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Images of Work and Love
The Dynamics of Economy and Emotions on the Big Screen in Sweden and Mexico 1930–1955
Dissertation presented at Uppsala University to be publicly examined in Hörsal 2, Kyrkogårdsgatan 10, Uppsala, Friday, 16 September 2016 at 10:00 for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The examination will be conducted in English. Faculty examiner: Fil dr Ann Ighe (Göteborgs universitet).

Abstract

This thesis studies the intertwinement of economy and emotions within the context of modernity. By investigating how work and romantic love interact in fiction films from the period 1930 to 1955, I seek to shed light on how two cultural practices that might normally be assumed to belong to separate dimensions of life – the economic and the emotional – are actually closely connected to each other. The examination of these interactions allows a better understanding of the process of modernisation, as well as the ways in which cultural differences matter in two national contexts: Sweden and Mexico.

The thesis is structured into three overarching dimensions of analysis: space, gender and class. I seek to explain the relationship between work and romantic love within these dimensions using the concepts of emotional capital, respectability and worthiness. The results highlight the differences between the national cases.

For example, films depicting the Swedish countryside represent both modern and non-modern domestic spaces when judged in terms of their configuration and appearance; however, certain traits of rural characters such as solidarity, closeness to nature and equality transcend into modern society and guide work and romantic love practices. In Mexico, the countryside is depicted at the core of national identity; however, this space is characterised by its non-modern nature. The countryside, according to films, must be reformed by notions of science and rationality. Film narratives show that through romantic love, the man modernises the non-modern woman.

The gender analysis revealed that Swedish films endorse the Housewife Contract in Swedish society during this period. In Mexican films, a similar contract is found in the discourse of the modern nation but films endorse a broader interpretation. Mexican films show that whilst the patriarchal organisation of society is expected to loosen its grip in a modern society, a stable gender structure is desirable.

The class analysis reveals that upward mobility is a desirable outcome in Swedish film stories. Women attain it through love while men do so through work. However, upward mobility is unacceptable in Mexican films; they instead endorse class permanence.

Keywords: Work, Romantic Love, Modernity, Emotional capital, Worthiness, Respectability

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ISSN 0346-6493
urn:nbn:se:uu:diva-297491 (http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=nbn:se:uu:diva-297491)
Acknowledgements

Completing this thesis has been a long and challenging journey, but also hugely worthwhile and exciting. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my primary supervisor Orsi Husz and secondary supervisor Maths Isacson. I could not have wished for better guidance in this process. Orsi, your empathetic and meticulous reading of my texts always allowed me to see my own thoughts with more clarity. Your critical eye and your incredibly precise way to put into words what I had been attempting to formulate helped me enormously and inspired me in both the interpretation and writing stages. You taught me that simple and intelligible trump convoluted and intricate. Maths, your enormous knowledge and experience were key to my development as a researcher. You pointed out themes and interpretations of history that I had missed or misjudged. I arrived from a different discipline and a different cultural background and you helped me settle down in the scholarly tradition of the department; you taught me things that are invaluable and helped me focus my attention on the relevant topics, countering my tendency to beat about the bush. Orsi and Maths, you have been more than mentors to me. During all these years of engaging and inspiring discussions about my work, my films and all the ideas that have come up surrounding the crafting of this thesis, you have also been supportive on a personal level, always caring about how I feel and what difficulties I might be experiencing. I have never felt alone.

I would also like to thank my colleagues at the department who have helped me broaden my views and taught me a lot about Swedish economic history but also about life. Thanks to all of you who have read and commented on my texts at seminars and engaged in conversations outside the seminar room! I would like to especially thank Göran Salmonsson who read a manuscript and gave me insightful comments. This reading was key in the finishing stages of my work. Ylva Hasselberg and Fredrik Sandgren also read my manuscript and offered incredibly useful and shrewd criticism. Fredrik’s second reading added, moreover, inspiring and practical touches to the final version. I am very grateful to you!

I am also deeply grateful to Lynn Karlsson, who has helped me greatly with issues small and big concerning the thesis, and has always been ready to ease my anxieties and make all those things that seemed impossible to me appear easy.

Sarah Linden Pasay helped me proofread one of my thesis chapters and her comments were so sharp and valuable. Thank you so much!
In earlier stages, my fellow PhD students commented on my first drafts and this helped me refine my question and put my thoughts in order. Magnus Eklund critically assessed my project, serving as the opponent at my first seminar, and after that he provided me with invaluable help and suggestions that I took with me throughout the writing process. I am very thankful for that!

I have had the fortune to work in a friendly and relaxed environment at the Department of Economic History in Uppsala where I have always felt at home. You all, dear colleagues, have contributed to making me feel that way. I would like to especially mention Hanna, Sarah, Karin, Olle, Marie, Johanna, Gabriel, and Kristina, whose friendship and support have been invaluable.

Film scholar Mats Jönsson, opponent at my final seminar, was a perfect reader at that stage of my work. He brought in insights from history, but more importantly from film scholarship, which I had not yet considered fully. Mats provided me with novel views and readings of my material, which allowed me to continue the thesis-writing journey with new eyes and fresh ideas.

I would like to thank Mexico’s National Council of Science and Technology (CONACYT) for the generous support I received during my PhD education.

The Anna Maria Lundin travel grant from Smålands nation kindly funded my stay at El Colegio de México during the autumn term of 2011. I was a guest PhD student at the Programa Interdisciplinario de Estudios de la Mujer (PIEM). My supervisor during this research stay, Professor Gabriela Cano, kindly and open-heartedly shared her knowledge about Mexican gender history with me. Talking to such an experienced, knowledgeable and engaged scholar was greatly inspiring. Thank you so much Gabriela!

The Uppsala-Oxford programme funded my stay at Oxford University during the Spring 2012. Although I did not work on my thesis in Oxford, this experience had a profound impact on my work as it was such a stimulating environment. I had the opportunity to study a course and attend the Economic and Social History Seminar. I would like to especially thank Professor Jane Humphries for her guidance and mentorship.

I received a scholarship from the Helge Ax:son Johnsons Stiftelse which funded the last couple of months of the final writing process, allowing me to work in a calm and focused way when I most needed it.

My work would not have been possible without the help of the institutions and the people who guard and take care of such valuable source material. Hence, I would like to thank all those who made possible my access to films, film material, pictures and the like. The Swedish Film Institute allowed me to consult material on the Swedish films I watched such as film reviews, interviews, newspaper articles, scripts, censorship cards, pictures, magazines, etc. The Swedish Media Database sent me study copies of all the films I requested and was always ready to provide me with all the material I needed.
At the Documentation Centre of Mexico’s Cineteca Nacional (National Film Library) I was able to consult printed material and they also allowed me to use still pictures from their collections. The kind help of Tzutzumantzin Soto was essential. At the Filmoteca UNAM (National University Film Library) I was able to request study copies of films and they allowed me to sit at their facilities and watch films at a time when they were moving to a new location and had restricted access for researchers. They also provided me with many of the still pictures that illustrate this thesis. Director of collections Antonia Rojas Ávila helped me enormously with all my requests. At the Hemeroteca Nacional de México (National Newspaper Archive) I was able to read printed publications and newspaper articles about the films from my selection. The staff at the Hemeroteca were always helpful and kind and assisted me in finding the right material when the number of documents was overwhelming. Thank you all for your help.

Apart from all the people who helped me on my academic path, an amazing group of people also contributed significantly to helping me keep my sanity in the toughest times and make life enjoyable. I would like to thank all my friends who have been by my side all along. My dear friend Diana Schwach came to me a couple of days before the deadline for a PhD position at the Economic History Department and encouraged me to apply. She was the first person who thought this would be a good thing for me and I will always be thankful for her support and encouragement.

My talented friend Alejandro Cisneros designed the cover of the book and I could not be happier with the result. Thank you!

A lot of people have been around throughout these years, helping me in many different ways and though I am afraid I might forget someone, I would still like to mention a few of you who have been close and supportive in your own ways, like Minny (†), Faye, Paul, Agnes, Tat, Gabriel, Verónica, Damaris, Mohammed, Yury, Scarlett, Christian, Miloš, Tobias, and many more. Jacaranda and Fernanda have been two of my greatest supporters in the last couple of years and have patiently listened to my frustrations as well as shared fun and memorable times ¡Gracias chicas! My friends from Mexico have also been there all along, despite the distance. Priscila and Paula have visited me a few times in Sweden and England and stayed near me, always asking about my progress and cheering me up when I have needed it the most. I know I can always count on you guys!

Quisiera agradecer también a mi querida familia. Mis padres han hecho todo por mí y me se han asegurado de que tenga todo lo que necesito para hacer realidad mis sueños y crecer como persona. Su apoyo ha ido mucho más allá del amor y la comprensión; en los últimos años también me han ayudado con la investigación misma, y sin ellos, esta tesis no hubiera sido posible. Mis padres me han apoyado yendo al archivo, consiguiendo material, enviándome información, y mucho más. No tengo palabras para agradecer todo lo que ustedes han hecho por mí, mi deuda es infinita. Gracias también a mi hermano...
Félix, a mi tía Miriam y mi abuela Miriam (†) quienes me han brindado amor y apoyo incondicionalmente y han sido una gran motivación en mi vida.

I would also like to thank my beloved husband Aaron who has supported me in all ways imaginable. You have been there to help me relax and laugh after a hard day of work, always reminding me that there is much more to life than thesis writing. You fill my days with love and happiness. But if that were not enough you were also there to listen when I wanted to discuss thesis-related ideas and did the excruciating job of proofreading my thesis. Infinite thanks mi amor!

Finally I would like to thank my little one, who is not here yet. The anticipation of your arrival has given me the strength to take this project to completion. I still haven’t met you and you have already done so much for me.
CHAPTER 1
Introduction

Luz and Zaid are newlyweds on their honeymoon but Zaid is not happy because his wife is working on her art. ‘Don’t I have enough money to satisfy all your needs? Put those brushes down already!’ Luz responds, ‘I cannot do that. I need to finish this painting, it will make me famous.’ Zaid retorts, ‘Sure, but in the meantime I’m in hell.’ Luz, trying to calm him down, says, ‘Don’t be upset little husband, remember that you accepted the conditions before marrying me. Didn’t we agree that you would let me paint?’ Zaid responds angrily, ‘Yes, but not all day. Your mother warned me: you are going to marry Diego Rivera, she said. And you are worse, Diego Rivera at least smiles. You don’t even do that.’ Luz then says, ‘My darling, don’t you understand I have to please my mother? The rules of the League are very strict and forbid us from being loving towards our husbands.’ (Luz (Amparo Morillo) and Zaid (Antonio Badú), Top Women, 1943, Mexico).

Viktor and his new business partner, Uncle Ludde, are standing on the foundations of the mechanic workshop that Viktor has designed and planned all by himself. The project has been realised thanks to the help of Karin, who involved Ludde in the investment. Karin and Viktor are good friends who are secretly in love with each other. In the final scene, Karin goes to see Viktor at the construction site, and, as soon as he sees her, they both understand that they have now become a couple. Viktor shouts happily: ‘Karin!’ To which she dreamily responds, ‘Yes, Vicke…’ Then Ludde, satisfied, says, ‘Well, this is all I have been waiting for. And here you are now, two young people with two pairs of hands. There’s a lot of work to do here.’ (Karin (Aino Taube), Viktor (Elof Ahrle) and Uncle Ludde (Carl Barcklind), Mr. Home Assistant, 1938, Sweden).

These scenes, taken from two of the films that I analyse in this study, one Mexican and one Swedish, illustrate its overarching concern: the interaction between economic and emotional dimensions of social life in the context of modernity.

In the first scene we observe the marital relationship of a couple in which the wife belongs to a feminist league presided over by her mother, which commands its members to take a rational approach to marriage based on the woman’s self-sufficiency and professional development. This film belongs to the comedy genre, and by the end of the story all the feminist women, includ-
ing Luz, abandon their extravagant ideas and chose a traditional wifely role over their careers.

In the second film story, the female protagonist is an upper-class young woman who, due to her class position, is not able to work although she longs to do so. But by the end of the story, as we observe in the scene described, once she finds love, she is also rewarded with the possibility to work, together with her future husband.

These two film stories show that romantic love and work are intertwined concerns of the protagonists. In the former, the outcome of the story shows an incompatibility between work and romantic love for women and articulates that what appear to be ‘modern’ ideas are not necessarily desirable and prevent women from attaining love and being happy. In the latter, on the contrary, the story shows the compatibility of work and romantic love; moreover, the protagonist couple appear to embody modernity, in contrast to Karin’s non-modern upper-class family that prevented her from working and swindled Viktor, hindering his attempt to start his own business.

What are the conditions of the relationship between work and romantic love? Why do Swedish and Mexican films present such different views? What do the interactions between work and romantic love say about Swedish and Mexican approaches to modernity? These are some of the questions that guide the framing of this thesis.

The starting point of this thesis is the assumption that the economic and emotional dimensions of life are intertwined. Sociologist Eva Illouz makes this point in her work about the role of emotions and love in capitalist society. Illouz puts the intertwinement between the emotional and the economic at the centre of the modern; she claims that the modern individual is ‘at one and the same time emotional and economic, romantic and rational.’

Illouz argues that in modern society the basis of love was transformed in such a way that marriage, instead of being a strategy to form family alliances, became a vehicle for class mobility. When Illouz talks about modernity, she refers to the time after the First World War and claims that in this period, the study of love is central to the foundation of modernity. What characterises love in modernity is its dual aspect: as a source of existential transcendence and as a site of gender struggle. Love and economic calculus are, Illouz asserts, tied together because the market logic has penetrated romantic love practices. Features of modernity such as choice, rationality, interest and competition have changed the ways in which people make decisions about sentiments. At the same time, love has become the main representation of the intensification of emotional life that has characterised modern society.

I agree with Illouz and assume that, within modernity, the emotional and the economic are intertwined and that this interrelationship is in fact at the

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core of the modern society. However, Illouz centres her study on the United States and to a large extent on the experiences of middle-class individuals. In this thesis, I would like to take the study of emotions and the economy further and explore other historical contexts and other understandings of modernity in order to assess to what extent cultural and historical specificities matter and to contribute to the understanding of the factors behind the interaction between emotions and the economy.

In this study I am focusing on one particular economic practice and one emotional practice, namely work and romantic love, within the context of modernity that I set in the period 1930 to 1955 in Sweden and Mexico, two countries that were going through a process of transformation, but were culturally distant. I seek to examine the representation in popular culture (cinema in particular) of how work and romantic love interact with each other and observe how these interactions contributed to the understanding of modernity.

**Aim of the Study**

The aim of this thesis, in other words, is to demonstrate that work and romantic love are two interrelated cultural phenomena and that the ways in which they interact with each other are a fundamental part of the process of the modernisation that Western countries went through in the first half of the twentieth century. One of the assumptions of this thesis is that the interaction between work and romantic love is time and culture dependent, which means that how they shape and modify the process of modernisation depends on the particularities of each national case.

This is a comparative study. The comparative perspective is an essential feature of this thesis, because by looking at the interaction between work and romantic love in two countries I expect cultural and historical specificities to bring to the fore precisely how this relationship comes about.

The aim is approached through the following questions:

Do Swedish and Mexican films from the period 1930 to 1955 depict a connection between work and romantic love?

If so, how is this relationship depicted? What does this relationship depend upon?

How does the relationship between work and romantic love modify or affect notions of Swedish and Mexican modernity?

I have mentioned earlier that I regard both romantic love and work as cultural practices, and as such they are context-bound and subject to change. Eva Illouz considers emotions to be ‘cultural meanings and social relationships that are inseparably compressed together and it is this compression which confers on them their capacity to energise action.’[^Illouz]

[^Illouz]: Illouz (2007), p. 3.
of culture and the (economic) value created by work is relative and dependent on its special social setting.\(^4\) This means that both work and romantic love are historically dependent cultural phenomena.

When romantic love and work are observed in the sources, they must be regarded in the light of the dynamism of transformation that the process of modernisation entailed.

Why is it particularly work and romantic love I am interested in? Work in the West has throughout history been disconnected from other social dimensions. Whereas in other cultures, historian Patrick Joyce argues, work has been connected to kinship, politics and religion, in the West there has been an attempt to see work as a separate phenomenon.\(^5\) So work has not straightforwardly been considered a cultural practice, but it has been viewed as a rational one, separate from other aspects of life. I argue in this thesis that this is not the case.

Work has been studied in relation to emotions before. The use of emotions as part of the performance of work and emotions as work skills have in fact been analysed by influential sociologist Arlie R. Hochschild\(^6\) and other scholars who followed suit. In this thesis I am not looking at the emotional aspect of work practices but specifically at the romantic love practices occurring around work, both within and outside the workplace, but that affect work and the worker.

In order to disentangle this relationship, I use a broad concept of work that allows me to grasp different nuances in the changing nature of the economic activity. I pay special attention to the indications of modern work in my sources and most commonly deal with wage work. Nevertheless unpaid work is also discussed in some sections. When it comes to romantic love, however, I view it as a more fluid concept. In fact, since romantic love is the practice that varies the most in my two study cases, I have considered it necessary to treat it historically and look further back into the specific meaning and practices of romantic love in Sweden and Mexico during the time of study.

In the following section I put forward the definition of work that I use in this dissertation, as well as a definition of romantic love, plus a historical review of the context within which the emotional practice has been developed in both countries.

### Modernity and Modernisation

In this dissertation I focus on the years 1930 to 1955, a period of modernity in Sweden and Mexico, in which both countries experienced important trans-

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\(^6\) Hochschild has developed her arguments in books like Hochschild (1983); Hochschild (2003); and Hochschild (2012).
formations, not least in cultural practices associated with work and romantic love. This is also a period of transition, during which traditional practices intertwined with modern ones while people experienced economic, social and political changes. The process of modernisation in this thesis is connected to the development of a capitalist industrial society.

Modernisation and modernity can be controversial concepts. They might not only refer to different time periods but can, deliberately or not, entail political judgements as well. C.A. Bayly takes an interesting standpoint in his book *The Birth of the Modern World* in which he claims that ‘an essential part of being modern is thinking you are modern.’ This means that although Bayly demonstrates the modern nature of his period of study (1780–1914), by stating that changes in this period came about particularly rapidly, modernity can in fact be identified in different periods at different geographical locations. Dipesh Chakrabarty warns that claims of modernity are ‘artefacts of both ideology and imagination’; in his view, modernity is always a biased concept and generally a Eurocentric one.

In this thesis I look at the relationships between the spaces of modernity and mind-sets of modernity and I can also see how they are riddled with contradictions, apparently readily in the conflicts between local, national, civilizational and global claims of modernity, but also conflicts between the social spaces represented by notions of class, gender, ethnicity, urban/rural divisions, and so on and so forth.

Modernity is always filled with frictions and contradictions and how the process of modernisation develops depends on how dimensions of class, gender, ethnicity, and urban/rural divisions are organised in different societies.

When I use the concepts of modernity as a phase or modernisation as the process towards that phase, I refer more explicitly to a modality of capitalism and industrialism. I can say that both Sweden and Mexico were going through that path during the period 1930 to 1955, and as historian Arif Dirlink argues,
‘by nearly universal recognition, we all dwell in modernity, but experience it differently.’ So I assume that the process of modernisation and the view of modernity had different content and connotations in Sweden and Mexico. In this study I take modernity as the product of the interactions and resistances between the forces of capitalism and social and cultural forces in society.

The type of modernity I am dealing with is related to certain values that guide social practices. In Talcott Parsons’ modernisation theory, which is explained through the theory of actions systems,

upon modernization the personality system becomes achievement oriented …; modernisation leads to rationalisation, value generalisation and the diffusion of secular norm in the cultural system; and functional differentiation is the dominant trend in modern society.14

Thus, notions of secularity and rationalisation are features of modernity, but as I will discuss in this analysis, this is not always the case. Here we could mention the claim, made by advocates of the concept of multiple modernities, that the diversity of different cases of modernity needs to be acknowledged and cultural continuities identified.15

Within a context of modernity, the workings of an industrial society are connected with the principle of rationality. Max Weber argued that the emergence of capitalism occurred thanks to the triumph of the ‘rational permanent enterprise, rational accounting, rational technology and rational law.’16 But what is this rationality that has traditionally been considered to be an inherent characteristic of the industrial society and capitalism? The discipline of economics has been developed on the principle of rationality. Economic theories have been devised based on premises of individuals’ tendency to maximize their self-interest, or decide based on the first satisfactory option they encounter (bounded rationality).17 Emotions, on the contrary, have long been considered irrational obstacles of economic decisions, or essentially inexistent in economic decision-making.

Sociologist Viviana Zelizer sees this unwillingness to see the connections between economy and emotions from a moral perspective. A group of social scholars, Zelizer argues, have proposed the idea of ‘separate spheres and hostile worlds’. This idea entails that there is one sphere of sentiment and solidarity and another sphere of calculation and efficiency; when these spheres combine, moral contamination is the result.18 These theories, it seems to me, are more normative than explanatory. Zelizer says that these theories

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17 To read more on modernity and rationality, see Weirich (2004).
are not only part of the nineteenth century thought of early industrialism; the mingling between intimacy and economic transactions is still regarded as an anomaly well into the twenty-first century.\textsuperscript{19}

Despite the fluidity of the concept of modernity and the fact that modernity can be defined in a variety of ways in this thesis, I take it as a fixed concept. This does not mean that I disregard the malleability and changing nature of the concept, but what I rather mean is that whenever I refer to modernity in this thesis I refer to a particular set definition. Thus, while I hold onto a fixed conceptualisation of modernity, I observe how Swedish and Mexican films relate to it and either embrace or counter it. The definition that I find relevant in this study is based on Anthony Giddens’ and Eva Illouz’ work.

For Giddens the modern world is characterised by being global due to the widespread nature of capitalism all over the world, by the presence of mass media and of industrialism.\textsuperscript{20} But Giddens distinguishes between two moments of modernity. There is an early modernity related to the industrial society, in which we observe the use of material power and machinery in the process of production, which is tied to the rise of capitalism. And there is a late modernity, characterised by the introduction of reflexivity into personal and institutional life. Reflexivity, Giddens claims, is inseparable from social relations. Social practices are shaped by the new information individuals acquire regarding those practices.\textsuperscript{21} Giddens points at several characteristics of modern societies, such as people’s trust in professional expertise, which replaces security based on kinship, religious cosmology or tradition; risk is present and it transcends social and economic differences; people construct their individual identities based on choice. Individuals can negotiate their lifestyles having the ability to choose from a range of options; the individual self opens up and there is mutuality in self-disclosure. Relationships are based on the trust that mutual disclosure generates and the commitments that this disclosure require, creating intimacy. Experience is mediated through global media, and as I mentioned earlier, reflexivity in modern society entails that social practices are altered as a result of incoming information.\textsuperscript{22} All these characteristics of modernity are observable in film stories in the way film characters behave and relate to others and their societies.

Eva Illouz’s understanding of modernity, though similar to Gidden’s, is however more focused on the first decades of the twentieth century and the particular phenomena occurring in Western societies during this period. Moreover, Illouz argues that the concept of modernity must necessarily include an emotional dimension. In \textit{Cold Intimacies} Illouz proposes that

\textsuperscript{21} Tucker (1998), pp. 143–144.
\textsuperscript{22} Loyal (2003), pp. 116–122.
Illouz claims here that modernity can only be safely defined when emotions are taken into account – Illouz’s modernity denotes the period marked by the ‘making of capitalism’. Thus, emotions and capitalism go hand in hand and this relationship is what defines the modern.

She explains that in the transition towards modernity, the ‘old’ world was characterised by religion, community, order and stability, as opposed to the ‘new’ world characterised by change, secularity, dissolution of community ties, increasing claims of equality and uncertainty about identity. Illouz talks about emotional capitalism as a culture in which emotional and economic discourses and practices mutually shape each other, thus producing...a broad, sweeping movement in which affect is made an essential aspect of economic behaviour and in which emotional life...follows the logic of economic relations and exchange.

The author sees in modernity, characterised by being a capitalist, rational, egalitarian, secular and individualist, an era in which emotional life constitutes a fundamental part and it changes as much as it induces change.

Giddens and Illouz present a notion of modernity that arises from the advent of the capitalist industrial society, but they centre their arguments on aspects of society that affect the construction of individual identities and thus their actions and behaviour (agency), such as the increase of choice, risk, the legitimacy of experts, etc. However, in their view, the reconstruction of individual identities, the roles of emotions and intimacy and the changes in gender relations are fundamental in the understanding of modernity.

When I analyse modernity in this thesis I take these features into account, but it is impossible to refer to them without also illustrating the contrasts and defining what does not belong to modernity. We cannot refer to what is new, modern and novel without mentioning what was there ‘before’. Giddens and Illouz certainly do so. Giddens talks about a premodern society based on kinship, local community, religious cosmology and tradition, a society that orders life through pre-set channels of tradition; he affirms that, in this society, reflexivity is only possible as a reinterpretation of tradition. Illouz also talks about traditional societies or traditional values when she describes the practices that began to crumble with the advent of modern capitalism. Thus, ‘premodern’,

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‘old’ and ‘traditional’ are concepts that the authors use interchangeably. In this study, however, I will use ‘non-modern’ instead, because premodern, old and traditional can be misleading. ‘Premodern’ has been used more consistently in the history discipline to name a specific time period; ‘traditional’ has been used to characterise that which is unchangeable; and ‘old’ is too vague as an analytical concept. So even if ‘non-modern’ is not ideal, it conveys the meaning I am looking for.

To sum up, in this thesis, modernity is understood as a period characterised by the presence of an industrial capitalism, rationalisation, a higher awareness of the individual identity, and emotionality over collective identities. I also endorse the idea that emotions played a fundamental role in modernity because they had a role in the changing economic, social and cultural structures, not least the conception and practices of work.

The Paths of Sweden and Mexico towards Modernity

The films I have selected for this study reflect modernity and the context within which they were produced. Studies concerning the period 1930 to 1955 and the process of modernisation in Sweden and Mexico have paid attention to a variety of themes. In this section I provide a context for the period, paying particular attention to the specific themes that films in one way or another presented or related to in their stories and also those themes that provide a better insight into the conditions in which work and romantic love were understood and transformed during this period.

At the beginning of the period this thesis covers, the world was edging towards a severe economic crisis; there was political turmoil in Spain; Abyssinia was facing Italian troops; and the world was tense due to Hitler’s advancement and the expectation of a World War. Sweden was entering the so-called second phase of the modern breakthrough.28

During the first half of the twentieth century, a series of key transformations took place in Sweden that altered the life of its inhabitants markedly. Sweden changed from being an agricultural-based economy to an industrial economy. People migrated in large numbers from the countryside to the cities. Also of great significance for Sweden’s economic structure were the increase of wage labour and the rise of the money economy.29

Sweden, however, could not escape the crisis in the first years of the 1930s. The events that marked the crisis were the decline of the export sector, the fall of domestic investment and the rise of unemployment. Strikes broke out in the district of Ädalen, leading to the killing of demonstrators by soldiers. Kreuger & Toll, one of the world’s leading financiers, responsible for a significant export of capital from the United States to Sweden, went bankrupt. In

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In the summer of 1932 the entire Swedish banking system was in danger of being drawn into the cycle of bankruptcies. These events led Swedish voters and politicians to take measures to change the course of the country. Consequently, the Social Democrats took the lead toward a new economic policy.

The decade started with severe unemployment. During the depression years 1930–1933 the rate of unemployment never went below 9 per cent. The Swedish economy, however, emerged quickly from the crisis, and until the 1950s economic growth was above average for the industrialised world. Transport, manufacturing and the public sector were the main generators of economic growth in Sweden.

The establishment of industrial production in the countryside contributed to the persistence of a relatively large rural population. Migration to the cities was increasing and it was mainly a female phenomenon. Young single women from the countryside who would have worked in agriculture and domestic service left for the cities, while older women stayed. In the 1940s male agricultural labourers followed suit. By the 1950s, although a rationalisation process had reached farm work and wages had increased so as to improve agricultural labourers’ economic and social conditions, the lack of workforce in agriculture was patent. Between 1930 and 1940 the countryside population decreased by about 155,000 whereas cities’ population increased by about 385,000 inhabitants. During the whole decade of the 1930s Sweden’s population was mostly rural. By the 1940s only one out of every four workers received their income from agriculture or related industries.

The 1930s constituted a turning point in Swedish history. The birth rate reached bottom, life expectancy began to extend and the proportion of marriages increased. Age distribution was rather favourable. Never before had the productive population so few children and elderly to provide for.

There was, however, a lively debate during the 1930s in Sweden on the population question. The alarmingly low birth rate raised concerns among political actors. This question was thoroughly dealt with in Alva and Gunnar Myrdal’s book *Crisis in the Population Question* from 1934, which brought about a larger debate with other notable economists and social scientists of the period, such as Gunnar Myrdal’s mentor Gustav Cassel and Eli Heckscher. Although most scholars and politicians agreed on the fact that there was a population problem derived from the decline of births in the country, Cassel was suspicious about the Myrdal’s proposal of providing an encompassing network of child services. Such a solution, he thought, would be costly and

not necessarily effective. The solution was, in Cassel’s view, to promote economic growth through liberal policies, rather than income redistribution, the socialisation of production and the reorganisation of the family, as the Myrdals suggested.36

Two phenomena hence dominated the interwar period: mass unemployment and the population crisis. Moreover, urbanisation entailed a fundamental change in the lives of Swedes. The household structure also changed during the 1930s. In 1930 Sweden had a population of 6.1 million.37 By the middle of the decade around 40 per cent of the population was single, but the proportion of people living on their own was still as low as in 1920. Of the people who shared a home, 77 per cent lived with a married couple with the husband as the head of the household. The rest lived in institutions such as elderly homes, hospitals, rehabilitation centres, prisons, etc. Only 4 per cent lived alone and 1.5 per cent were lodgers. Households with single mothers comprised 6 per cent of the population. It was uncommon for a woman to live alone with her child, although around 15 per cent of women gave birth to children out of wedlock. In total, around 10 per cent of the population lived in households with a single parent and child.38

In sum, the population trends that predominated during the first decades of the twentieth century were characterised by

- the rise in marriages,
- the increasing number of women in the labour market,
- an urbanisation trend that entailed smaller households and fewer people sharing household expenses,
- an increasing need for income which in turn led to a greater differentiation between women’s productive and reproductive work,
- and the changes in the pension system which allowed a greater number of elderly people to support themselves with their pensions and own savings.39

By the 1950s the nuclear family had become the most common household unit; the proportion of married couples increased even more. The employment intensity of married women rose. The education period became extended, and the improvement in living standards allowed single people to have their own households. The women who in the 1930s chose work over marriage were, by the 1950s, able to combine both.40

During the first decades of the twentieth century, the industrial society had replaced the agrarian society.41 By the 1930s agricultural employment was surpassed by manufacturing and service sectors. Around 1950 private services employed more people than agriculture.42

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40 Åmark (2002), pp. 265–266.
In the 1920s the labour market for women expanded as many businesses that required female workers prospered, such as the service sector and certain female-coded industries. Moreover, the rationalisation and standardisation of production gave rise to a demand for unskilled and semi-skilled labour. Many of the production processes in factories were divided up into simpler tasks that could be assigned to women. Since women were not expected to stay in a job position for longer periods, the process of rationalisation created a demand for them. 43

The first years of the twentieth century were marked by change in the position of women in the labour market and in the status of their work. While in the pre-industrial agrarian society women had a strong position in production, by the first half of the twentieth century they had become marginalised as housewives who needed to be provided for. 44

While in the 1920s women conquered the political battle of female suffrage and enjoyed economic gains due to the increasing demand for female labour and the rise of wages, the following decade saw the enhancement of a housewifely ideal. Gender historian Yvonne Hirdman argues that during the period 1930–1965, what she calls a Housewife Contract predominated in Sweden, in which the man takes the role of breadwinner and the woman the role of the homemaker. This means that although women could be wage earners, and they were so to an increasing extent, in an increasing number of branches, they had the main responsibility for taking care of husband, children and home.

Modernisation also had an impact on unpaid household work. Only a small percentage of domestic work was included in statistics on private services, but the great majority of housework was unpaid. Unpaid household work increased during the whole period and reached its peak around 1950. This accounted for one third of all employment. Schön finds an explanation in the fact that the decline in agriculture, the sector that employed most women in previous decades, was not compensated by a corresponding increase of paid positions for women in the cities. 45

According to statistics from the period, the percentage of women with remunerated work dropped from 53 per cent in 1880 to 32 per cent in 1950. Nonetheless the tendency was not homogeneous. Housewives were more common in households with male industrial workers than in other higher and lower income households. Already by the 1920s, single women had disappeared from agricultural labour and by the 1930s paid domestic employment decreased. In turn, office and other service-related jobs increased. During the war, women took over traditionally male-dominated jobs, and during the 1930s and 1940s many women became entrepreneurs; they opened, for instance, milk shops, bakeries, barbershops and the like. After the Second World War,

However, most female-run small businesses closed down due to, among other reasons, a process of rationalisation in certain industries. Domestic employment completely vanished from the labour market, and in turn a whole new set of occupations appeared. Women could find jobs in healthcare services and offices. The public sector widened and new female dominated occupations appeared within social services, education, childcare, etc.\(^\text{46}\)

The situation of women in the changing labour market was thus paradoxical. Whereas on the one hand the women’s movement fought for the expansion of education alternatives and work opportunities, and in fact, the demand for female work force increased in certain branches, even some traditionally reserved for men, a new hierarchy in the workplace and the labour market in general arose, which put women in a subordinated position. Men took leading positions and women were assigned simple and monotonous tasks.\(^\text{47}\)

From the 1930s onwards, a rationalisation movement took place in Sweden, which would have an influence on the gender organisation of labour. Women were considered to be best suited for work on the assembly line, and they worked long hours for low wages. Moreover, as I mentioned earlier, women would still carry out unpaid housework. Women’s paid work was, according to economic historian Ulla Wikander, more often than not dull, unsafe and badly paid.\(^\text{48}\) That women were in the labour market to stay and that they had the important social role of taking care of their family was discussed vigorously. Alva Myrdal argued, for instance, that women ‘as the child-bearing sex, present specific social problems.’ In the same vein, she added, ‘women bear a special responsibility for the future and quality of the Swedish people.’\(^\text{49}\)

Hence, for socialist thinkers the utopic solution to the problem of the average Swedish woman, who was considered to be married, with wage work, and a household comprising of a husband and one or two children, was the collectivisation of the home. It would be highly beneficial for the female worker, for instance, if cooking were to be left to large-scale providers, for it would be cheaper and more nutritious.\(^\text{50}\)

From the early 1930s, Alva Myrdal advocated collective measures for child-rearing and housework aiming to support women’s wage work and a better upbringing of children. Functionalist architecture would underpin her ideas. The functionalist house Myrdal described was to be located in an apartment building surrounded by a park. It would have a central kitchen where food would be prepared rationally and distributed with food lifts or eaten in dining halls. A standard cleaning service would be included in the rent, and a laundry central would be part of the house. There should also be a common

\(^\text{48}\) Wikander (1995), pp. 43–44.
\(^\text{50}\) Hirdman (1998), p. 126.
socialising room, a reading room, sunbathing facilities, gymnasium, doorman, etc. Moreover, a collective day-care centre with an infant unit, children’s room and pre-school would also be found in the building. It was considered important to enjoy enough space, light and sound isolation and the access to the collective comforts. Such a model house would, in Myrdal’s opinion, simplify women’s life and provide the conditions for a better social life.\(^{51}\)

The role of women during the war years is well known; in many countries women took up traditionally male work tasks in industries and other work areas. Working housewives in particular became a popular image as they became common in, for instance, the metal industry, while men were called up to maintain military preparedness. The State Labour Market Commission (SAK) was the organ that during the war years was responsible for the labour market and the supply of labour during the preparedness period. The Swedish labour market needed more workers and a dynamic work force that would be willing to move around according to the necessities of the market.\(^{52}\) The SAK attempted through a propaganda campaign to recruit housewives without small children for the war efforts, which for their part entailed becoming workers wherever they were needed. Although the women who were encouraged to take paid work were mainly housewives and domestic workers, it became manifest for SAK that the demand was larger than that and women with small children were also needed. Nevertheless, ideological motives and insufficient child-care services became an obstacle to their recruitment.\(^{53}\) The fact that the recruitment of women was justified as an act of solidarity and loyalty to the nation meant that the new role of women in the labour market was not regarded as an emancipatory one. The male breadwinner model continued to prevail. In fact, by the end of the war, the role of women at home was re-evaluated, and the Research Institute of the Home was established. At the same time, labour unions asked for guarantees for the return of men to their jobs. Women, and in particular feminist expert groups, alleged that women’s return to the traditionally female sphere would not occur as easily as expected. Historian Johanna Overud argues that the experience of the war marked a change that could not be ignored, despite the fact that the propagandistic strategy of the state was to create the image of a female worker who would temporarily take over men’s work tasks, only, when no longer needed, to take back their proper place at home.\(^{54}\)

Per Albin Hansson introduced the notion of the People’s Home (Folkhemmet) in a debate in the Swedish Parliament in 1928. The good home became a symbol of what the Swedish state attempted to create in the formative period of the welfare state. The foundations of the home were, said Hansson, com-


community and fellowship. Similarly, he went on and argued that equality, respect, cooperation, and helpfulness were values that should be present in the good home. Applying these principles to the big home, meaning the Swedish society, implied, according to Hansson, that all social and economic differences should be eliminated and the measures taken by the state should target the conditions that created privileges for some and deprivation for others.55

The political debates of the period also emphasised the uncertainty of the new times. The social democratic policy that Gustav Möller presented before the party on the eve of the parliamentary elections is an illustrative example. The worst evil, Möller argued, was economic uncertainty and insecurity, the threat against future employment possibilities, in particular those of the working class. Workers were marginalised from the workplaces and left alone to deal with economic and moral forces as a result of rationalisation and standardisation processes in the industry.56 This was the thinking that became the basis of the creation of the welfare state. One of the chief objectives of the social democratic policy was to reduce unemployment to a minimum and enhance the worker’s role in the market. Moreover, Sweden aspired to free the citizens from dependence on poor relief. Workers, in particular industrious, responsible ones who fulfilled their obligations towards society and their families, should receive full support to escape the shame of state assistance. Such thinking derived from a decade characterised by a series of challenges in the economic and political system, such as unemployment, class struggle and difficulties in the parliamentary system.57

During the period from the early 1930s after the crisis and up to the 1950s, Sweden enjoyed rapid economic growth. The aim of economic policy was to provide security for the citizens who, due to the nature of the economic system, were exposed to the fluctuations of the market economy.58 Among the important socio-political reforms that took place in Sweden during the 1930s was the national pension scheme. The allowance was however not yet universal. Another reform often cited, due to its symbolic significance, was unemployment insurance.59 Historian Klas Åmark argues that a closer analysis of political reforms during the period suggests that the policies in fact prioritised diligent and well-behaved workers with stable jobs. The goal of social democrats, Åmark claims, was to build a modern society with a modern salaried class gathered around a reformist labour movement.60

Just as the workers were prioritised in the 1930s reforms, it also became evident that certain groups were treated differently. Families, for instance,

56 Åmark (2005), p. 66.
57 Åmark (2005), p. 66.
60 Åmark (2005), p. 84.
received a family allowance, and those married without children received a compensation that was lower than that of the unmarried.61

The ideal that dominated the social insurance system in Sweden during the period extending from 1932 to the middle of the 1950s was the sole-breadwinner model, and although it has been widely argued that, in discursive terms, the man had the main responsibility for earning income and the woman was responsible for housework, in reality, the most common arrangement was that all household members who were fit to work contributed to the household income. However, the division of labour on gender grounds was very strict in both social and household arenas. Derived from such an understanding of how work should be organised, and considering the low birth rate question, labour’s collective agreements divided workers into different categories: skilled men, young people, older people with reduced work capacity, and women. These groups received different wages even though they performed similar tasks. Women, during the 1930s, earned around two thirds or three quarters of men’s wages.62

Legislation contributed to limiting women’s work. Restrictions were both formal and informal. Wage discrimination, protective laws, social laws and tax policies contributed to a gendered division of labour.63 The protection that women as a group had was an object of political discussion. Legislation against women’s work took the shape of protective measures. Night shifts, for instance, were prohibited for women until 1962. Moreover, during the first six weeks after delivery, women were not allowed to work at all within industry, building or transportation branches except when they showed a medical certificate that attested their ability to work without causing any harm to themselves or their children. Six weeks before delivery the mother-to-be had the right to be absent from work if she showed a certificate proving that she needed it, and in all cases she could be free from work for two weeks before delivery. Women, however, strongly resisted, for example, night work prohibitions for a long time, because it prevented them from obtaining well-paid jobs such as at newspapers, printing presses and bakeries.64

In 1931 a law on motherhood support was drafted. The formal differences between men and women had been erased, at least on paper. ‘The legislation finally removed the clear legal subordination, both between man and woman in their marital relation and for women as citizens.’65 The education policy was another illustrative example, since from 1927 girls were also allowed to pursue a high school education. Yvonne Hirdman agrees with Wikander,

64 Wigforss, et al. (1938), pp. 81–82.
65 SOU 1990:44, p. 84.
however, that although subordination became less manifest in institutional terms, it was still marked in the labour market.  

When it comes to the regulation of private life, the welfare state also got involved. A polemic question that the state sought to regulate was that of sexuality. The justification for the state’s involvement in such a private matter was that the individual’s happiness and society’s happiness were not in opposition to each other. The development of society was directly related to the people’s education. A new sexual morality was thus needed because the old one constituted an obstacle for the goals of the population politics.  

According to the new sexual morality, sexuality was something good, healthy and righteous. The norm, however, for all sexual unions was marriage. The state addressed primarily men with its marriage propaganda. The solution the state considered was to present the new sexual morality and in particular the benefits of marriage as an affirmation of life and a pleasurable morality.  

The Population Commission also showed concern about prostitution and licentiousness. Policies of child birth limitation, based on racial arguments, would be applied to those people who were least fit for procreation. The Commission proposed that people with an asocial disposition be sterilised.  

The period ca. 1930–1955 was characterised by a great number of changes in Swedish society, many of them in the areas of work and the private life, and they were connected to current views of what a modern society should be like. Therefore, work and romantic love, two cultural phenomena in transformation, are relevant themes that contribute to the understanding of this period of modernity.  

In Mexico, meanwhile, the later years of the 1920s and the first years of the 1930s were marked by the impact of the Revolution and the economic and social crises it brought about. Mexico strived for modernisation after the chaos, instability and economic stagnation of the revolutionary years. Modernisation materialised in the implementation of a new growth model. A new political discourse announced the restructuring of society.  

Mexico was, at the beginning of the period of study, a country of 18,596,000 according to statistics from 1936, but with a low density of population of 9.4 inhabitants per square kilometre. The Mexican population was not integrated in terms of race, language or customs, and part of this heterogeneity can be explained by the process of conquest that disrupted the indigenous patterns of social life and created new social groups such as the mestizo, or the American-born children of Spanish and indigenous parents. In the 1930s, the economic project of development that Mexico was going through encountered challenges in the population structure: the indigenous population was consid-

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ered a problem because they were not sufficiently absorbed by the economic and social processes of the nation.\textsuperscript{70}

In 1928, a political crisis began with the assassination of Alvaro Obregón, who would have most likely been re-elected as president of Mexico. This event unleashed further political moves, like revolutionary leader Plutarco Elías Calles’ creation of the National Revolutionary Party (PNR), which brought together all social groups that had any influence in the political arena. The programme of the party had a nationalistic basis. For agriculture, for instance, the party proposed to distribute communal land to the destitute, to sell irrigated lands to the middle classes and to protect the property rights of large-scale landowners.\textsuperscript{71} For industry, the party proposed a programme to promote industrialisation through import substitution, paying special attention to the working classes. The party also proposed the creation of the National Labour Law (\textit{Ley Federal del Trabajo}) and the creation of national social security institutions. Calles called himself \textit{el Jefe Máximo} (the \textit{Top Leader}) of the revolutionary family, and he maintained that the Revolution should be part of the cultural reality of the Mexicans. His attempt to make revolutionary ideology an essential part of the ‘Mexican soul’ can be shown in the following speech fragment: ‘we must enter and conquer the minds of the children, the minds of the young, because they do and they must belong to the Revolution.’\textsuperscript{72}

The crisis that had seriously affected the country had come to an end by 1933; a reorganisation of political forces and the adoption of a new economic policy were under way. State power was concentrated in the figure of \textit{el Jefe Máximo}. Public policies were oriented towards the creation of basic infrastructure projects such as the electric industry. From 1933 onwards economic growth was rapid, and the foundations were in place for the implementation of a model of industrialisation and the consolidation of Mexican capitalism.\textsuperscript{73}

The Mexican economy grew at an annual rate of 10.5 per cent, or 5 per cent in real terms, during the period 1932–1940. The agricultural sector grew, although to a much lesser extent (2.8 per cent annually or 1.3 per cent in real terms). Growth was, however, rather unorganised, without strategic planning, which in practical terms meant that there was no integration of productive processes. Moreover, there was no attempt to produce technology; on the contrary, industrial inputs were imported and adapted to the needs of the Mexican industry. The deficiencies of infrastructure, partly as a result of the Second World War, led the government to focus resources and investment in infrastructure projects such as transport, credit and energy.\textsuperscript{74}

\textsuperscript{70}Munguía (1937), pp. 60–62.
\textsuperscript{72}Meyer & Beezley (2000), p. 455.
\textsuperscript{73}Semo Calev, et al. (2006), pp. 69–71.
\textsuperscript{74}Semo Calev, et al. (2006), pp. 72–73.
The war however, favoured the Mexican economy due to the increasing demand for primary goods and manufactures, which led to an increase in exports up to 1945. During the post-war period, the country experienced growth in the agriculture sector as a result of land redistribution and the introduction of technological advances. During the 1940s high inflation affected the Mexican economy, which meant a reduction in real wages. An increase in employment, better-paid jobs and migration from the countryside to the cities, however, made up for the losses.⁷⁵

Beginning in the 1920s and continuing more intensively throughout the 1930s, the so-called revolutionary politicians attempted to rebuild the country. They wanted to reconstruct the nation and regenerate its people based on the ideas of the Revolution. The spirit of the Revolution entailed ideas of social justice such as land redistribution, inclusion of all Mexicans regardless of social standing and ethnicity, anticlericalism, patriotism and labour rights. A group of revolutionary politicians attempted to implement these ideals and claimed to have a modern vision of Mexico. The Revolution and its ideals were modern in themselves, and the new generation of politicians wished to make them true.

In Mexico, to become modern had a very distinctive meaning as the post-revolutionary years, mainly the 1930s and 1940s, were imbued with the revolutionary sentiment. Historian Julio Moreno, in his study of advertising in Mexico 1920–1950, argues that progress was always referred to as an outcome of the Revolution. Although the Porfirian period⁷⁶ was a time characterised by a technocratic rule, with the establishment of a train system, a number of infrastructure projects and the motto ‘order and progress’, according to Moreno, by the 1930s all time before the Revolution was considered backwards and undesirable.⁷⁷ The reconstruction of the nation required the implementation of certain economic and political programs in order to reach the levels that the political class observed in other Western countries, but it was also considered necessary to educate and re-educate the people, to teach Mexicans to be civilised, modern and progressive and to create a homogeneous society.

During this period a cultural revolution took place. Education was to play a role in the formation of the New Mexican. Rural schools were to instruct farmers in modern agricultural techniques, and they would also become informed and patriotic citizens. All workers were to be organised. Labour unions would create happy and productive workers. Public schools would educate all citizens and redeem them. The child, the adult, the Indian, the woman, the peasant, all Mexicans would be empowered through education. Education would be integral and include notions of hygiene, nutrition, phys-

⁷⁶ Porfirio Díaz was the conservative dictator removed from power by the Mexican Revolution.
⁷⁷ Moreno (2003), p. 117.
ical fitness, sports, morality, self-control, arts and crafts. President Lázaro Cárdenas (1934–1940) instituted a socialist education, through which children were taught to have sympathy for the working classes, to be aware of the benefits of land redistribution, and to appreciate Mexico’s natural resources. The contents of the courses would also provide a rational explanation of the world. Cárdenas’ socialist education project caused opposition, however, from the conservative upper class and peasant classes, fascist groups and the clergy. They formed associations to counter these ideas, which they thought were a danger to the youth.

The last two years of Cárdenas term, after the expropriation of the oil industry in March 1938, were characterised by moderation. Anticlericalism ended and socialist education was, although still an official policy, put on hold.

By the 1940s politicians were ready to promote a rapid industrialisation of the country. Although the modernisation of agriculture was under way, the efforts did not prevent the countryside from stagnating. A vigorous urbanisation took place, to the detriment of agriculture. The unions’ activism was quietened. The state negotiated with unions and made them agree to a commitment to a sustained capital accumulation; this was possible thanks to the high degree of centralisation of labour unions, whose leaders were aiming to pursue political careers.

Thus, by the 1940s, the main concerns of the country’s rulers were industrialisation and economic growth rather than completing the revolutionary project. The motto ‘order and progress’ made its appearance once again in the new modern, post-revolutionary period. Socialist rational education was substituted by a higher concern for increasing the literacy skills of the peasantry, which included bilingual instruction for indigenous populations. Cultural missions to remote villages restarted. The redistribution of land was abandoned, and government policy favoured the industrialisation of agriculture instead. The Second World War led to an expansion of the industrial labour force in Mexico. The industrial sector grew around 10 per cent per year between 1940 and 1945. A small number of business groups controlled industry, commerce, communications and finance. Investors from the United States came to control an increasing share of the Mexican economy, and the ownership of private lands was also concentrated in a few large companies and private landowners. Workers’ wages lagged behind inflation.

During the post-revolutionary years there was a blooming cultural production. Mexican muralists were active right from the first years after the Revolution. Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco and David Alfaro Siqueiros created large paintings depicting nationalist motifs in public spaces. Ethnic

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themes were common; the encounter of the European and the indigenous worlds became dominant, but also current social problems, class struggle, popular folklore and the Mexican Revolution were portrayed. In the world of literature, the main innovation of the time was the creation of the so-called novel of the Mexican Revolution. Many of these works, according to historian Helden Delpar, focused on the military aspects of the conflict. Interestingly, these kinds of cultural expressions do not necessarily offer positive views of the Revolution. While children learned at school about the achievements of the Revolution and the social reforms it brought about, literary productions offered critical views. *Cartucho*, for example, by Nellie Campobello, the only such novel written by a female author, takes a child’s perspective to describe the bloodshed and brutality of the revolutionary war. Also, following the *indigenismo* movement endorsed by president Lázaro Cárdenas, several novels gave the indigenous population an important role in the development of the stories. They depict, however, a situation in which the Revolution does not bring any real gains for them despite land redistribution. So we observe rather contradictory messages in these two types of cultural production. Positive visions of the Mexican Revolution with a promising outlook for the future as shown in murals coexist with the disappointment and disillusion expressed in the novels of the Mexican Revolution genre.

The spirit of modernity pervaded the political discourse in Mexico at the turn of the century and was particularly strong in the 1920s and 1930s. Manuel Gamio, influential anthropologist and social reformer, instituted what for a long time came to be called an official *indigenism*. As a means to bring progress to the country, Gamio was convinced that Mexico had to become a more homogeneous nation because after the Revolution the country did not have any of the characteristics of a consolidated nation such as France or Japan. Mexico lacked, in his view, racial approximation, cultural fusion, linguistic unification and economic equilibrium. Gamio was a positivist and argued that modernity could be reached if the Mexican Indians who were holding back progress were included in the national project and the Catholic church was stripped of its, in his view, enormous influence over the masses. The backwardness of the indigenous populations should be attributed, according to Gamio, to their poor diet, lack of education, material poverty and their isolation from national life, so they were to learn Spanish and accept modern medicine. The Church should step aside in order to build a modern, secular society. Gamio encouraged the government to promote education and science, claiming that religion was the cause of the native’s cultural stagnation.

A distinctive feature of Mexican society and the modernisation process of the post-revolutionary years were the antagonisms indigenous-*mestizo* and

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84 Person of mixed race, particularly of European and indigenous origin.
rural-urban. The *indigenismo* movement permeated not only educational programs and economic policies, but was also evident at a cultural level and at the level of popular culture and consumption, with notions of who the indigenous people were and the role they played in Mexican society. On the one hand, there was a very clear tendency to glorify the indigenous past, observable in the afore-mentioned murals, but also in school textbooks and films. Nevertheless, the indigenous populations were also a symbol of backwardness. A telling example can be found in 1921 contest of *La india bonita* (The beautiful Indian) organised by the government as part of the centennial celebration of the end of the Independence movement. The aim of the contest was to find the woman who would be the model of beauty and virtue representative of the Mexican nation. The beautiful Indian would be the link between the glorified Aztec past, the living indigenous populations and the *mestizo* people. Although the beautiful Indian was supposed to be the bearer of tradition, she was also considered to be modern or at least potentially modern. The participants were expected to have an awareness of modern media and the city, inasmuch as that they had to have access to the information about the contest and dared to be part of it. In fact, historian Apen Ruiz claims, the characteristics of the representative of Indian beauty were the same that constituted the *mestiza* beauty ideal: brown skin, black eyes, petite frame, delicate feet and hands and straight black hair. These physical traits, Ruiz argues, were constructed according to the desires of white and *mestizo* elite in Mexico City.85 María Bibiana Uribe, a 16-year old of the Mexica race, according to the press, won the contest. According to Manuel Gamio, assiduous commentator on the contest, María Bibiana had the ability to arouse in all Mexicans an awareness of their shared past. Moreover, she represented the desirable feminine subject. She was attached to her traditions, but at the same time she was willing to accept the modern aspects of urban life. She was not, however, as extreme in her sense of modernity as to fall into the danger of feminism.86

The lifestyle of peasants was a recurrent motif pervading representations of post-revolutionary Mexico. The development of *charrerías*,87 for instance, as well as the increasing popularity of the *ranchera* music genre that originally stood for folklore and popular rural culture, celebrated and romanticised the countryside and turned into national symbols.88 This can be observed in a number of films portraying the Mexican countryside.

Post-revolutionary governments were highly interested in educational projects that would contribute to instilling new virtues in the New Mexicans. The ‘new man’ that the educational project sought to create was to be ‘sober, industrious, patriotic, literate and moral. He would dedicate his labour to cap-

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87 Horsemanship and rodeo riding.
88 Moreno (2003), p. 115.
italist gain for himself, his employers and the nation,’ while the ‘new women were to be educated, rational housewives and mothers, good administrators of their husbands’ wage, creating a home that could keep the new man sober and productive. But probably one of the most significant cultural and policy-related changes of this period was a transformed view of children. The growing interest in children was characterised as modern because of the particularly great emphasis that children’s well-being was receiving from the state. This attention to children materialised in the scientific principles of healthcare and education of children, together with the provision of health and education services for urban and rural-based children; a basic principle of these changes stemmed from the fact that children started to be regarded as belonging to the nation rather than to the family.

One of the strategies that the post-revolutionary state followed in order to bring modernity to the country and achieve the desired national unity was thus the development of an educational infrastructure, and particularly important was the emphasis on rural education. After the Revolution, politicians and social reformers created an educational program. Together with Gamio, José Vasconcelos was one of the promoters of this project. Vasconcelos was Mexico’s Secretary of Education and an influential thinker and educator, widely known for the arguments in his book The Cosmic Race, in which he claims that racial miscegenation results in the improvement of society. To Vasconcelos, the three most important aspects of the Revolution were agrarian reform, the organisation of labour and the development of a rural educational programme. The programme had as an objective to modernise the Mexican peasantry by indoctrinating a nationalistic spirit through the abolition of illiteracy, the improvement of economic conditions and the enjoyment of life through art, literature and music. Education included instruction in farming methods, citizenship, hygiene, child-care and food preservation in an attempt to eliminate traditional popular beliefs, such as, for example, the ideas of bad winds and evil spirits as carriers of human illness. The Indian was to be incorporated into the Mexican family and only then could the country become modern. But the peasantry needed not only education, but also health services in order to become modern.

Health programmes were also launched after the Revolution. Programmes such as the medical ejidal services aimed at ending social injustice by bringing modern medicine to the countryside and connecting it to the agrarian reform. Medical experts encouraged the construction of infrastructure to provide rural villages with clean water and waste disposal, but the attempts did not become systematic until the middle of the 1930s when Cárdenas became president. The agrarian reform that was also a salient feature of the Cárdenas’ governmental

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90 For a more thorough study of Vasconcelos’ work, see Stavans (2011).
programme was based on the idea that an increase in agricultural output was a key element in the development of Mexico as a modern nation. This reform required necessarily an expansion of modern medical services to rural areas, and it ‘entailed the transformation of the peasants into hard-working, self-assured, and nationally committed producers’\textsuperscript{92}. Health brigades, however, were not only implemented by the government, but also by philanthropic organisations, exemplified by the role the Rockefeller Foundation played in Mexico between 1920 and 1930. Apart from modern medicine, simpler health education strategies were used, such as trying to convince peasants to wear shoes and build and use latrines to avoid the spread of hookworm-transmitted diseases, but even such a campaign proved challenging, both due to the refusal of peasants and local healers to embrace foreign methods and the lack of resources from the Mexican government.\textsuperscript{93}

The efforts of the 1930s resulted in the inclusion of modern health as part of the notion of citizenship in post-revolutionary Mexico. However, after the 1940s, the government transferred resources invested in the development of the countryside towards industry, and the federal administration stopped addressing sanitary needs in the poorest rural areas of the country.\textsuperscript{94}

According to Anne Rubenstein, the disruption of ordinary family life and social structures that followed upon the industrialisation and urbanisation processes in Mexico after the 1940s were mirrored in a number of popular culture products, among them the cinema. Female celebrities such as film actresses affronted conservative standards of femininity.\textsuperscript{95} Mexican history after the 1930s is a product of the conflicts and transactions between the revolutionary culture and nineteenth century liberalism; Mexico’s different cultures continued to coexist in opposition to each other.\textsuperscript{96}

Cinema and Modernity

In the Western world, idea of the new modern society was deeply linked to the new forms of industrial production, technological developments and urbanisation. The acceleration of work rhythms and the precise measuring of time at the work place, as well as the need for workers to adapt to machines and machine-like tempos seem to have bewildered many. Charlie Chaplin’s \textit{Modern Times} from 1936 constitutes an illustrative example of this. The workers of the factory seem to have been stripped of all their human qualities. Time never stops; it in fact appears to run faster, severe and inflexible to human needs. Rather than aids, machines are tyrannical rulers. In a sequence in \textit{Modern

\textsuperscript{92} Kapelusz-Poppi (2001), pp. 37, 42.

\textsuperscript{93} Birn (1996), pp. 35–51.

\textsuperscript{94} Kapelusz-Poppi (2001), p. 45.

\textsuperscript{95} Rubenstein (1998), pp. 5–6.

\textsuperscript{96} Rubenstein (1998), p. 6.
*Times*, a group of engineers shows a factory director a new lunch-time device, capable of feeding the workers while they keep working; this is presented as a solution to the productivity problems. The inventor of the feeding machine and two white-coated scientists offer a demonstration. Chaplin is the guinea pig, and in a moment of confusion he is asked to place himself before a soup plate. The sight is disconcerting and it verges on the absurd. All of a sudden, the machine breaks down and lunch becomes a frightening experience. The worker, powerless and vulnerable, at the mercy of a heartless machine, is thus dehumanised.

*Modern Times* represents undoubtedly a view of modernity that emphasises the apprehension that the dramatic transformations of the new forms of industrial production and working conditions provoked in many, not only in the United States where this film was produced, but in a large part of the world. In order to understand the changes that the period 1930 to 1955 brought about and the reactions these generated, it is necessary to examine the economic and social context and identify key transformations occurring during these years that in this study are regarded as a period of modernity.

Thus, cinema contributes to the creation of an understanding of modernity; it disseminates it and it is, at the same time, nourished by the audiences’ responses. Film and cultural scholar Ravi Vasudevan argues that there is a very close connection between cinema and modernity. Firstly, cinema is an institution of modernity in itself because it deals with the reproduction of images, and therefore it has a fundamental impact on how traditions of representation are depicted through its mechanisms. Moreover, cinema allows a wide circulation; the image that cinema communicates can reach larger groups of society.

The process of modernisation – and modernity itself – has different meanings in Sweden and Mexico. It is important to note that when we talk about Mexico (and Latin America) in terms of modernity, we have to acknowledge that modernisation was an uneven and decentred process. The process of modernisation and cinema in Latin America have followed Western canons as external influences floated in and were available for many; but, at the same time, there has been a particular way in which the region has formed its own processes and understandings of modernity. Media scholar Ana M. López argues in this regard that ‘Latin American modernity is produced via an ambiguous symbiosis of traditional experiences/practices and modernising innovations, such as the technologies of visuality epitomised by the cinema.’ It is therefore necessary to be cautious when Mexican modernity is compared to Swedish modernity. Even though Mexico is connected to global practices,
the specific interaction with local histories and traditional practices creates a patchy process of modernisation as well as, López argues, an experience of overlapping chronologies.\footnote{López (2000), p. 50.}

For this reason, as I will discuss further in the section on sources for this study, the Mexican selection of films is concentrated on the later part of the period of study and the Swedish selection is made up by earlier films.

Modernity, according to historian Jeffrey M. Pilcher, arrived in Mexico around the turn of the twentieth century, with destabilising consequences for the society and a “complex of industrial capitalism and urbanisation which pulled migrants from the provinces into a frenzied city life of trolley cars, factory labour, mass-market newspapers, weekend sports, and motion pictures.”\footnote{Pilcher (2001), p. 1.}

The arrival of sound in cinema in the 1930s and the early adoption of the technology in Mexico created a change in the way Mexican cinema presented itself outwardly. López affirms, “the sound cinema of the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s would become the principal interlocutor of Latin American modernity.”\footnote{López (2000), p. 72.} Quoting Mexican writer Carlos Monsiváis, López continues: “[the movie theatre was] where Latin Americans went not to dream but to learn to be modern.”\footnote{López (2000), p. 72.} For many decades Mexicans had known that the common goal is to become modern, but the meaning of being modern had been less agreed upon. The consensus, however, Pilcher argues, was that it was what Mexico lacked in comparison to Europe and the United States: industry and democracy. Pilcher emphasises the dynamics of capitalism in Mexican society. He argues that its dynamic of boom and bust forced people to adapt to new and alienating forms of urban labour and urban living, experiencing positive business cycles, but also rampant unemployment and poverty.\footnote{Pilcher (2001), p. xxi.}

During the Second World War the economic situation was blooming for many business owners, who took advantage of the increased demand and the ban the government imposed on strikes; thus, while an elite saw enormous economic benefits during this period, the great majority of people struggled for their survival.\footnote{Ramírez (2013), pp. 45–46.} As we will see in the empirical analyses, Mexican modernity is portrayed in terms of technological advances, novel consumer products and international influences, as well as poverty, alienation and depression.

At the beginning of the period this thesis covers, the preoccupation with the creation of national identity was characteristic of the country’s path towards modernity. Hollywood cinema was popular everywhere, not least in Mexico, but when sound cinema arrived and the idea of showing English-speaking films in Mexican theatres became a hit, the reaction of the intellectual elite
did not wait. A Mexican writer, Alfonso Junco, wrote in national newspaper, *El Universal*, on the first of June, 1929 about American cinema, that the shrillness and the howling of the music, the plebeian dancing, the unsightly barbarism of boxing, the immodesty and licentiousness of women, the terrifying disintegration of family and marriage were coming to spoil the only pure things that Mexico had left: the woman and the home.¹⁰⁷ Junco, together with other Mexican writers, expressed his concerns in national newspapers about the threats of foreign cinema. They were also worried about the image that Mexican cinema presented onwards. Whenever films touched upon themes that were considered immoral or too daring, these were criticised by intellectuals and academics.

The representation of gender roles in modern society was also a theme in films. A characteristic of modernity in films that has been noted is in particular the role of women. During the period of study of this thesis, many films portrayed the ‘bad woman’ or a ‘woman of loose morals’ as protagonists in film stories. García Riera argues that the more wickedly these women behaved, the more modern they were.¹⁰⁸ Joanne Herschfield talks instead about the polarity bad woman/good woman in Mexican films from the 1940s. Even though, Hershfield argues, this polarity is not original, as it can be observed in other countries’ cultural repertoire and over a long period of time, what is uniquely Mexican is that, in cinema and popular culture in general, the stereotypes are tied to the specific mythical symbols of the Virgin of Guadalupe, Mexico’s patron saint, and la Malinche, an Indian woman sold to the Spaniards when they arrived in what today is Mexico’s territory in the sixteenth century, who later became Cortés’ interpreter and mistress. La Malinche has commonly been regarded in the Mexican imaginary as a traitor.¹⁰⁹ But even though these stereotypes have been pervasive throughout Mexican history, the fallen woman is portrayed as a consequence of modernity in the films studied here.

Mexican cinema was thus connected to modernity. Film scholar Ana María López argues that film melodrama in Mexico was the principal vehicle for the transmission of codes of behaviour to the working class.¹¹⁰ So the poor, who were suffering the consequences of a patchy and imbalanced process of modernisation, were learning to be modern through a modern media.

The process of modernisation in Sweden has been discussed principally in scholarly literature. Jan af Geijerstam states that the period from 1930 to 1980 can be considered one of stability, consensus and belief in the future, and it has been characterised by a continued growth in economic and material welfare. For this reason, Geijerstam continues, this period has been referred to as ‘Welfare Sweden’, ‘The People’s Home’, ‘The Strong Society’, ‘Harvest Time’,

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¹¹⁰ Quoted in Hershfield (1996), pp. 43–44.
‘The Record Years, etc.’ Even though there is a relatively straightforward narrative of the passage of Sweden from a poor traditional society to a rich modern one, with a first industrial revolution, a second industrial revolution and the creation of the welfare state, the story is in fact more complicated. When talking about modernity in Sweden, we can be referring to different phenomena. In his doctoral thesis, Martin Wiklund identifies the variety of narratives available in Swedish historiography and proposes a critical stance towards conventional and established views that tell uncritical success stories. In this thesis I seek to investigate the ways in which cinema makes sense of social changes and the way it shapes and conveys senses of modernity. So through cinema we can observe whether or not these conventional stories of success captured the imagination of the people.

Certainly, the period of study of this thesis was chosen among other reasons for the significance of the actual social, economic, political and cultural changes that created a sense of modernity. The 1930s was a key decade in Swedish history. According to Wiklund, the expression ‘modern Sweden’ has generally been used to name the society that has developed from the 1930s; that is, the society that has been referred to as the People’s Home or welfare society. The welfare state has undoubtedly been in focus in Swedish historiography of the period; other narratives, however, interpret modern Sweden as the rational and enlightenment-imbued society. In such a narrative, the Stockholm Exhibition, functionalism and rationalist intellectuals are presented as examples of Sweden’s path towards modernity.

The Stockholm Exhibition, which has come to represent the ‘springboard of functionalism in all of Scandinavia’, has been referred so often that it has also become part of a mythology of modernity, particularly because it not only represented an architectural style, but also a way of living that entailed that social life could be broken down into basic functions.

Some narratives emphasise the amalgamation of the traditional and the modern. This type of history writing identifies modern society connected with rationalisation and information, secularisation, effectiveness and the building of institutions, but all this develops in conflict with tradition, or what has been called ‘the romantic’. The emergence of the romantic is explained as a reaction against modernisation’s rationalisation, secularisation, individuality and the eagerness to control nature. This view, affirms Wiklund, quoting film historian Per-Olov Qvist, is closest to the interpretation of modernity by cinema in the 1930s. Qvist connects the concepts modernisation and modernity to the fundamental transformation of Sweden from an agricultural society to an industrial one. Qvist argues that Swedish films started from the 1930s to

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111 Andersson & Geijerstam (2008), pp. 8–9.
be influenced by the new national ideology, which entailed a project for the future developed in conjunction with the variety of roots still ingrained in the past, pre-modern society.\textsuperscript{115}

The 1930s was not a particularly prolific decade for Swedish cinema, as production decreased in comparison to the 1920s, but from 1940 to 1950 the industry witnessed a revival. From 1940, Sweden produced an average of 45 films a year, in a country of seven million inhabitants. By the end of the decade, Sweden had about 2,500 cinema theatres and 6 production studios.\textsuperscript{116} The war period 1939–1945 was the most productive for the Swedish film industry. At this time a film a week had its première during film season. The period was also characterised by increased attendances.\textsuperscript{117}

Just as in Mexico, the early years of sound cinema in Sweden were largely influenced by American productions. During the 1930s Swedish film production did not manage to account for more than 10 per cent of the screenings during any year; nevertheless, Swedish films contributed to one third of the total film earnings, which speaks for Swedes' great interest in domestic films.\textsuperscript{118} Later on, by 1948, 313 films had their première in Stockholm, out of which 178 were American and only 36 were Swedish. There were also 29 English, 7 Russian and 3 Norwegian films.\textsuperscript{119} Swedish films, however, were popular amongst the audiences. Film director and film scholar Gösta Werner admits that 1930s Swedish film production gave up its internationalization ambitions and remained isolated in terms of both spirit and film language.\textsuperscript{120}

In the same vein, film scholar Leif Furhammar argues that Swedish film from the 1930s does not seem to have turned to foreign models for inspiration, not even to American film production.\textsuperscript{121} The provincial character of Swedish cinema meant that filmmakers resorted to recognizable motives and cultural codes for the audiences. This entails that even though ideas, stories, narrative techniques, and technology might have, to a certain extent, been obtained or inspired from abroad, films were a 'popular mass medium directed towards the average person and familiarity was one of its distinctive features.'\textsuperscript{122} Thus, filmmakers must have been aware of their need to address questions and create stories that appealed Swedish audiences. Furhammar argues that during the 1930s, Swedish films were characterized by their dealing with dreams of happiness that were tied to people’s social needs of identity feelings, protec-

\textsuperscript{116}Lawrence (1950), pp. 183–184.
\textsuperscript{117}Furhammar (1991), pp. 171, 191.
\textsuperscript{118}Jungstedt (1979), p. 13.
\textsuperscript{119}Lawrence (1950), p. 187.
\textsuperscript{120}Werner (1978), p. 64.
\textsuperscript{121}Jungstedt (1979), pp. 14–15.
tion and fellowship. Jiri Kojala’s study of Swedish films shows that before 1943, practically all films had a happy ending. These themes led to film narratives that visibly depicted ideas of the Swedish People’s Home.

Swedish films from the beginning of the period shared a general mood of happiness or the search for happiness. Moreover, the most recurrent themes, Furhammar argues, were love and marriage. Typically, love was regarded as the greatest value of all, above money and social status. Moreover, love was also a way to acquire economic prosperity and social progress. Love found expression in a number of ways: marriage, family formation, class solidarity, and so forth. One essential characteristic of love as found in films was that it accommodated to the framework of official sexual morality: it never pertained to lust or desire. With the exception of a few films, the Swedish film production of the 1930s was not openly political. Some political traits, however, are found in some films. The Swedish community was promoted and its deviants or enemies punished. Although films were not particularly thorny in political terms, social democracy, left and right extremism, and the working-class movement, among others themes, were dealt with or ironized. Anti-Semitic elements could also be found during the whole period, most of them probably the result of an unconscious stereotyping of Jews, as the Swedish film industry frequently strived to keep away from political controversies.

The notion of the People’s Home has been influential in literature and film. The films produced in the few decades from the 1930s onwards have certainly been connected to the formation of the Swedish welfare state in different ways, thus providing an interpretation of the social changes that characterized Swedish modernity. Nevertheless, as film scholar Daniel Brodén argues, the general concept of the People’s Home has been used in films offering both a positive outlook of the future and a criticism of the less ideal practices. The notion of the People’s Home has also been connected to the conscientiousness ideal common in 1940s and 1950s films about youth going astray. A pessimistic view towards the welfare society was also advanced by films from this period. Regardless of whether films presented an idealised picture of the welfare state or took a critical stance towards it (as film scholar Per Vesterlund argues, referring to some filmmakers active after the Second World War), references to the People’s Home and social transformations say something

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129 Brodén (2008), p. 35.
130 Brodén (2008), p. 36.
131 Brodén (2008), p. 36.
about films’ views on modernity. This is the modernity that I am interested in here; in other words, the ways in which films interpreted social changes, how these changes were judged and how an understanding of modernity was shaped for the audiences.

I have argued so far that the concept of modernity that I use in this study is in a way related to the changes that occurred in Mexico and Sweden in the period 1930 to 1955. Certainly, each country had its own development, and even though we could argue for clear political, economic, social and cultural transformations occurring in both countries during a similar period, the truth is that their processes of modernisation had very distinctive features.

I am interested in the ways in which modernisation and modernity were interpreted and depicted in the cinema production of both countries, but more importantly I am interested in the intertwinement of work and romantic love within the context of modernity. I am going to focus on markers of modernity and non-modernity that in one way or another are relevant for understanding the relationship between work and romantic love. Modernity is the framework within which love and work practices interact. Even though modernity is not my chief object of study, but the framework of the two practices I analyse, I expect to contribute to a better understanding of Swedish and Mexican modernity.

Defining my Study Objects

Work

Work is not just an economic practice. Although the very practice of work is certainly a response to the needs for food, clothing and shelter, work is at the same time a source of sociality, and it is a social convention with ethical and moral implications.132 It is undeniable that wage work has become predominant and most visible in industrialising societies, and it is also uncontroversial, as Kathi Weeks argues, that wage work has a normative expectation on individual responsibility, which is socially mediated and is the primary means of integration of the individuals into not only the economy, but also ‘social, political, and familial modes of cooperation.’133 Wage work became one of the characteristic elements of the rise of industrial capitalism. The fact that regular paid employment became synonymous with work is one of the changes that had an affect both at the level of the economy but also on the everyday life of individuals as a result of the advent of the modern society.134

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So far I have been using the concept of work rather freely, as though its meaning and usage were generally agreed upon. This is far from being the case. Instead, work can be a rather controversial concept and can bear different meanings depending on the discipline that studies the phenomenon and the context within which it is brought up.

I have sought to make clear, however, that the concept of work that I am interested in is one that stresses its cultural nature. I view work in this thesis as a cultural practice that varies over time and geographical location and whose meaning and appraisal is highly related to a set of sociocultural factors such as gender, ethnicity, class, and so on.

The concept of work can be considered the basis of this study because even though I am looking at its relationship with romantic love, I focus on how work appraisals, motivations and practices are modified when observing one of its emotional dimensions.

Weeks argues that one of the social norms around work is that in most societies (read here modern, industrial societies) people are expected to work for wages. But not all work is wage work. There are certainly people who do not work for wages, but are supported by someone who does; in this sense, even for them, wage work is part of their everyday existence. But there are also other types of remuneration that are received in exchange for some sort of effort. Thus, if we take Frederick Gamst’s definition of work, the definition becomes immediately broader than Week’s concept of wage work:

Human work is exertion, energetic, physical or mental activity, having purpose, direction toward a goal with reference to the modalities of behaviour of a specific culture or one of its subcultures. More narrowly conceived, work can be gainful when involving compensation that is either an increment or a saving value in a culture.135

In this thesis a broader definition of work is necessary because I attempt to look at different types of exertion and activities that are not necessarily remunerated with a wage, but that in fact are performed and in some way motivated either by social norms of work or by some other types of equally strong social and cultural forces, say family interests or romantic love.

One basic premise of this study is the claim that the traditional dichotomies private versus public and rational work versus irrational domesticity are indeed a delusion and should be challenged. Within such a dichotomist view, modern work is expected to occur in workplaces away from the home, performed by rational workers and devoid of traces of emotionality because, after all, work is an economic activity.

However, what I attempt to show in this study is that such a clear-cut separation between public and private, rational work and irrational emotionality does not give a fair account of the practice of work, not least in modernising
societies where rational effectiveness in work practices might be expected. Hence, although work and love are not supposed to be mixed and, in fact, are expected to be found at extreme opposites on the spectrum of an individual’s everyday life configuration, they in fact relate closely to each other.

**Romantic love**

The concept of romantic love is not, in this study, merely treated as an analytical concept. It is a historical phenomenon which as such must be viewed as pertaining to a particular time period and geographical location.

Even though social phenomena are related not to a single, but to a wider array of emotional experiences, I argue in this thesis that romantic love is crucial when it comes to understanding appraisals and practices of work. It might become clear later on in the empirical analysis that motherly love or self-love can certainly take a prominent role in work practices; I have nonetheless chosen to focus on romantic love for several reasons. First and foremost because I am interested in isolating the effects of one emotion, rather than the broad emotional spectrum, as a way to more clearly link emotions and an economic and cultural practice. Secondly because romantic love, like work, has historically, and particularly since the emergence in the Western world of the notion of Victorian love, been the basis upon which societies are sustained and reproduced. Romantic love, William Reddy claims, is both a norm and an aspiration for millions.136 Thirdly because work and romantic love can be observed as phenomena that underwent important changes as a result of the process of modernisation and industrialisation, with the transformation of lifestyles, work and family configurations. Finally, because love ‘is the site par excellence of the denial of the social world especially when this world takes the murky face of economic interest, and…romantic love denies its social basis through its claim to transcend or overturn it.’137 As a cultural practice, love, however, despite these claims, is subject to the influence of the economic and political spheres.

There is a close connection between modernity and romantic love. Eva Illouz has studied the dramatic changes that romantic love has gone through as a consequence of modernity. The period after the First World War in the United States, according to Illouz, marked a radicalisation of the social tendencies inscribed in early modernity and changed the culture of love and the economy of gender.138 The study of love is crucial for the understanding of modernity, and this is so because ‘heterosexual romantic love is about the individualisation of lifestyles and the intensification of emotional life projects as well as the economisation of social relationships, the pervasiveness of economic

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137 Illouz (1997a), p. 3.
138 Illouz (2012), p. 34.
models to shape the self and its emotions; these are two of the most important cultural revolutions of the twentieth century."\textsuperscript{139} Romantic love, Illouz says ‘has become an intimate, indispensable part of the democratic ideal of affluence that has accompanied the emergence of the mass market, thereby offering a collective utopia cutting across the transcending social divisions’.\textsuperscript{140}

In this section I want to address a couple of important points. Firstly I will discuss why the study of emotions is relevant and how emotions (and romantic love in particular) can be studied from a historical perspective. Secondly I present some historical arguments of relatively general application (based primarily on American studies) about romantic love. Finally I offer the context of the study of romantic love in Sweden and Mexico.

**Analysing Emotions**

Emotional experience and expression of emotions are culturally bound, that is to say, they are constituted by ‘shared meanings transmitted from one generation to another.’\textsuperscript{141} Culture plays a role in the construction, interpretation and functioning of emotions.\textsuperscript{142} All societies have emotional standards\textsuperscript{143} and these vary across cultures and time. Emotions are part of the human experience, and as such they have been understood as

> complex set of interactions among subjective and objective factors, mediated through neural and/or hormonal systems, which give rise to affective experiences, … generate cognitive processes, and lead to behaviour that is often, but not always, expressive, goal-directed and adaptive.\textsuperscript{144}

While there are not many ways to approach the actual emotional experience of individuals, at least with the methods of historical research, emotional standards are to a certain extent more visible. Moreover, according to the theory of emotives, developed by historian William Reddy, there is a clear connection between the way in which societies are able to express emotions and how people actually felt.\textsuperscript{145} Reddy claims that emotional utterances indeed have a powerful effect on emotions and makes reference to several scholars when making this claim. Jerome Kagan, for instance, states that there is evidence that choosing to express an emotion may create the actual experience. In a similar fashion Phoebe Ellsworth argues that the realisation of the name of the emotion changes the feeling, simplifying and clarifying it.\textsuperscript{146}

\textsuperscript{139} Illouz (2012), p. 36.  
\textsuperscript{140} Illouz (1997a), p. 1.  
\textsuperscript{141} Phillips (2010), p. 57.  
\textsuperscript{142} Illouz (1997a), p. 3.  
\textsuperscript{143} Stearns & Stearns (1985), p. 814.  
\textsuperscript{144} Kleinginna & Kleinginna (1981).  
\textsuperscript{145} Reddy (2001), pp. 142–143.  
\textsuperscript{146} Reddy (2001), pp. 103–104.
Thus, if emotional utterances have a direct impact on what they are supposed to refer to, as Reddy claims, then the study of the expression of emotion constitutes an appropriate way to approach the actual relationship between emotions and other social phenomena, in this case work.

Sara Ahmed, in her analytical model of emotions, claims that emotions are social and cultural practices. So, instead of taking the psychological approach that affirms that emotions come from inside and that introspection is required in order to reach the inner emotions individuals experience, Ahmed argues that ‘emotions come from without and move inward’. But Ahmed in fact implies that emotions themselves create the boundaries between ‘I’ and ‘we’ and the ‘psychological’, ‘the social’ and ‘the collective’; these boundaries do not exist on their own, but merely as a result of the relationality of emotions. Ahmed claims that ‘emotions are crucial to the very constitution of the psychic and the social as objects, a process which suggests that the “objectivity” of the psychic and social is an effect rather than a cause.’

In this sense, it is in fact emotions and the emotional relationships between individuals and objects that shape and delineate the objects of emotion. Emotions are, moreover, about movement and attachment, Ahmed argues. It is the objects of emotion rather than emotion itself that circulate. ‘What moves us, what make us feel, is also that which holds us in place, or gives us a dwelling place’. The study of emotions in films allows us to see the ways in which the socialisation of emotions occurs and the workings of spatiality and movement.

The relationship between emotions and the public sphere has been noted by Max Weber. He wrote about the dangers in modern society of an excess of rationality and bureaucracy. He saw the rational calculation of monetary profit and loss as essential to modern capitalism. Weber was also afraid that increased bureaucratisation would entail the ‘exclusion of love, hatred, and every purely personal, especially irrational and incalculable, feeling from the execution of official tasks.’ This means that the emotions that he considered were part of the systems of work organisation would become totally emotionally detached from them as a consequence of the process of capitalist modernisation. What I am going to examine in this thesis is the extent to which this detachment is actually something that occurred and was reflected in one of the most influential popular culture products: cinema.

**Love in History. Modern Love**

Love has long been considered to belong to the realm of the home and the private sphere. What has been termed the ideology of separate spheres, a split that occurred, according to many historical accounts of the Western world,
at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries, assigned the economic production role to men, outside of the household, and the nurturing role to women, at home.\textsuperscript{151} Besides the economic explanation linking the early capitalist development to the well-defined allocation of production work to workplaces outside of the home and reproduction work to the home, the separation of spheres has been traced back to the Victorian era and been given a complementary cultural explanation. Queen Victoria, who ruled the British Empire from 1837 to 1901, encouraged a view of men and women as essentially different. This set of values, which became widespread in Europe and the Western world, encouraged separate spheres for women and men. Feminine and masculine traits were constructed as incompatible dichotomies: selfishness and altruism; the market and the family.\textsuperscript{152} Women were considered to be morally superior in relation to men, for the latter lived in a world of corruption. Women were, and still are, expected to be the emotional experts, be compassionate and understanding and have their lives shaped by transactions of emotionality.\textsuperscript{153}

The definition of love as ‘a strong emotional attachment, a cathexis, between adolescents or adults of opposite sexes, with at least the components of sex desire and tenderness’\textsuperscript{154}, as defined by William J. Goode, can be rather controversial: Firstly, because affirming that love has to occur between individuals of opposite sexes is unjustified, and secondly, because attempts to distinguish true love from infatuation or sexual desire from love turn out to be highly problematic. Nevertheless, there exists an idea and ideal of love that is in fact rather close to Goode’s definition.

Steven Seidman, in his book documenting the changes in the meaning of love in the United States, identifies a society imbued in Victorian ideals during the decades 1830 to 1890. After 1890, however, love changed from ‘having an essentially spiritual meaning to being conceived in a way that made it inseparable from the erotic longings and pleasures of sex.’\textsuperscript{155} In the United States, thus, the author argues, the concept of love became sexualised, and its erotic dimensions acquired a more predominant role in the understandings and practices of romantic love. Furthermore, the pursuit of pleasure received public legitimation as a symbol or vehicle of love.\textsuperscript{156}

In a similar vein, Eva Illouz argues that at the turn of the century the meaning of marriage endorsed by the Victorian middle class changed as marriage lost its previous role as a provider of social and economic security, leisure and social status. From the first decades of the twentieth century, she continues,

\textsuperscript{151} Cancian (1987).
\textsuperscript{152} Folbre (2009), p. 235.
\textsuperscript{153} Berlant (2008), p. 170.
\textsuperscript{154} Goode (1959), p. 41.
\textsuperscript{155} Seidman (1991), p. 4.
\textsuperscript{156} Seidman (1991), p. 5.
marriage changed, as women demanded support, sympathetic listening and affection and turned to men to satisfy their emotional needs. So marriage became a joint emotional enterprise, in which the free expression of emotions was expected in order to attain sexual, verbal and emotional intimacy.157

The change in the understanding of romantic love also occurred as a result of capitalism. Illouz argues that romantic love and the market intersected in conjunction with the rise of capitalism through practices of consumption, the appearance of new commodities and technologies of leisure. Illouz argues for the emergence of a commodification of romance, which means that romantic practices such as dating became directly connected to the consumption of leisure goods and technologies.

Moreover, the weakened observance of the Victorian ideology of separate spheres, affirms Illouz, characterised by a change in sexual mores, as well as the equalisation of men’s and women’s status in the public sphere, affected the ways in which they spent their leisure time. New technologies, Illouz further argues,

restructured the cultural landscape of early twentieth-century America as inventions such as the telephone, typewriter, high-speed printing press, phonograph, radio, photography, and motion pictures expanded the public’s general access to mass culture through newspapers, magazines, popular songs, and films.158

Anthony Giddens also writes about the meaning of romantic love in modern times. For Giddens, modern society has been marked by the rise of romantic love and a new intimacy implying a democratising of the interpersonal domain. Changes in sexuality resulted in the emergence of what he calls a plastic sexuality or a decentred sexuality, freed from the needs of reproduction. Interestingly, Giddens identifies a differentiated impact of the rise of romantic love in women and men. The ethos of romantic love, Giddens argues, has helped to restrict women to the home at the same time as romantic love can be seen as a radical engagement with the ‘maleness’ of modern society.159 Undoubtedly, modern societies have gone through emotional changes, and as part of the restructuring of intimacy, romantic love acquired new meanings. Most of the study of romantic love in modern times has, however, focused on the United States.

Hence, investigations of romantic love and marital relations during the twentieth century suggest that there occurred a change in the emotional standards of romantic love in the United States that involved a ‘clash between love ideals and self-development.’160 According to Berggren and Trägårdh, Sweden, as well as the United States, has been characterized by a strong in-

159 Giddens (1992), pp. 2–3.
individualism.\textsuperscript{161} This might suggest that there were similarities in the way love ideals conflicted with individual aspirations in both countries. The clash Peter Stearns refers to, however, may have occurred differently due to the dissimilar ways in which love ideals and individualism materialised in each country. Emotion scholars have identified similar emotional standards in Western countries during the twentieth century, to which the United States, Sweden and Mexico might have conformed. These were, by the beginning of the century, based on the notion of the self-sacrificing woman and the self-realising man.

\textbf{Swedish Love}

Swedish scholarship suggests that there is a relevant change in the way love and marriage were understood and the practices around this understanding at the turn of the century. The dominant pattern of heterosexual relationships throughout the nineteenth century was a result of the enlargement of the bourgeois class, according to literature scholar Kristin Järvstad.

This pattern entailed the idea of the complementarity of the sexes: the woman being the goddess of the home who took care of her husband as he came back home from a day out in society.\textsuperscript{162} Nonetheless, this predominant ideal began to be questioned at the start of the twentieth century, when middle-class women took a step forward into social life.

Gender inequality was also questioned by the women’s movement as women’s subordination did not seem to have changed despite the changes in their social roles. There was a legislative change however in 1921, with the new Marriage Code (\textit{Giftermålsbalken}), which abolished the husband’s guardianship over his wife and gave each member of the couple an ‘equal’ responsibility to support the family, recognising unpaid house work as a part of this contribution.\textsuperscript{163}

Despite the changes that this new legislation entailed, giving women more rights, there was no meaningful transformation in the traditional view of sex complementarity. Marriage as an institution was not questioned, neither were the roles of women and men within it. The law continued to endorse the bourgeois ideal that there were certain natural traits in women that made them particularly suitable as home-makers. Moreover, women could certainly have a place in the public sphere, as society also needed the features that only women possessed, such as their motherly feelings and caring abilities.\textsuperscript{164} Society needed women’s morality (\textit{sedlighet}) to educate men (whose sexuality needed to be disciplined) and children to be better human beings.\textsuperscript{165}

\textsuperscript{161} Berggren & Trägårdh (2006), p. 32.
\textsuperscript{162} Järvstad (2008), p. 12.
The fact that in Sweden the creation of the welfare state included very clear family policies shows that there was also a particular view of marriage, and thus romantic love relations, that predominated, or rather, that was endorsed by intellectuals and social engineers. The sexual question became a social and not only a private matter.

The renowned book, *Crisis in the Population Question*, by Alva and Gunnar Myrdal and a subsequent state investigation on the sexual question in 1936 were important landmarks in the social debate and in the attempts of policy makers to change social attitudes towards sexuality. The ideological basis of the Population Commission in charge of devising social policies was ‘a reciprocal good development between on the one hand society’s commitments in the form of social and economic reforms and on the other hand people’s enlightenment and education.’\(^{166}\)

The message entailed liberation from the taboos that surrounded sexuality and an opposition to sexual deprivation. Nevertheless, this new morality did not encompass sexuality outside of marriage, both because the fate of single mothers could be a problem, but also because the Commission were afraid that such a view of free sexuality would become the moral superstructure against which the material basis would lie. Therefore, marriage remained the institution that formalised all sexual unions.\(^{167}\)

Together with an invitation to see in marriage and child-raising a life task for women and men, love itself became a concept used in policy-making and public debate. Marriage and family formation were to be a result of love, and for this reason hasty unions or those based on the wrong emotional reasons were advised against. These types of unions, it was claimed, prevented people from finding real love.\(^{168}\)

At the same time, during the first decades of the twentieth century academics and other participants in the public debate talked about the increased emotional function of marriage, asserting that unlike in the pre-industrial era when men and women worked together and were highly dependent on each other for their economic survival – and there was a significant social pressure to stay together – in the modern industrial society the emotional became the most important function of marriage. The emotional function entailed providing the members of the couple with a primary group where they could be accepted as they were and could always count on emotional feedback and understanding.\(^{169}\)

As we can thus observe, the period of study of this dissertation deals with a time in which love and marriage were changing and being explicitly discussed.

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\(^{168}\) Hirdman (1989), p. 139.

Moreover, the spirit of modernity and rationalisation of life was intertwined with an increased awareness of emotionality.

**Mexican Love**

In the Mexican case, scholarship on culture suggests that the country’s sociocultural background is based on the union of the powerful male conqueror and the subjugated female Indian.\(^{170}\) This view has permeated explanations of Mexican identity. Mexican nationalism has emerged as a necessity of a people to find its own identity after overcoming the trauma of the Spanish Conquest and its consequences.\(^{171}\)

The cultural transformation Mexico went through during the first half of the twentieth century touched upon the views of love and courting, but also the practices attached to these views. After the Mexican Revolution there was a clear tension between the conservatism of the Porfian era and the attempt to liberalise cultural practices according to a humanist approach. In 1917 a law that allowed divorce was approved, and the discussion about this law brought up differing views on love, sex and the purpose of marriage.

A paradigmatic example that historian Ana Lidia García Peña has studied is that of the lawyer Eduardo Pallares, who not only discussed the question assiduously in his books, but also was faced with these new forms of understanding marriage in his private life. Pallares had somewhat contradictory views on the matter. On the one hand, he fiercely criticised the divorce law and declared it a threat against society and morality. On the other hand, however, he was in favour of a more liberal and less religion-bound view of love which considered sex as a natural and desirable practice within marriage for the sake of pleasure, although he warned that passion could also lead to the ruin of family and society. According to Pallares, the sexuality of Mexicans was one of the social problems of the first half of the twentieth century. This was the case because the sexual disquietude upset men’s ability to act rationally.\(^{172}\)

García Peña argues that in post-revolutionary Mexico there was an attempt to find new ways to experience sexuality, at the same time as there was an attempt to get rid of nineteenth century atavisms.\(^{173}\) This means that throughout the century and particularly during the first half of the twentieth century, there was a dualism that entailed the permanence of nineteenth century values and an attempt to leave those values behind and build a modern way to view and practice love and marital relationships.

One of the most important concepts in Mexican history of this period is probably secularism. The end of the Mexican Revolution did not mean the end of all turmoil. On the contrary, Mexico continued a civil war and the group

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\(^{171}\) Reyes Manzano (2005).

\(^{172}\) See García Peña (2013).

in power set out a variety of strategies in order to achieve what they called Mexico’s Reconstruction.\textsuperscript{174} The new regime was profoundly ambivalent, as it maintained characteristics from the old Porfirian regime, but at the same time ‘sought to mould minds, to create citizens, to nationalise and rationalise the wayward, recalcitrant, diverse peoples of Mexico.’\textsuperscript{175} This attempt to modernise Mexico and the Mexicans was thought possible only through implementing an anticlerical line. The sharp anticlericalism of the state and the reaction of the church and its most ardent followers wound up in the bloody Cristero War (1926–29).\textsuperscript{176} Hence, the changes and continuities in love practices in Mexico, such as courting and marriage, have to be observed in this context of a fight between religion and nationalism based on rationalism and social engineering. Mexican essayist Carlos Monsiváis affirms that the Mexican Revolution brought about an openness in terms of sexual behaviour, or, in other words, a popular frankness that, due to the relative nature of moral values during a period of upheaval, allowed an explosion in the diversity of behaviours.\textsuperscript{177}

The Mexican Revolution and the following upheavals made early twentieth century Mexico a society in transformation. Migration from the countryside to Mexico City and industrialisation created a socioeconomic structure that entailed a change in living conditions for many people. Historian Robert Bufflestiong studies the penny press, addressed towards the working class in Mexico City at the beginning of the century, and finds that a lot of the content dealt with women and love and intimacy. He finds a great deal of misogynist messages and an indication of widespread violence against women. The discourse that the press spread about the worker’s ideal wife is an interesting finding:

In the household of the worker himself is the solution: it’s the woman. With few exceptions, the companion of the worker is self-denying, virtuous, economical, and hard-working. She should cover up with intelligent manipulation, and even with her own work, the deficiencies of the father, of the husband, of the brother; she should balance the budget with economy: she should oppose the idiocies, dissipations, and unnecessary expenses of the spendthrift worker.\textsuperscript{178}

This study shows that views on love, the role of men and women in a marriage were a point of discussion and that they varied according to class.

The so-called Western collective standard of romantic love – entailing, at the beginning of the period, a traditional view of love in which women were held to a particularly self-sacrificing image\textsuperscript{179} and that is argued to have changed toward a view of love that held the self-development of women in a higher regard than was the case at the beginning of the period – might have

\textsuperscript{174} Knight (1994), p. 393.
\textsuperscript{175} Knight (1994), p. 394.
\textsuperscript{176} Knight (1994), p. 402.
\textsuperscript{178} Macías-González & Rubenstein (2012), p. 172.
differed among Western countries. Moreover, this expected change in the emotional standards of romantic love must have influenced the relationship between romantic love and work practices. Changes in emotional standards, Peter Stearns argues, can ‘reveal much about other aspects of social change and may even contribute to such change.’

**Thesis Outline**

This thesis consists of six chapters. In the introductory chapter, I have presented the aim of the study, the context of the two national cases with a focus on modernity, and I have defined the study objects. In the coming chapter, I present methodology and sources, as well as the analytical framework of this study and the theoretical concepts I will use throughout the thesis.

Chapters three, four and five constitute the empirical part of the study. In chapter three on space, I focus on domesticity in urban and rural spaces because the tensions observable in the city-countryside divide have often been linked to the process of modernisation. I set out to explore how spaces depicted in films are related to notions of respectability and worthiness by observing which work and romantic practices occur in different spatial environments and how films depict space in relation to modernity. In chapter three, I focus particularly on domestic spaces, where it could be argued work practices should not be very prominent, but where I expect to show that the intertwinements of economic and emotional practices is more common than has been assumed.

In chapter four, I focus on how gender structures, as they are mediated by films, affect the relationship between work and romantic love. In this chapter, I take work as the starting point; I firstly observe how work is depicted in the workplace and then I observe what happens when love comes into the picture. For the organisation of this chapter, I take female and male representations separately in order to more clearly unveil how films present distinctions based on gender. Emotional capital, respectability and worthiness pervade the analysis.

In chapter five, I focus on how the representation of class in films explains the different approaches to upward mobility involved in the relationship between work and romantic love. As I mentioned earlier, class is a predominant way of structuring society, and as such it is visible even when it is not the centre of the analysis. Nevertheless, when focusing on class mobility, we can more clearly understand the relevant differences in the relationship between love and work in the two national cases.

Chapter six is the concluding discussion of this thesis. In this chapter, I present a summary of the most relevant findings of the thesis and pay special

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attention to the comparative analysis in order to examine how culture plays a role in the way emotions and economic practices intertwine and how the narrative of modernity becomes affected through the study of this dynamic.
CHAPTER 2
Methodology, Sources and Theoretical Starting Points

In order to study the relationship between work and romantic love, it is necessary to observe the expressions of emotions in the source material. Assuming that ‘every community deploys emotional ideals and norms,’ it is important to find sources that account for cultural specificities. But how can we observe those norms and ideas?

The concept of emotionology coined by Peter and Carol Sterns refers to ‘the attitude or standards that a society, or a definable group within a society, maintains towards basic emotions and their appropriate expression and ways that institutions reflect and encourage these attitudes in human conduct.’ This is what I am able to approach when studying emotions historically, not exactly how people actually felt, but rather what the standards were and the general stance of different institutions towards those emotions. Barbara Rosenwein discusses the difficulties of finding sources for these standards. She argues that popular advice manuals are one of the few available sources for this; other sources such as courtly love literature should be discarded because they fail to penetrate deep enough into popular culture and institutional arrangements. William Reddy, in turn, uses mainly literary texts as primary sources in his book The Making of Romantic Love, in which he compares what he calls ‘the longing of association’ in Europe, South Asia and Japan, 900–1200. The main strength of his work, even if it does not penetrate into the emotional expressions of the majority of the people, is the comparative nature of his research.

For research on emotions in the twentieth century, we are lucky to have a vivid relevant source: cinema. The best way to approach emotions and to observe work practices and motivations in the first part of the century is by examining cinema production because these media products are made with the emotional norms of the societies in which they are produced, and not only that, they also contribute to shaping emotional expressions.

Films as Historical Sources
There are several arguments in favour of the use of films as historical sources. One of them is that cinema has a great impact on society, and audiences

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can make sense of what they see and experience off-screen with the help of films and mass media messages. Although this is not a study of reception and I am not providing evidence here for the connection between the cinematic message and popular behaviour, I do acknowledge, as many scholars have demonstrated,\(^4\) that there is a strong mutual connection between films and social practices.

In an attempt to highlight the importance of cinema as a mass-media product, sociologist Norman Denzin affirms that a cinematic society had emerged already only three decades after the emergence of cinema. Film was introduced as a new form of entertainment for the masses. Denzin affirms that cinema was ‘an art form for some, a source of profit for a few, a challenge to Christian morality for others, a threat to the human eye for some, an educational vehicle for others;’ and this new machinery, he further argues, fundamentally transformed society.\(^5\) Historian Marc Ferro regards film as an agent and document of history, and also as a cultural object of the society in which it was produced and the society that receives it. For Ferro, the relationship between films and the world of cinema, the audiences, the business, and the state is complex. The stylistic as well as the technological changes in cinema cannot be separated from the historical processes occurring in the societies that produced the films.\(^6\)

Another way to study films historically is by taking film texts as historical documents and analysing them as evidence of social and cultural historical processes within the societies that produced them. Film historian John E. O’Connor stresses the value of film as historical evidence, among other reasons because it is a particularly evocative material. There is no more effective way, he affirms, to recreate the ambience of the period than to project its moving images in a darkened room.\(^7\)

The influence of film in society is undeniable. Furthermore an increasing number of scholars, among them historians, have acknowledged the need to use audio-visual material as historical evidence, especially for history writing of the twentieth century. Films can be regarded as a window to people’s values, attitudes, and beliefs: the culture of their time. Films provide us with a way to explore cultural features that would have been extremely difficult to reach otherwise.

Furthermore, the relationship between film and modernity makes this cultural product a particularly suitable source for this study. At the same time as films portray the process of modernisation on the screen, they are themselves the epitome of the modernisation that took place during the period of study of this thesis, characterised by the emergence of cultural products of mass entertainment.

\(^4\) For more on film reception see: Staiger (2005); Polan (2013); Eagleton (2000); Piturro (2008).
\(^7\) O’Connor (1990), pp. 108–109.
The first half of the twentieth century witnessed the emergence of sound in cinema, and it soon became the most popular and influential medium of entertainment. Historian Robert Sklar writes about the influence of movies in the cultural consciousness of all classes in American society. By the 1930s, Sklar affirms, film culture became a dominant culture for many Americans, providing new values and social ideals to replace shattered old traditions.

The situation was not so much different elsewhere in the world. Cultural scholar Carina Sjöholm affirms that movie-going in Sweden was considered a part of modernity. The new mass media was increasingly sought, and it was related to a new lifestyle. Films rapidly reached a massive audience; they were an industrial product that responded to the necessity for cheap and mass-produced entertainment. Sjöholm concludes in her study that during 1940–1950 films and movie-going were essential parts of the life of the Swedish youth.8

Likewise, film production in Mexico was of central significance, not only for the country, but also for the rest of Latin America and Spain. Film historian Carl J. Mora observes that Mexico, long regarded as a cultural centre in the region, established itself as an important shaper of mass culture. Mexican films, he affirms, have served as a conduit for a complex of ideas and influences in the region.9 By the same token, film scholar Sergio de la Mora affirms that cinema, since the end of the nineteenth century, has furnished a vehicle for the circulation of narratives of Mexican national identity.10 Film has been constantly acknowledged as an important medium for the transmission of culture in Mexico.

Nonetheless, film is a problematic source material, just as many others in the historian’s toolbox. A film is never an exact reflection of reality, and many would indeed assert that films have usually little to do with reality itself. This might to some extent be true. Films can portray the dreams and illusions of a society or of a subgroup in society; they can also be an attempt to represent reality as a means of criticising or bringing up particular issues or social concerns. I would argue, however, in agreement with film historian Robert A. Rosenstone, that films as historical sources are not very different from other types of more commonly used written materials. In fact films and written sources are similar in that they refer to actual events from the past at the same time as they ‘partake of the unreal and the fictional, since both are made out of sets and conventions we have developed for talking about where we human beings have come from.’11 I would, however, add to Rosenstone’s assertion that even though films can to some extent be likened to other types of material, such as literary works, press, autobiographies, interviews, and other sources.

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8 Sjöholm (2003).
that have been extensively used by historians, the difference is that films can
give a vivid sense of the times we are studying.

Films are also, as other popular culture products, dependent on forces of
production and reception. So the fact that films serve a commercial purpose
and that audiences can judge the product and respond by changing their
consumption patterns implies that films are expected to reach large social
sectors. For this reason films cover a large spectrum in terms of the values and
attitudes they portray.

The historian who is willing to work with films needs to be completely
aware of the nature of the sources. Film and the study of history are relatively
newly acquainted, and there is hence a long road ahead with regards to the
potential uses of the material and the development of methodologies for the
particular use of historians. There is, however, some research on topics related
to those of this study where films are used as primary material.

In Deborah Montgomerie’s study of the tensions between war work and
ideological definitions of femininity through visual images of New Zealand
women, she argues that films can be considered a cultural shorthand, opening
a window on the background in which women made their choices.12 Images
evoke attitudes and values present in the society in which they were produced,
and therefore, as Montgomerie argues, they constitute a window through
which culture can be appreciated.

Film historian Tommy Gustafsson wrote his doctoral dissertation about
emotional themes such as fatherhood and love, sexuality and popularity, but
also about children and youth and ethnicity and racial stereotyping. He also
considered the first decades of the twentieth century, a period of modernisa-
tion in Sweden. Gustafsson focused on masculinity and gender relations as
they were represented in Swedish cinema of the 1920s. His study contributes
to a better understanding of gender relations, and his results also highlight
the strong presence of racism and xenophobia in cultural representations.13
Film historian Mats Jönsson has released a series of publications in which he
uses film material in order to investigate questions about politics and media
strategies, but he has at the same time been interested in discussing the empir-
ical value of films as historical source material.14 Just like Jönsson, historian
David Ludvigsson has been interested in studying how history is portrayed in
media and how films can be used as evidence of history. Ludvigsson wrote
his doctoral thesis about two Swedish historical documentary makers. By
studying their film work, he researched questions of history production and
how history and the past are used and mediated by film media. He also arrived
at conclusions about the cognitive, moral and aesthetic dimensions of the film

13 Gustafsson (2007).
14 See for example: Jönsson (2004a); Hedling & Jönsson (2008); Jönsson (2009); Jönsson &
genre he studied.15 Historian Eva Blomberg examines the position of different political actors in relation to the use of film and the process of decision-making in the elaboration of film policies. In one chapter of the book *Dialogues*, she analyses films produced by two labour unions and examines the purposes of the use of film by one of these organisations. She also looks at how the unions visualise their history through film production. Blomberg argues that films can be used just as ethnologists and historians would use interview material. Blomberg concludes that the films produced by labour unions say something about the ways in which union leaders regarded gender relations, as well as female work and female union participation. In another article she studies the decision of the working class movement to engage in film production and its consequences in the construction of sex identities.16 Blomberg’s work has fundamentally been occupied with gender and representation. She has also noted that images should be used in historical research because they can allow us to go deeper into the analyses, if text and images are regarded as being intertwined rather than separate.17

Historian Ulrika Holgersson’s research about representations of domestic workers in Swedish films from the 1930s to the 1940s is close to my own regarding the topics she studies, the time period and, to a certain extent, the method she uses. In her study Holgersson analyses class and gender as aspects of film representation; thematically she takes up modernity and the city and countryside just as in this study, but also other themes such as sexuality, youth and the body – which I do not specifically focus on. Moreover, Holgersson takes the star system as a starting point in her analysis, because she sees the particular film star as an intersection between film, film culture and society.18

Films as historical sources have also been used in Mexican scholarship, particularly in gender history. Historian Joanne Hershfield, for instance, has studied how the cinematic figure of the woman has functioned to mediate narratives and social debates. Hershfield studies the roles of particular female characters in six films from the 1940s and concludes that the multiplicity of female subjective identities prevents a unified narrative of the position of women in Mexican discourse. She argues that the portrayals of femininity in films can be regarded as ‘products of, evidence of and narrative responses to the material and psychic crisis permeating the Mexican nation.’19 Hershfield’s work has centred on feminism, gender and the visual image. Probably her most relevant book in the context of my own study is *Imagining La Chica Moderna*, in which she analyses modern femininity in post-revolutionary Mexico. The author claims that women’s lives were affected by the forces of

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18 Holgersson (2014); Holgersson (Forthcoming).
popular visual culture and when looking at images of ‘real’ women, these are not so different from those depicted in popular culture images.\textsuperscript{20} Hershfield argues that Mexican women claimed a modern identity that, even if indebted to American and European discourses, was also adapted to Mexican conditions. The modern identity of these women was commercial and global in nature.\textsuperscript{21} Historian Jeffrey M. Pilcher’s book about the famous film comic character \textit{Cantinflas} is a study about the Mexican transition from a traditional agrarian society to an industrial urban one. In this study Pilcher follows the work of one particular actor while he attempts to disentangle Mexico’s chaotic road to modernity.\textsuperscript{22} Gender historian Julia Tuñón studies the construction of gender difference in Mexican cinema of the 1940s. More specifically she addresses the representation of women in the cinema of the Golden Age. But Tuñón also pursues a discussion about the use of films as historical evidence and argues that films do not stand on their own, but are integrally related to the people who lived in the society in which they were produced. The main interest of the author is to understand the way in which cinema takes real women as a starting point to then construct an abstract image; she studies value codes that govern this construction.\textsuperscript{23}

Films have thus been widely used by historians even if cinema is still a relatively under-exploited source. Films have been mainly used to investigate discourses and ideals of gender, but also the spirit of the times, in particular modernity and the process of modernisation during the twentieth century. In that sense my study does not diverge significantly from these types of analysis. As a source for studying emotional history and the intertwined relationship between emotions and the economy, however, films have been less prominent.

### Source Material and Method

I have argued that films are suitable source material for the study of cultural practices and modernity because they are able to vividly show practices, dreams, attitudes and ideals of society; because they are the cultural product that during the time of study reached the largest number of people; and because they were a modern phenomenon and took the most perplexing and appealing elements of the process of modernisation to the screen.

Moreover, films are a suitable source material for this study because films are the cultural products that to the largest extent deal with romantic love. The great majority of films have love as their central theme. Work also has an important place in film because work practices are present in the everyday life

\textsuperscript{20} Hershfield (2008), p. 157.
\textsuperscript{22} Pilcher (2010).
\textsuperscript{23} Tuñón Pablos (1998).
of most people. There is, therefore, no better historical source that explicitly or implicitly shows the connection between work and romantic love.

Furthermore, films depict much more than a particular theme; they allow us to see objects, the use of space, the workings of gender and class relations, views on morality and views on modernity and non-modernity. In short, films allow us to see samples or small fragments of life. Even though films are not real life, the judgements and values we find in the stories they present are taken from the society in which they were produced and in that sense they are real and worth studying.

In this thesis I take fiction films of different genres and examine how they deal with questions of work and romantic love and the intertwinement of these cultural practices. I approach the relationship between work and romantic love in two countries through a selection of films produced and screened during the period 1930 to 1955. During this period, 822 Swedish films had their premiere in Sweden and 1,374 Mexican films had their premiere in Mexico. The source material of this thesis is comprised of 41 films from a variety of genres, 19 produced in Sweden and 22 produced in Mexico. These films are of varying degrees of popularity and scope. Even though popularity was not a main criterion of selection, I made sure that at least some of the films enjoyed high popularity during the time they were released. The Swedish selection is dominated by romantic comedies and the Mexican selection is dominated by melodramas; this represents the actual distribution of genres in the national production of each country.

The period 1938–1952 has been named the Golden age of Mexican cinema and the peak of film production was more concretely in the years 1942–1945, when the consolidation of the industry was such that it became the most powerful film industry in Latin America and was able to compete with Hollywood in the local market. At the beginning of the period, the most common genres were dramas (infidelity and orphanage were common themes), cowboy musicals and films about the Mexican Revolution. However, in the 1940s new themes began to appear, as well as a larger quantity of films from other genres such as comedies, biographical films and literary adaptations. After the middle of the 1940s, one of the most common themes was urban dramas or urban comedies. The representation of the city and the urban destitute groups became very common; also family melodramas were recurrent. By the end of the 1940s and the beginning of the 1950s, the prostitution-cabaret melodrama became commonplace in film production.

The most popular genres in Swedish film production have also varied throughout the period. The 1930s has been known as the decade of the Pilsner

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24 This number was obtained by counting the number of films of the period produced in Sweden by a commercial producing house and with a Swedish distributor, to make sure they were commercial films, in Svensk Filmdatabas. The source for the number of Mexican films is Amador & Ayala Blanco, Cartelera Cinematográfica Digital 1912–1989.

films, a nickname taken from the light beer known as pilsner, but that referred to the ‘lack of artistry’ of films produced in this period and the common occurrence of beer and other types of alcoholic drinks. Pilsner films were regarded as light and popular and aroused intense debate in intellectual circles. A debate between culture personalities took place in 1931 and another one in 1937, followed by a state inquiry in 1941 aiming at formulating a proposal for the support of culturally valuable films. In the 1930s, the great majority of Swedish films had a happy ending, which appears as a reward for honour and righteousness. Among the most popular themes in Swedish cinema during the 1930s were love and marriage, social changes, social mobility, provincialism and escape from reality; mainly the comedy, but also the melodrama genre constituted the most common narrative form of films. Swedish cinema was at its peak of production in the 1940s. During the war years, several themes were present, such as the ‘state of alert’ films (beredskapsfilmer), films based on literary works, and the rural romance. In this period, Swedes watched mainly Swedish films and among them Edvard Persson films were the most popular. Films in this period often depicted ‘the Swedish nature and the Swedish land, the Swedish heritage and the Swedish self-esteem, the classless community feeling and the solidary welfare state care.’ In the post-war years, melodramas and comedies were popular and the theme of juvenile delinquency flourished, as well as films dealing with other types of social problems, in which social revenge and class differences were to blame. Even though the types of genres that were most commonly produced in each country vary, I argue that the themes, values, messages and appraisals of modernity and the meanings attached to work and love come to the fore in the stories regardless of the narrative form.

My motivation for the choice of the period is twofold. On the one hand, the period 1930 to 1955 matched a process of modernisation in both Sweden and Mexico. This period in Sweden marked the breakthrough of functionalism in architecture and social engineering and the creation of the welfare state; in Mexican historiography, the 1930s have become a synonym for the institutionalisation of the ideology of the Revolution and industrial development. The 1930s also witnessed the emergence of sound cinema. By then cinema, only a few decades old, had already developed some sort of language and style that allowed audiences to understand and engage with the stories. Sound cinema was not only an exhilarating invention, it was also a phenomenon that led national cinemas to develop. By this time audiences recognised they

30 Furhammar (1979), p. 185.
needed to hear their own languages and dialects if films were to be somewhat credible.

Furthermore, this period, characterised also by a world war – even though neither of the countries in question participated directly – was particularly beneficial for the film industry in Sweden and Mexico, because larger film industries were being affected by the belligerences.

The films produced during this period varied in genre, theme, purpose, budget, etc. This means that the audiences they were directed to and the scope and influence they could have also varied. Still, popular and unpopular, high- and low-budget films were produced to be seen and to reach large audiences.

Success or lack of it can depend on a number of factors, such as the actors and actresses starring, the quality of filmmaking, advertising campaigns and the appeal of the story. Yet, even when dealing with unsuccessful or unpopular films, we cannot separate the content, the message and the values the film promotes from the society that produced them; these films were made for the audiences to identify with some of the characters and to share their views or criticise them.

After watching dozens of films from this period and reading reviews and synopses of many more, I pre-selected certain films based on the particular themes I wanted to discuss in this thesis. Then, after watching pre-selected films, I made a new selection of films, this time considering more thoroughly their popularity and, more importantly, the clarity with which they presented the relevant themes of this thesis. Films that were rich in their representation of love and work and those whose sequential nature (re-makes, trilogies) added details and further elements to study proved to be good material for the development of my arguments.

Finally, a basic premise of this study is that films are a product of a society; they were not created in a vacuum and were not the product of a single genius or a single businessman. All films are social productions and all, to varying extents, can say something about culture and cultural practices.

This is not a study of films as art objects; it is rather a study of cultural phenomena. Hence, films are situated in this study within a historical context. At the same time as I discuss and analyse what the films convey, I seek to bring forward contextual elements that might allow us to understand the societies that surrounded particular work and romantic love practices.

The procedure I followed in the crafting of this thesis began with a thematic orientation. My preliminary watching of films allowed me to see, for example, that certain occupations and work practices were commonly depicted in film and that some of them where more common in one national context than the other. Although some occupations might be overrepresented in film, – such as prostitutes and dancers in the case of Mexican films – this very fact, I assumed, was relevant to take into account, since it constituted a cultural reaction to the effects that the process of modernisation was bringing about.
The films used in this study were selected, as I mentioned, thematically; by viewing a large quantity of films (and also naturally from my revision of literature on film production in both countries), I acquired a sense of the most recurrent thematic lines. Thus, even if I cannot say that every film is representative of a genre or a type of film, they are in a way rather typical of their period. None of the films analysed here stand out particularly for their uniqueness. Perhaps the only film that could be said to have some thematically unique characteristics is the Swedish King’s Street (Kungsgatan), given that there are not so many Swedish films in the period that deal with the question of prostitution. Still, King’s Street follows the pattern of the drama genre of other films, as well as other themes surrounding the story, such as the migration of the youth to the cities, consumption, and the dangers as well as the appeal of the cities, which are common in many other productions of the period.

The selection of films I used in this study deal with the themes of work and romantic love and show how these cultural practices interact with each other. However, this thesis is structured in three dimensions: space, gender and class, and within the spatial dimension I focus on domesticity and the city-country divide. Many of the films in my selection are mentioned in all three empirical chapters, whilst some of them are used in only one or two chapters. The selection of a particular film for a specific chapter has to do with thematic suitability. So while all films mentioned here deal in general with questions of work and romantic love, some of them might have particular storylines, spatial representations, sequences or shots that are relevant to exemplify the arguments I make in the analysis.

I carried out a qualitative analysis of the films and used mainly three units of analysis: 1. the storyline, 2. the sequence and 3. the shot. Although sequences are perhaps the most predominant unit of analysis, story lines and shots are used as well when required.

The plot of the film is the part of the storyline that we can actually see on screen; this gives us a great deal of information as it presents the audio-visual material where the viewer finds people, objects, spaces, sounds, music, and so on. We learn about the story at the same time as we see moving (or static) objects and hear the soundscape. I refer to the plot when it is important to attract attention to the storyline and its components; as we will see in the following chapter, spatial elements of the plot are particularly relevant.

The storyline, or everything that is a part of the story – even implicit elements that are not in the plot – shows the cause-effect relations, the display of motives, and the psychology of the characters, which in turn allow us to see values, attitudes, beliefs, life outlooks and the world that a single image cannot convey. Thus, in films in which the relationship between work and romantic love can be better observed through the understanding of the whole story, I offer a more detailed description of the film in question, although focusing on the themes I study. Considering that the film’s main purpose is to
tell a story, I look at the story as a whole to find the connections between work and romantic love.

There are films in which work, though present, is not necessarily a fundamental part of the story. Work might nonetheless still be visible to some degree in these films. Even though romantic love might be a central part of the story, the connection between work and romantic love is not necessarily consistently commented upon. In these cases, shots and sequences can provide significant information, whereas the story as a whole might not have the same relevance.

I have explained that films are excellent sources to study the relationship between love and work, because love is what most films are about and work is such a common and taken-for-granted cultural practice that it is bound to be present in film stories. I have observed that films can provide large amounts of information about the society in which they were produced, and as historical documents, films are rich in many ways. Storylines can convey values and attitudes, and a closer observation of sequences and shots can give information on spatiality, fashion, normal and deviant behaviours, etc. Analysing the different levels of a film, including music and lighting, or even examining film reviews that give information on how the films were received by the audiences, can contribute to the formation of the ‘whole picture’.

But how did I analyse the stories, sequences, shots and complementary elements of film media?

While I watched the films, I first focused on the storyline in order to see to what extent the narrative uses the cultural practices of work and romantic love to construct the story. In the analysis, I was careful to see appreciations of love and work, this is, to what extent the spirit of the film considered work and romantic love practices as something ‘positive’ or ‘negative’, or more concretely, to what extent the stories depicted the characters’ work and love practices as respectable, non-respectable, worthy or unworthy.

I then watched the films in a more detailed fashion, seeking to capture the storylines, scenes and shots that could convey the richest meaning to understand the particular relationship between work and romantic love. Dialogue was one of the main elements of meaning, but also the places people and objects occupy (mise-en-scène, perspective), gazes, body language, clothing, sceneries, sound, music, etc. In this step, I also sought to identify which categories were most useful in order to more clearly find ways to compare and contrast the two national cases.

When I present a film analysis in this thesis, I sometimes present a brief description of the storyline, particularly when the argument that I put forward is located at this level. Sometimes, however, when I highlight a particular scene or sequence, I do not present the storyline. In these cases the reader may find it useful to turn to the appendix, where I present a synopsis of every film used in this study.
The Comparison

I am interested in observing the filmic mediation of the connection between work and romantic love. I assume that there is a relationship between these two cultural practices, which are, moreover, in a changing phase in modernity during the period 1930 to 1955. What interests me most, as I have mentioned before, is what this relationship looks like. If we assume that cultural practices of work have the potential to be transformed, shaped or in some way affected by the cultural practices of romantic love, and if we also assume that most cinema, regardless of time and space, will deal with the matter of romantic love, then what is left to investigate is the specific manner in which films depict this relationship.

But why is it necessary to compare two countries?

I begin this study with several assumptions. Firstly, that culture matters to the extent that culture determines outcomes. Secondly, that work and romantic love are both cultural practices, and both are fundamental in the lives of most individuals in Western societies. Thirdly, that as part of the experience of modernity, societies experience transformations in economic, political and social structures, but also, very importantly, in cultural practices. Fourthly, that emotional and economic practices are more intertwined than has been previously assumed. And fifthly, that Sweden and Mexico are two countries that are distant not only in geographical terms, but most importantly in cultural terms; they have also had a rather different historical development and followed different strategies to deal with their processes of modernisation.

By juxtaposing two cases of analysis, I expect that the particular characteristics of each will become more visible and thus help us to better understand how romantic love and work were understood in Sweden and in Mexico and how modernity was affected. Thus, my point is not only to highlight the importance of culture, but also to learn more about each study case.

What makes Sweden and Mexico a good choice for a comparative analysis is that they have, despite their differences, similarities that are relevant for the research question. On the one hand, Mexico and Sweden were going through a process of modernisation and building a welfare state based on industrial growth and an attempt to socialise the profits of economic growth. On the other hand, as I mentioned earlier, these two countries did not participate directly in the war that ravaged many other countries at that time. Even though some war preparedness measures were taken in general, the fact that neighbouring countries were deeply involved in the conflict created a greater chance for Sweden and Mexico to both grow economically and to create a new type of state.

Sweden and Mexico thus both embarked upon nation building and welfare-state building programs at this time. These countries also had a relatively

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32 This can be motivated by the simple fact that there are social institutions that endorse (wage) work and love (marriage) and that have been erected as a result of modernity. See Illouz (2007).
blooming film industry during this period that allowed them to produce enough films to entertain their national audiences and even a public abroad.

Other similar social and economic phenomena also can be found in these countries – as well as in several other countries going through similar processes – such as a considerable migration from the countryside to the cities, the entrance of a larger female labour force into the labour market and an increasing industrialisation.

Another relevant point in this comparison is related to the role of censorship in film production. I have observed a few times, particularly in the previous chapter, that previous studies on modernity and popular culture and the relationship between emotions and the economy have focused empirically on the American case, not least those of Eva Illouz, the author who to a large extent has inspired my starting points for this thesis. However, there is an important difference between the situation of the film industry in terms of censorship in Hollywood and the Swedish and Mexican cases.

In Mexico, officially there existed censorship regulation in the Show Regulations (Reglamento de Espectáculos), which obliged filmmakers to observe ‘the proprieties of life’, but as what this actually implied was so vague, the regulations were not applied systematically. On the contrary, the critical voices that demanded governmental intervention were louder than government interference itself. One example of official censorship concerns a film from 1933, in which a more reassuring ending was enforced because the original was considered derogatory to the Mexican armed forces.33

In Sweden, the Censorship Board (Statens biografbyrå) was established in 1911 to scrutinise films and forbid those that were regarded to be in conflict with general laws or morality or that could act against or obfuscate legal concepts; of special interest were horror scenes, suicide and gross crimes. Particularly, the Film Board was interested in monitoring content that could be harmful for children.34 In terms of films dealing with the relations between the sexes, it was noted by a film scholar in the 1950s that the Swedish Censorship Board was more liberal than its American equivalent.35

In Hollywood, the censorship agency was called the Production Code Administration, and it was an in-house procedure for self-regulation. The Code, established in 1934 and abolished in 1968, dictated what could be shown on screen, and among the themes explicitly mentioned were marriage, sexual relations, and proper gender roles: the institution of marriage was sacred, and films were not to depict immoral examples of sexual liaisons.36 So Hollywood films, during the period I study, were more affected by censorship than Swedish and Mexican films. For this reason, even though Swedish and Mexican

films cannot be considered completely unregulated or free from censorship – even though official censorship was not as strict, moral guardians still made their opinions public and indirectly influenced what film producers chose to screen – they still had a relative leeway in terms of what was allowed.

Thus, although I expect through this comparison to see differences, I am also interested in finding similarities and to some extent seeing how my findings differ from those that previous research has arrived at by studying the American case.

Analytical Framework

The empirical chapters of this thesis are connected to three analytical dimensions: space, gender and class. I have selected these themes because they are central explanatory aspects of the work-love relationship in both previous research and films. In this section, I present a theoretical understanding of space, gender and class and how these dimensions will help me address the aim of this study.

Space

Films tell spatial stories. Michel de Certeau argues that ‘every story is a travel story – a spatial practice’ and everyday practices are thus always spatial. Stories, like those films tell, as well as those from literature and those we tell everyday are always situated in spaces. A story cannot happen without a space. Changes in forms of interaction within particular spatial environments are pronounced in periods of dramatic transformation. During the process of modernisation that this thesis deals with, certain spaces facilitate a clear observation of the re-shaping and renegotiation of social practices. Spaces change, as do the objects contained within them and the way people interact. Interpersonal relationships, how people relate to other people and objects, are, moreover, culture and time determined. So the study of spatiality reveals change and also attitudes to change, in this case, attitudes towards modernity.

Space, here understood as a ‘site, zone or place characterised by specific social activities with a culturally given identity (name) and image,’ is ‘implicated in symbolic and conceptual formations,’ which means that the social activity taking place in space is to be interpreted as occurring within a meaning-loaded framework. The shaping of spaces and what occurs within space is therefore informative of the times and the phenomena that we are interested in.

38 Benko & Strohmayer (1997), p. 188.
Access to spatial representation through a popular mass media product allows us to observe the values and meanings attributed to different spaces, objects, people and the practices constrained within spatial boundaries.

Representations of space, as understood by sociologist Henri Lefebvre, are, though abstract in nature, able to ‘modify the special texture of the city and landscape according to certain ideologies, and are linked to codes and signs.’\(^{40}\) It is through the representation of space that films introduce modernity as a theme in cinematic narratives. Thus, by representing space, as Lefebvre would put it, film as a mass media product creates meanings and disseminates them, while, I would claim, films at the same time reflect the surrounding material spaces.

Spaces in film constantly conjure ideas of modern and non-modern lifestyles. Comments on modernity can be expressed by, for example, depicting the city in opposition to the countryside or open public spaces, such as the street or the shop, in opposition to private spaces, such as the home or certain rooms within the home.

Films, themselves a symbol of modernity, depict the modern often by way of contrast. Dichotomies are central in film narratives: good and evil, female and male gender roles, work ethic and entertainment.\(^{41}\)

More concretely, the representation of space in the analysis seeks to offer a more tangible experience of the role of work and romantic love in modern society and how they are intertwined. In this study the analysis of domestic spaces is put into focus. The spatial organisation of the home and how different characters move around and interact with each other and the objects that surround them say plenty about the relationship between work and romantic love. This can be observed in the following example.

In the Swedish film *Home Slaves* (*Hemslavinnor*) from 1931, we observe how the protagonist, Greta (Isa Quensel), who works for the Rosenqvist family, conveys disapproval of her work situation by moving slowly, responding to the calls of the mistress of the house deliberately late and locking her into a closet, thanks to Greta’s access to the household keys and her ability to move freely in the house. Greta is also able to meet with her boyfriend in the privacy of the kitchen, a room in the house that is reserved for the domestic worker and where other members of the family very seldom enter. For Greta, work and romantic love occur in the same spatial context, but by the end of the story, this changes, when she no longer needs to work for pay and is, for the first time in her life, able to live in her own home. By observing how film characters use spaces and by paying attention to their ability to move around, to their spatial restrictions, as well as to the ways in which they relate to other people and objects within these spaces, we can observe how work and romantic love intertwine in a concrete fashion.

\(^{40}\) Thacker (2003), p. 20.

\(^{41}\) See Altman (1987), p. 49.
Gender

The category of gender pervades the analyses in this thesis; gender expectations rule all social relations. ‘It is a pattern in our social arrangements and in everyday activities or practices which those arrangements govern.’ I look at gender here as a relational concept, and even though throughout this study the male/female dichotomy is actually present and thus addressed, I do not mean to treat this dichotomy as the ultimate category in the analysis of gender. Rather I take sociologist Raewyn Connell’s more relational approach: ‘Gender is the structure of social relations that centres on the reproductive arena, and the set of practices (governed by this structure) that bring reproductive distinctions between bodies into social processes.’

In this study, however, I am particularly interested in how gender is produced by audio-visual media and for this reason Teresa de Lauretis’ definition becomes useful. De Lauretis argues that gender ‘as a representation and self-representation, is the product of various technologies such as cinema, and of institutionalised discourse, epistemologies, and critical practices, as well as practices of daily life.’ The author sees cinema as a medium that spreads representations of gender, and of femininity in particular. Women, she claims, are represented as a spectacle; narrative cinema is for her where this representation finds its most complex expression as well as the widest circulation. So gender is a construction based on relationships, but is also shaped by technologies of gender such as cinema. The films I analyse in this thesis are, therefore, part of a construction of gender in the time period and geographical location in which they were produced, because, as Connell argues, gender arrangements are always changing.

Design historians Cheryl Buckley and Hilary Fawcett study the representation of women’s fashion in Great Britain, and talking about the interwar period, they claim that the representation of female identities was shaped by discourses of modernity. They claim that women’s cultural lives were influenced by their experiences in the home and the world of work. Cinema was one way in which fashion and modernity were spread, and the experiences of women, of their transforming gender roles, were in many cases represented and shaped by the visual imagery they were exposed to.

But there are specificities in the ways gender was constructed and represented, so I will address Swedish and Mexican works on gender to find insights into the social structures that will be observed throughout the analysis.

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The notion of a specific gender contract – the housewife contract – predominant in Sweden during the period of study of this thesis is useful in order to contextualise the social structure that functioned as a framework for cinematic representations. Yvonne Hirdman has developed the concept of a gender contract in a Swedish context in order to show how a specific gender system structures society.48 Hirdman analyses the programme that the workers movement outlined for the modernisation of society after the Second World War, and she identifies in it the idea that modern society is one of men as sole breadwinners and women as housewives, living in modern subsidised apartments with central heating, water-pipes, and bathrooms and with rational tools, functional fabrics, household utensils and furniture.49 The role of women was discussed as part of an open economic and political debate.50 When I analyse gender in this thesis, I take into consideration the concept of the housewife contract or the emphasis on the housewifely role of women as part of their involvement in modernity.

In the Mexican case, the study of gender has had a political focus. In the 1980s many scholars were interested in disentangling the power structures and the relationship of women with the state and different social hierarchies.51 The other focus of gender history in Mexico has been the economic participation of women and its consequences for family life.52 Other common topics in Mexican gender research have to do with demographics (fertility, birth-control, reproductive rights, population policies) and other social themes (migration, family, labour participation, work outside of the household, poverty).53 In the context of this thesis, the studies that have more relevance are those related to work and the gender division of labour. Just as in Sweden, there was a discussion in Mexico about the proper roles of women regarding the labour market and home duties at the beginning of my period of study. Women’s labour, both paid and unpaid, generated debate about gender identities.

Political leaders after the Revolution attempted to create an image of the New Mexican woman who would be more modern in her habits and beliefs, but not necessarily less feminine as a consequence of her participation in wage work.54 The model of femininity that the state advocated was one that endorsed wage labour for women as long as they did not question patriarchal privilege or endanger domestic stability. In terms of the ideas she was supposed to embrace, the new woman would reject Catholic ‘superstition’, but preserve

52 Melgar-Palacios (2008), p. 49.
54 Olcott (2003), p. 47.
her proneness to self-sacrifice and modesty that made Mexican women unique and different from modern European and North American women.55

Women as workers were thus part of the national project, but women necessarily had a role and a particular behaviour to follow. The physical appearance of women was also noted within the context of gender and modernity in the decades following the Revolution. The image of the Mexican woman circulated not only throughout the country, but also internationally, so Mexican diplomats made sure that the image of Mexican women that they used to represent the nation was one of (mestizo, light-skinned) beauty and modesty, and they in fact presented this type of appearance as Indian and genuine Mexican.56 Women that were ‘modern’ in the style of European or American women, advertising their sexuality, were in turn considered anti-Mexican. Studies on Mexican gender history have stressed the diversity of gender practices and the tension between prescribed and practiced roles. I do not expect cinema to show only normative gender roles. But, rather, the tensions of modernity.

Class

The third empirical chapter in this dissertation deals with the role class plays in the intertwinement between romantic love and work. Class is ubiquitous and hard to overlook when doing film analysis. Like Beverley Skeggs, I view class as a structural concept, meaning that class is ‘made’ through access to different forms of capital, those that sociologist Pierre Bourdieu developed in his work: economic, cultural, social and symbolic. My understanding of class in this thesis is related to the concept of emotional capital, which refers to the management of emotions and the system of emotional dispositions that lead the individual to act in a certain way under certain circumstances.57

Class is certainly shaped by access to capital, and it is, as I wish to emphasise, shaped by access to emotional capital. People who can benefit from their own or others’ emotional dispositions can gain class advantages.

An example of the relationship between class and emotional capital can be exemplified with the following film story:

In the Mexican film Salón México from 1948, the protagonist is a young woman, Mercedes (Marga López), who works at a cabaret in order to pay for her younger sister’s tuition fees at an exclusive boarding school. Mercedes earns enough money to keep her sister at the school and pay for all her expenses, but she cannot afford to have a high standard of living herself. Mercedes has no other family connections, friends or a social network that she can rely on when she encounters problems, economic or otherwise. All that Mercedes

55 Olcott (2003), p. 49.
56 Kiddle (2010).
57 See Cahill (1999).
has at the beginning of the story is her job and the joy of offering her sister the opportunities she herself was denied. But Mercedes has emotional capital, represented by her motherly love, her proneness to self-sacrifice and her disinterestedness. Thanks to these traits a righteous man falls in love with her, and he offers to love her and provide for her so that she can leave her illegitimate and dangerous occupation.

In this example Mercedes is a working-class woman at the beginning of the story. She is able, however, to offer her sister an upper-class life and is able to pass as an upper-class woman before her sister and the staff of the boarding school on Sundays during her weekly Sunday visits. On top of Mercedes’ low socioeconomic status, she is at the bottom of society because her job puts her constantly in danger. Despite this, Mercedes’ emotional capital gives her an opportunity to gain other forms of capital, such as economic and social. Through marriage, Mercedes has the chance to change her class of belonging, and marriage becomes a possibility thanks to the fact that she possesses emotional capital.

We will get acquainted with Mercedes later on, and the reader will find out about her fate. We will learn how class works, but also how it interacts with other social dimensions. Suffice it to say here that emotional capital has a relevant impact on how class works in film stories.

Sociologist Spencer E. Cahill argues that exposure to different emotions and the evaluation of different emotions and feelings vary by, among other factors, social class, parental occupation, ethnicity and gender. This is exactly what films show. Emotional expressions vary in film characters according to their subjective identities, based on class, gender and national identity.

For Skeggs and in this study, class needs to be understood as both cultural and economic. Films reveal that romantic love tends to play an important role in work practices and motivations, especially when the senses of worthiness and respectability of the characters are in focus. Moreover, the ways in which romantic love and work relate to each other are informed by the characters’ access to other forms of capital such as economic, social and cultural. Respectability, according to Skeggs, has to do with class and with how people create their own identities to fit certain norms according to their social positioning.

Class is not only about economy; it is a social construction that also relates to culture. Power relations and the making of categories in society intertwine with other factors such as ethnicity, gender and sexuality.

Beverly Skegg’s concept of regimes of value is useful to understand how different classes depicted in films value their assets and actions regardless of how distant they are from the dominant middle-class ideal. Skeggs argues that people in her empirical studies spent ‘enormous amounts of time attempting to attach value to themselves…through the performance of respectability and

58 Cahill (1999), p. 112.
59 For a thorough discussion on class, see Holgersson (2011), pp. 164–170.
by reversing dominant symbolic moral values." Working-class people, those whom Bourdieu paid little attention to in his work according to Skeggs, might lack all the types of capital necessary to convert and accrue value. However, her empirical studies demonstrate the existence of other alternative value formations. ‘Through the non-utilitarian effects of care, loyalty and affection, people found other routes to valuing each other outside the circuits of exchange that demand a value-return.’

This is exactly what can be seen in films. Even though we consider films to often portray typical moral standards of the middle classes, very often they also present and comment on the values of other social classes. Through the depiction of the values and actions of the rich, the poor, the middle classes, the peasants, the upwardly mobile, etc., films present a view of the class-related experiences of people.

Even though films might not be a faithful portrait of all social classes, they represent the set of values and motives behind the characters’ actions, which allows us to observe their specific view of ‘what/who matters’, ‘what/who counts’ and what is just.

It is important to keep in mind, however, that we are dealing with two levels of analysis in films. On the one hand, the stories tell us about the regimes of value that the film characters are immersed in and how their actions are appraised in their fictional society. The fictional society created by the filmmakers can tell us about how a certain group of people (middle-classes, cultural élites, educators, etc.) regard other groups in society. On the other hand, there are regimes of value that films communicate to the audience that might, to some extent, contravene the values ascribed to the characters in films. Both levels are part of this analysis. These two levels are often intertwined, but I seek to differentiate them in the analysis and I do so through the concepts of respectability and worthiness. I will elaborate on these later on in this chapter.

Eva Illouz has discussed the relationship between love and class and outlines sociologist Herbert Lantz’ argument about the origin of romantic love among propertied and literate elites in the pre-modern period. Lantz’s observations, Illouz states, suggest three important elements for the understanding of the relationship between love and class:

Mechanisms of symbolic domination...can structure how romantic love is perceived by various social groups; the practice of romantic love demands availability of time and distance from material necessity...Romantic practices might be related to what Bourdieu calls ‘cultural competence’, that is, to forms of talk, taste, and aesthetic evaluation, themselves related to standards of romance.

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This means that what Illouz calls *romantic competence* can only be attained through access to certain forms of capital – linguistic, cultural, economic and time resources. At the same time, however, romantic love in Western culture has been given a transgressing role. Unlike pre-modern love, as Illouz calls it, the romantic utopia of the capitalist era has been elevated to the highest of values, capable of defying gender, class and national loyalties. Moreover, Illouz argues, romantic love in the era of capitalism is contradictory, and this argument is closer to what I seek to prove in this study. For while modern individuals are expected to be hard working and diligent, they are also expected to dedicate their time and resources to hedonistic activities (consumption of leisure, entertainment, trips to natural environments, etc.) and romantic practices.

Like Illouz, I argue that in the modern era, work and romantic love are more intertwined than had been previously thought. What sociologist Viviana Zelizer calls *hostile worlds*, or the approach that discards ‘accounting for the intertwining of monetary transfers with intimate relationships’, has been the view of social scientists throughout time. Social scientists, Zelizer argues,

> describe intimate relations as a world apart from the economy…Social scientists themselves carry symbolic representations of money as rationalising, flattening, transparent, fungible and ultimately corrupting; they also carry representations of erotic relations as sentimental, broad, singular, and profoundly vulnerable.

As emotional and economic practices are intertwined I want to show that class positioning plays a role in how these cultural practices interact with each other. Even though class, like gender, is a concept that more or less explicitly permeates the analysis of the whole study, I will deepen the discussion of class in chapter five of this thesis.

**My Theoretical Toolbox**

In order to approach the relationship between romantic love and work within the context of modernity, I use a set of theoretical concepts that allow me to identify and assess how films present and appraise this dynamic. These concepts are emotional capital, respectability and worthiness. These concepts are particularly relevant in the empirical chapters four and five, while in chapter three, dedicated to the analysis of space, I focus on the representation of the city and countryside and seek to map out the material representation of the cultural phenomena I am studying. In this section I seek to define the theoretical concepts that constitute the tools of this analysis.

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Emotional Capital

Films, a window on the past capable of conveying meaning, reflect ‘the social and political realities of the societies’ in which they were produced. The story and characters voice ‘prevailing attitudes, values, and social mores of the time, its hopes, fears and concerns’. But how can we arrive at a better understanding of the messages and discourses that films provide? How can we grasp that subtle and most generally implicit relationship between the emotional and the economic that I have been arguing for?

As a means of approaching how film characters through their actions and dialogue and through the implicit symbols and messages with which film media communicate meaning, experience the dynamics between work and romantic love, I use the concept of emotional capital. I use Bourdieu’s concepts of capital, and I further develop the concept of emotional capital that other authors, such as education scholars Diane Reay and Michalinos Zembylas, have used in the field of educational research, in a way that can be useful to grasp the workings of romantic love.

Diane Reay argues that Bourdieu’s concept of capital needs to be extended to include emotional features. Reay, in fact, does so. She, however, concentrates on the involvement of mothers in children’s education, so as to develop a more comprehensive concept of emotional capital. I take her work as a point of departure in order to analyse the ways in which emotional capital places individuals in different bargaining positions within the practice of work, and how these differences are gender dependent.

Firstly, though, I will elaborate the concepts of capital developed in Bourdieu’s work and present the concept of emotional capital. Cultural capital has to do with modes of thinking, types of disposition, sets of meaning, qualities of style; it might take various forms and it is primarily transmitted through the family. The relative value of cultural capital is relational, which means that the qualities assigned to a particular social status are related to what the dominant classes regard as the most valued cultural capital. Economic capital relates to wealth and access to financial resources. Social capital is created through social networks and social relations, those between the family and the wider society. Symbolic capital refers to individual prestige and personal qualities. And all these types of capital, Bourdieu argues, can be transformed into one another; they produce resources that can be mobilised.

Through work, as Weeks argues, people obtain not only economic capital in the shape of a wage, but also social, political and familial links of cooperation, which, in Bourdian terms, are also forms of capital. Moral and ethical values are attached to work as a cultural and social activity; and these considerations can also be understood in terms of capital. But ‘work constitutes a particularly

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important site of interpellation into a range of subjectivities,” and this means that, through work, class is created and recreated, but also gender and other subjectivities take form in the workplace. Accordingly, the types of capital that are generated or lost during the practice of work depend on the subjectivities of the performer, but these subjectivities are, at the same time, also shaped by work.

Emotional capital is closely linked to social capital. Bourdieu refers to the resources that come from the family and add to the individual’s relative position in society. Bourdieu says, for instance, that practical and symbolic work that generates devotion, generosity and solidarity falls primarily on women, who are responsible for maintaining relationships. Sociologist Helga Nowotny developed the concept of emotional capital, and she sees it as characteristic of the private rather than the public sphere and constituting ‘knowledge, contacts, relations as well as access to emotionally valued skills and assets, which hold within any social network characterised at least partly by affective ties.’ Thus, emotional capital has been identified by scholars as being an asset women have to a larger extent than men and as being used mostly within the private sphere, particularly within the family. Emotional capital, understood as emotional resources and as sociologist Patricia Allatt defines: ‘emotionally valued assets, skills, love and affection, expenditure of time, attention, care and concern,’ can be found in many different types of work, including the illegitimate work of the prostitute.

However, it is important to note that emotional capital thus understood has been used mainly in the study of family relations and in cases such as parental involvement in children’s education. Emotional capital has been mainly defined as the resources that are put to use within intimate and private spheres. Therefore, I would like to note that although I draw on this previous research on emotional capital, my usage of the concept as an analytical tool differs slightly. Emotional capital, I would argue, is more related to the emotional resources that are valued in a society and involve some degree of attachment and intimacy, regardless of whether these resources are distributed in private or public spaces and within or outside the family. In this sense, my view on emotional capital is closer analytically to Arlie Hochschild’s concept of emotional labour, which entails the individual’s need to manage their emotions according to socially determined rules in order to perform certain types of work.

Therefore, in a way, I see romantic love as an emotional capital that is central in the performance of certain work practices, but also and even more so as

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a motivation for or outcome of work practices. The study of romantic love as emotional capital allows a clearer grasp of its relationship with work. I am not looking at all the different possible emotional resources that emerge in work, but only those restricted to romantic love. But in order to translate romantic love into the conceptualisation of emotional capital, I attempt to observe the emotional resources that can be related to the contemporary view of romantic love in Western cultures.

**Respectability**

The concept of respectability that I use in this analysis is related to that which Beverly’s Skeggs develops in her work, *Formations of Class and Gender*. Skeggs’ empirical study on class demonstrates how people actively look for ways to gain meaning and worth and the things they do and how they attempt to move away from class values that can be demeaning. Skeggs calls this process a search for respectability.

Respectability is recognised by the same group that defines it: ‘Respectability became a property of middle-class individuals defined against the masses.’ However, Skeggs demonstrates, subordinated groups can re-define and re-appropriate respectability through a number of mechanisms. Respectability refers to the moral judgements and visual representations of righteous gender roles approved by elite groups, but as I will show in the analysis, respectability is not merely tied to the scale of values defined by elite groups, but is also defined and redefined by individuals from more vulnerable groups who use their available resources (often emotional) to acquire value.

The understanding of respectability is historically and culturally bound. As I will mention throughout the analysis, the level of respectability and the ability of individuals to acquire it depend on many factors, not only on the socially accepted elite values, but also on the values created by vulnerable social groups. More important perhaps is the fact that both work and romantic love are factors that increase (or decrease) respectability. How work and romantic love relate to respectability depends on the different subjectivities of individuals (gender, class, etc.) and on culture. In this study, the interaction between work and romantic love and respectability leads to the answer to my original questions: How do romantic love and work interact? And how does this interaction relate to modernity?

**Worthiness**

I chose to use the concept of worthiness in this study at a later stage of my work. While analysing the material, I realised that the happiness of film characters and the comments of film reviewers on whether the people represented

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75Skeggs (1997), p. 3.
in the stories were good or bad were based on a value that was far from a hedonistic search for wellbeing. Sometimes happiness did not necessarily entail wellbeing at all. However, a common denominator in the film stories was the search for some higher value that justified the actions of the characters, whether or not these actions were deemed as good or bad by the larger society represented in the film. This higher value is what I call worthiness.

Pierre Bourdieu has, in his work, shown the connection between economy and culture. With the concepts of capital (economic, cultural, social, and emotional), it is possible to observe how status relates to and reinforces class structures. Bourdieu’s notions of social honour and prestige as a result of the use of certain forms of capital can be said to correspond to what I mean by worthiness. For Bourdieu, class differences lead to cultural differences which are in turn legitimated by the fact that they are perceived as individual worthiness. Thus, even though Bourdieu does not see legitimation through worthiness as a conscious action, but rather as a habitus determined by class of belonging, he does consider the concept of worthiness as explanatory. I do not agree with Bourdieu’s view of culture as a fixed predetermining force, but I find the way he relates culture, economics and worthiness useful. I, like Bourdieu, assume that actions, behaviours, tastes and life-styles are partly determined by class and thus by the habitus that belonging to a particular class entails. Thus, actions that provide worthiness are closely related to class and to the available resources of the individual.

Films are stories told to an audience, so regardless of the values and attitudes of the characters, the story as a whole has a message and a moral. The message and the particular moral of the story are conveyed and reinforced by different narrative elements. The narrative elements point at how the audiences should interpret the story and thus who in the story is considered worthy and why.

Characters can be depicted as either respectable or non-respectable or navigating a scale of respectability throughout the story, but by the end there are indications of the character’s worth, regardless of whether the society in the film has already decided on an irrefutable judgement.

In most cases, the respectability, or lack of it, of a character indicates a particular value outside of the film story; this value is what in this study I call worthiness.

A character or an action can be worthy even though other elements in the story are judged non-respectable. Films can portray situations in which a character acts in a way that is in line with her or his higher values (which are socially and culturally-shared values such as motherhood, family, religion, etc.), and thus the film judges the character or the action as worthy even though the same actions can be in contradiction with other social values (morality, honesty, decorum, righteous femininity, righteous masculinity, etc.). In this case, even though the character can be judged worthy, she or he can also

experience a loss of respectability. Thus, the morals of a film can endorse one action and represent a character as worthy, while at the same time condemning the same actions and showing that, in the microcosm of the film, the character is non-respectable and even deserving of severe punishment. When I use the concept of worthiness in this analysis, I indicate in which way there is a gain or loss.

Introducing the theoretical concepts into the formulation of my research question it reads like this:

How do romantic love and work practices generate emotional capital to the extent that it adds to individuals’ respectability and worthiness?
CHAPTER 3
Urban and Rural Domesticities

Modernity in Space

Modernity is one of the most common themes depicted in Swedish and Mexican films from the period 1930 to 1955. One way in which films approached modernity was through the depiction of places containing highly novel elements. The settings that films show are a conscious attempt to convey a particular atmosphere to the viewer.

In this chapter, I delve into the representation of modernity in films. In particular, I focus on visions of modernity that are connected to work and romantic love, and in order to do so I have selected a particular spatial context: domestic spaces in both city and countryside environments.

Films are cultural products that stand for modernity in many ways. They were modern because they represented a new technology for bringing entertainment to the masses, not least in the 1930s – the decade of the introduction of sound to film. But they were also modern in the sense that they reflected novel ideas and material conditions in modernising societies. But what can we expect films to depict during this period when it comes work and romantic love?

I centre my analysis on the home and its surroundings, although spaces outside of the domestic environment are at times taken into account to provide a contrast. The transformations in work and romantic love practices that the process of modernisation led to had a big effect on domestic activities and domestic spatial arrangements. Moreover, the home was a space that received particular attention as a receptacle for modern advancements both in Mexico and Sweden, and it was where social reformers often directed their advice and prescriptions.

The home and its surroundings can be thought of as intimate, rather than public, spaces, where emotions but not necessarily work have a place. Since one of the purposes of this thesis is to show that work and romantic love were in fact more intertwined than has been assumed, I seek to find hints in domestic environments that prove this connection.

When the question of modern domestic spaces in the West is brought up, often the literary figure of ‘the house as a machine for living in’ makes an appearance. Modernity is then equated with a futuristic setup and functionalism. But is this literary figure a fair description of the filmic representations of
modern domestic setups in Sweden and Mexico? Did modern housing ideals apply to both city and countryside environments? What were considered modern and non-modern spatial configurations in the city and the countryside, and how did these affect the ways in which people related to work and romantic love?

In order to answer these questions, I examine how spaces are arranged in films, what we can see, who inhabits them and how people relate to other people and objects within them, what roles people play, which duties they have, and how power relations are played out in the different domestic spaces depicted in films. In the analysis I also seek to connect the concepts of respectability and worthiness to space by assessing the different values attributed to domestic spaces in city and countryside environments and how people use them in films.

City and Countryside: A Dichotomy That Explains Modernity

The city as a spatial phenomenon has often been regarded as a key actor in modern industrial society. Cities that have been labelled as the essence of modern urbanism such as Paris, Berlin, Tokyo, London and Chicago, with a similar pattern of industrialisation, went through a marked change at the end of the nineteenth century. But as the rest of the world followed suit, cities everywhere became symbols of the ‘break with a traditional understanding of society as rooted in agriculture.’

Ben Highmore, interpreting Walter Benjamin’s *Thesis on the Philosophy of History*, says that ‘urban modernisation orchestrated by the machinations of global capital creates debris.’ Moreover, he argues that ‘in city spaces (often the poorest, the cheapest, the most profitable) the feeding frenzy of capitalist expansion decimates not just buildings but whole neighbourhood communities.’ Undoubtedly, the city has been linked to the process of capitalist industrial modernisation in narratives of modernity. Nevertheless, there is an undeniable rural-urban connection present when the process of modernity is brought up, not least in cinema.

The necessity to include an examination of the city-countryside divide in this thesis stems from the fact that, on the one hand, the tension between the rural and the urban says a great deal about how modernity is understood in cultural terms, and, on the other hand, the relationship between love and work are depicted differently in these two spatial environments. Rural love and rural work are often depicted in opposition to urban love and urban work in films.

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1 Levin, et al. (2010), p. 3.
Accounts of modernity, particularly those involving popular culture, contrast the city and the countryside in order to make a point about the new and the traditional. It is not surprising that the city-countryside or urban-rural dichotomies are so common when thinking about the process of modernisation. ‘The common image of the country is now an image of the past and the common image of the city an image of the future’ claimed cultural scholar Raymond Williams as he wrote about the ideas that became predominant as a response to social development from the Industrial Revolution and even further back to the beginning of the capitalist agrarian mode of production.³

Historian Kate Murphy argues that ideas about both city and countryside ‘shaped responses to the modern world.’⁴ She claims, with her case study on the discourse of elite public figures in early twentieth century Australia, that the rural is as critical as the urban in understanding modernity.⁵ Moreover, she emphasises that gender relations are crucial both when discussing modernity and the urban-rural divide. I share Murphy’s view on the need to consider the views of the rural when dealing with modernity. In fact, the intertwining of the city and the countryside, as well as modern and non-modern practices, is often at the core of film narratives in the period I am studying.

The meanings of space as well as the social practices that shaped and were shaped by spatiality vary from one national case to the other. Romantic love and work practices take place in the city and countryside according to the attributes of modernity or non-modernity attached to these spaces.

Swedish and Mexican Modernity: What Do We Know and What Can We Expect?

The Home

The home is a space whose configuration often signals notions of modernity. During the first decades of the twentieth century, changes in domestic architecture became visible in several national contexts. It has been long asserted that the building of domestic spaces follows gender binaries, constraining the inhabitants. Often the idea of the separation of spheres has been brought up when discussing material arrangements in the home, meaning that the architecture of the home serves the purposes of enhancing women’s proper roles in the domestic sphere: tending to her family and being its emotional pillar.⁶

This means that the home should be, according to Victorian ideals, a suitable space for domestic work practices – mainly care-related – and love. Thus,

⁵ Murphy (2010), p. 2.
as Victorian ideals (a middle-class model that affected all social groups) contributed to a separation and specialisation of rooms, imbuing each domestic space with a gender identity, the modern home that functionalist architects in the Western world promoted during the first decades of the twentieth century stood against purely homely values; they, in turn, presented it as a machine.

Le Corbusier’s famous phrase from the 1920s embodies this idea: The house is now regarded as a ‘machine for living in: standardized, impersonal, and scientific.’ Nevertheless, in historiographical accounts of American architecture, Victorian values make a comeback in modern architecture in the 1940s and 1950s.

The house is a good example of a space touched by the process of modernisation. It is also a place where city and countryside values clash.

In Sweden there was a lively debate on housing policies in the 1930s. Often cited milestones on this matter are the influence of the Stockholm Exhibition, where innovative ideas for the home were presented; Alva Myrdal’s book Crisis in the Population Question, which touched upon housing, gender relations, marriage, paid work, etc.; and the State Investigation on Housing Conditions, which was established in 1933, but which presented its first results in 1945.

In the 1930s most Swedish working-class families lived in one-room and kitchen apartments, or a single room equipped with a small stove in the corner. Lodgers were also common in working-class households. The debate of the period about the living standards of the working classes stressed the immoral nature of overcrowding, especially in the kitchen where people spent a lot of their time. According to the state investigation of 1933 concerning housing questions, the working classes used their living space incorrectly; their low living standards were caused by people’s lack of interest in hygiene and their poor habits, rather than economic necessity. Another argument brought up in the debate was that the working classes were prone to waste space by having a parlour, which was to be kept neat and silent and where nobody was allowed to sleep, despite overcrowding in the kitchen. The parlour had its own symbolic meaning in working-class culture, while middle-class intellectuals criticised its existence and regarded this spatial practice as wasteful.

In 1941 Brita Åkerman conducted a study on housing in Stockholm with the participation of 214 families in which she looked at living conditions and the shaping of homes. Åkerman begins her discussion on the common family by stating that ‘as the education and protection functions of the family have

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10 Myrdal & Myrdal (1934).
11 SOU 1935:49.
been overtaken by other institutions; and entertainment is also found outside of the home, the functions that remain are emotional ones. The families of today use their homes mainly as a sleeping and eating place.\(^{14}\) She thus noted that families were changing their habits and lifestyle, which was evident in the new ways people were using their homes.

Thus, at the beginning of the period this thesis deals with, the set-up of the Swedish home and the living standards of the working classes were a national concern. Low living standards, detailed in national reports, included overcrowding, lack of sanitation and natural light, poor ventilation, dampness, poor cooking facilities and storage spaces, all of which were considered a health hazard.\(^{15}\) The modernisation of the home became a priority for the state, so a number of experts were appointed to teach Swedes how to live with a sense of orderliness and cleanliness. These experts endorsed the idea that people had the right to ‘live well’. To live well entailed a scientific configuration of the home and an educated approach to home management.\(^{16}\)

The modern Swedish home was to conform to certain standards, such as a minimum size for kitchens and bedrooms, and these standards had to be made available to everyone.\(^{17}\)

The modern home sketched by social policy markers was comfortable and nice-looking, with enough space, light and ventilation for healthy living; it made a good workplace for the housewife; and, very importantly, it was accessible for the working classes. The apartments increased in size over time: the average home went from one-room and kitchen apartments at the beginning of the period to three-room and kitchen apartments by the 1950s. The building norms for housing became clearer with time after decades of scientific research into the best way of living. The 1950s was the so-called housewife decennium, and by this time the homes were carefully planned and practically furnished. The home was expected to be a comfortable and functional workplace.\(^{18}\)

When it comes to home appliances, there was an uneven spread of different devices in households of different incomes, but especially between the city and the countryside. In the 1930s the devices that were more common in urban homes were the electric iron, vacuum cleaner and gas stove. By the end of the 1920s most homes that had electricity had an iron; by 1933, 45 per cent of homes in cities and bigger towns had a gas stove and 6 per cent an electric stove; and by 1941 around 32 per cent of city homes had a vacuum cleaner.\(^{19}\) In the countryside the presence of devices was significantly lower, particularly

\(^{14}\) Åkerman (1941), pp. 3–5.
\(^{16}\) Björkman (2012).
\(^{17}\) For a comprehensive account of housing development in the Swedish Folkhem see, Hård (2010).
\(^{18}\) Rudberg (1994).
\(^{19}\) Hagberg (1986), pp. 49–50.
because electrification was still limited at the beginning of the period. By the 1950s, however, electrification became more widespread. By 1951, 19 per cent of the homes in the countryside had an electric stove. In addition, the prices of the home devices were so high in the 1930s that only those families with high incomes could buy them, although by the 1940s significantly more households had increased access to certain devices. For example, in 1941, 89 per cent of middle-class households had a vacuum cleaner, compared to 31 per cent amongst the working-class. An analysis of all electrical appliances shows a similar distribution based on household income. There was an important transformation from the beginning to the end of the period this thesis covers; however, class differences seem to have remained for the most part.

The material reorganisation of domestic spaces coincided with the changed position of women in society as a consequence of the process of industrialisation. The rationalisation of domestic work had as a purpose attracting women back into the home at a time of high unemployment. The political question had different ideological bases, one represented by Alva Myrdal who argued that in order for women to participate in society on equal conditions as men, domestic work had to be rationalised and minimised; the other represented by Elin Wägner, who believed that women should approach public life from their own visions taken from the domestic world.

A great deal of the discussion on the reformation of the home was related to the housewife’s role in her own home and in society. But how widespread was this role in reality? The housewife period, as the period from the 1930s to around the 1950s has been referred to, entailed that the most normal situation for a married woman was to be a housewife. In 1940 there were 1,200,000 housewives in Sweden and in 1950 there were 1,379,000. Many of them experienced an increased social status and felt blessed with the technical appliances they had access to. On the other hand, there were also women in the 1950s who lived in non-modern conditions, with cold water, wooden stoves, latrines in the yard, etc. and for whom novel comforts were something they could only dream of.

But how was this depicted in films? Did films spread a view of the modern home as an ideal that was classless and accessible to all? Or did films have a more realistic approach? Judging by the dominant presence of the housewife in the public debate, one would expect that films also shared this imagery. Was this the case?

In Mexico, there was also an ideal of modernity, and also there those who had access to the most comfortable and modern living conditions were the

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20 See chapter three in Hagberg (1986).
best-off classes. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Mexico was characterised by its social stratification into a landholding aristocracy owning big farms, mansions and houses abroad; a rural population living in adobe houses and small rural settlements; a middle class living in the cities in houses and apartments; and urban slums. During the 1950s Mexico City was in a phase of rapid urbanisation; ‘the poorest were concentrated in relatively central areas, and the peripheral squatter settlements and clandestine speculative subdivisions were populated mainly by consolidators.’ Thus, in Mexico, modern living was related both to the improvement of living conditions of the middle and upper classes and to the undesirable, but inevitable process of urbanisation that created crowded and impoverished inner-city slums, particularly in the largest urban areas.

Just like in Sweden, social reformers in Mexico had a commitment to modernity, and after the Revolution they aimed at bringing the nation into a ‘more advanced’ state that could be comparable to Western developments.

Progress for Latin American policymakers involved an aspiration of social, racial and economic transformation. Modernisation in Mexico entailed gendered welfare reform, and it was directed to both rural and urban populations. Peasants would learn modern medicines and childrearing techniques, and the modern citizen was to be self-disciplined and hard working in order to meet the industrialisation objectives of the country. Moreover, the welfare advocates saw mothers as central characters in their vision of the modern welfare state, both in rural and urban environments. One important element of the welfare programme was the creation of the professional field of social work, which allowed women from all classes a professional career.

Social workers played a fundamental role in the modernisation of social life and particularly the education of poor women in how to become modern. Historian Mary Kay Vaughan calls this process the modernisation of patriarchy in Mexico. Women’s modern role in the post-revolutionary household was therefore closely linked to domesticity.

Studies of the imagery of Mexican modernity, such as Hershfield’s *Imagining la Chica Moderna*, identify an aspiration of modernity based on consumption of primarily foreign items such as domestic technology, fashion, etc.

When observing the iconography of modernity in advertising during the first decades of the twentieth century in Mexico, it becomes clear that adverts address a sector of the population with much purchasing power: only a few were able to acquire novel consumer items such as kitchen appliances. Modern domesticity was a middle-class domesticity to which few had access.

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It required a living standard that allowed women to stay at home and be in charge of either domestic work or domestic management and the purchase of domestic appliances. Still, despite the fact that the target customers of these consumer goods were the middle classes, a rather limited group of people in fact, these images were present and circulated among a broader group of people.

When looking at advertisements, newspapers, magazines, etiquette books, etc., we get a clear idea of the desired image of the Mexican modern woman and her domestic role, as we can observe in Hershfield’s study. She looks modern; she is usually wearing fashionable dresses covered by an apron, uses vacuum cleaners, irons, cooks in state of the art gas stoves and electric ovens, uses scientific remedies for domestic plagues, uses medicines for her ailments, feeds her children with scientifically developed foodstuffs, etc.²⁹ A home managed by a modern Mexican woman was expected to be filled with appliances, be clean and tidy, and specially uncluttered and simple.

Studies of advertising from the period I analyse show that the home is a recurrent setting in printed adverts, and it is almost exclusively that of the middle and upper classes, social groups that during the so-called ‘Mexican miracle’ period had the ability to purchase consumer goods and live a modern life. Family life was a common motif in advertising; families, composed of a wife, a husband and two young children, were often depicted in the living room. Family life scenes often showed the housewife with a motherly and caring attitude, providing food, embraces or relief. The husband, in turn, changed his role in the period 1930 to 1970. While at the beginning of the period it is common to see him sitting on the sofa reading the paper, sometimes smoking while his children play on the floor and the mother contemplates the scene, from the 1950s and onwards the father is depicted taking a more active role, playing with his children and holding them.³⁰ Images of families in advertising account for the ideal of femininity based on a housewifely and motherly role, but also for a change towards a ‘new Mexican paternity and masculinity.’³¹

A study of a provincial Mexican city shows that the process of modernisation in Mexico, which author Olivia Ruiz connects to capitalist growth and industrialisation, modified gender relations and particularly the configuration of the gender division of labour and domesticity in middle-class households. While in pre-modernisation times, which is according to the author before 1940s, middle-class women and men worked in occupations that allowed a proximity to the domestic sphere and a more active participation of women in these productive occupations, with the advent of modernity a clearer separation of spheres took place in the city of Hermosillo. Men had greater access to new types of jobs, and the notion of the family wage became more

³¹ Sosenski (2014).
widespread. This led to a relegation of middle-class women to reproductive work in the home and more limited possibilities to work for wages or to have a presence in the public sphere.32

I mentioned earlier that in Sweden domestic workers decreased in numbers after the 1930s. This did not happen in Mexico. In 1930 one out of three women who participated in the labour market was a domestic worker, and of all domestic workers in the country, 70 per cent were women. Ten years later, the total number of domestic workers had increased by about 20 thousand, and the proportion of women had increased to 84 per cent. Although the country was going through a process of industrialisation, there was an increased participation of the female workforce in commerce, communication, and the public sector and their presence in domestic work remained the same.33 Despite attempts to regulate and reappraise domestic work both by state laws and organised workers themselves, this occupation continued to be highly unregulated.

In Mexican cinema, the representation of city and countryside environments had a turning point: while the cowboy musical genre prevailed on screen at the beginning of the period and particularly from the end of the 1930s until 1948, from that point on the city became predominant in film production. The commercial orientation of Mexican cinema turned to satisfying the demands of the urban working classes, who had made cinema-going their primary source of entertainment. So the city became a theme, particularly during the period 1948–1952, and its popularity reactivated the film industry, which had entered an impasse in the previous years.34

Films depict different types of environments, urban and rural and those in which upper and working-class people live and work. How were domesticity and gender structures affected by the process of modernisation in this multiplicity of environments and spatial contexts according to films? Did cinema predominantly depict the experiences of those groups that seemed to be the most popular in the printed media, such as the upper middle and upper classes?

The Cinematic Urban Home

The Swedish Middle and Upper-Class Home

Despite the fact that in Sweden the debate on housing conditions and domestic work revolved around the role of the housewife, usually from a working-class background, films frequently depicted upper-class environments in which domestic workers were present. These films constituted a popular genre in Swedish film production.

32 Ruiz (1994).
The question of domestic service itself was also relevant to the concerns of the times. In 1930, 22 per cent of all unmarried women in Sweden were employed in domestic work, but this proportion would be drastically reduced in the following decades. Domestic workers were common in the homes of the bourgeoisie; in this group, servants were considered necessary for maintaining a comfortable home.

Films that depict bourgeois households often focus on the lives of domestic workers, and in these films domestic spaces are largely visible. In these films some rooms are usually more present than others, for example the kitchen and the living room; others appear only sporadically, such as the bathroom and the bedroom. The kitchen in these films is a common setting. The kitchen in the modern home was, during this period, the receptacle of domestic technology, time-saving devices and comforts aimed at making domestic work less strenuous. We can in fact see some of these modern devices and modern space arrangements in these types of films.

In *Home Slaves* (1933) (*Hemslavinnor*), which plays out in the city, the modern nature of the home is depicted through, among other signs, the presence of electrical appliances. We can observe an early washing machine in the kitchen, which young Greta (Isa Quensel) uses while the benevolent mistress of the house, Anna Bergman (Signe Wirff), notes that when she was young and worked as a farm maid, she did not have access to such advances. In *We Home Slaves* (*Vi hemslavinnor*) (1942), we observe not only a refrigerator and a functional kitchen, but also a radio playing for the delight of the musical domestic worker who prefers to whisk the sauce to the rhythm of jazz.

Even though *We Home Slaves* came after *Home Slaves*, the appearance of modern domestic appliances is less highlighted in this film. There is, in fact, only one hint at the domestic comforts of modern times in this film, and this is depicted in a sequence in which Kristiana (Dagmar Ebbesen), a mature

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domestic worker who had recently arrived in the city from the countryside, is introduced for the first time to the vacuum cleaner. The scene makes clear that Kristiana detests the machine, as she designates it a ‘machine of the devil’ while she calls the vacuum cleaner vendor a Bolshevik.

In *A Man in the Kitchen* (*En karl i köket*) (1954) there is also a spacious functionalist kitchen, with all the comforts of the time. Very commonly, domestic technology and functionalist architecture are present in filmic kitchens.

All these homes are filled with kitchen technology and can be considered modern terms of the aesthetics of space. But is work modern too?

In the film *Home Slaves*, the protagonist, young Greta, is a city girl with a low socioeconomic status who was raised by foster families. Greta works for two families during the story. In the first family, the Rosenqvists, the housewife Klara (Anna Widforss) does not recognise her needs and rights as a worker and displays an overbearing attitude towards her. While working for this family, Greta is purposefully a lousy worker. In this workplace Greta is able to have her fiancé visit her in the kitchen, though not necessarily with the permission of her boss.

In the second family where Greta is employed, the Bergmans, she experiences a great difference in how she is treated. The housewife Anna is kind and motherly. In the kitchen, Greta’s work tasks are combined with friendship and an emotional attachment with her employer. Even though the presence of Greta’s boyfriend in the house is not visible on screen, we learn that, with the permission of Anna, Greta is able to have him visit her for dinner.

The film depicts having a good relationship between employer and employee as desirable because it presupposes a democratic view of interpersonal relations played out in the home. While Klara Rosenqvist is ridiculed and forced to revise her views on domestic work, Anna Bergman is depicted as a good employer.

In *We Home Slaves*, which is a more recent version of the manuscript on which *Home Slaves* was also based, the protagonist is an older domestic
worker, Kristiana, a woman who has lived most of her life in the countryside and only after having lost her previous job finds herself with the need to migrate to the city. Kristiana finds a job at the Larssons. The story is based on the contrast between Kristiana, her countryside manners and work ethic, and Laura Larsson (Hjördis Petterson) with her snobbishness and her conceited attitude towards domestic work and domestic workers, which seems to be a characteristic of urban bourgeois pretences.

Kristiana, to the dislike of the mistress of the house, sees her own presence in the family rooms as normal. She does not find it inappropriate to have her meals with the family, but her employer does. Kristiana advocates a more democratic interaction between all the household members.

Laura’s concessions to Kristiana, at the beginning of her employment, are some of the labour conditions that previous domestic workers at the Larssons tended to claim, such as free days and paid vacations. Kristiana, however, is not interested: ‘I did not take this job to be free,’ she says when Laura informs her about her working conditions. She in turn, claims a higher status in the house, in her words, ‘to be treated as a human being’. Kristiana is in fact a non-modern woman in most respects: she is used to the countryside lifestyle, waking up early and working all day long, and going to church on Sundays. Nevertheless, Kristiana’s view on domestic work and the role of the domestic worker is more in line with the modern view of the professionalisation of work than Laura’s disdainful attitude. The film does not necessarily present Kristiana’s attitude towards work as modern. In fact, her view of democratic relations and her position as an equal status member of the household is not depicted as an innovation that a modern woman brings to a non-modern home. Kristiana is, in fact, depicted as a non-modern woman who experiences a cultural chock when she is confronted with the urban lifestyle for the first time. However, the equality that she claims and the democratic attitude she endorses are traits that are presented as positive in the film and that appear as desirable and necessary in a modern society. By the end of the film, Laura changes her attitude towards domestic employees and understands that the era in which they could be regarded as servants and could be exploited has passed. She then becomes a modern employer.

In this film Kristiana is depicted as a worthy worker because she is hardworking and a bearer of righteous values, whereas Laura, despite the respectability that her social position awards her, is an unworthy woman when she acts as a snobbish and arrogant employer.

The presence of domestic workers in private rooms occurs in film stories, though usually with a hint of transgression. In Home Slaves there is a sequence that exemplifies the differentiation between private and public rooms in the house. The sequence starts with domestic worker Kristina (also played by Dagmar Ebbesen) in the master bedroom. There, she finds a photo of young Palle Rosenqvist (Valdemar Dalquist), the head of the household. She picks up the photo and kisses it saying: ‘Oh, my Palle!’ At that moment Klara Rosen-
qvist enters the room and witnesses the scene. Mad and confused, Klara takes the photo away from Kristina and scolds her for having violated her privacy.

In *We Home Slaves* the domestic worker steps freely into the bedrooms of each family member and wakes them up so they can start their days early. Laura Larsson and little Palle (Kaj Hjelm) are the least happy. They are not used to having someone coming as close as to their own beds and deciding when they should start their days. In *A Man in the Kitchen* and *Mr. Home Assistant (Herr Husassistenten)* (1938), two films adapted from the same theatre play, we also see the newly employed male domestic worker entering the master bedroom and waking up the head of the household. The husband reacts with surprise and bitterness and complains to his wife about this unacceptable intrusion.

These sequences show that the movement of domestic workers around the home, their work tasks and entitlements are unclear and in negotiation. Still, despite the disruptions and tensions between them and the family members, the domestic workers are regarded as professional home aides, who are allowed to enter the most private rooms and be close to family members as long as their tasks create a more efficient daily routine.

When domestic workers are allowed a closer involvement with family members, it is due to their roles as home aides who can promote the productive use of time. For this reason, a work practice that at times is interpreted as a violation of privacy can also be a respectable domestic task. What we usually observe in films is a change from a view of the domestic worker as a servant or household member towards a view of the domestic worker as a home aide.

If we look at the aesthetics of the home and the arrangement of space, we could argue that these films depict modern environments. However, the arrangement of domestic work in these homes denotes non-modernity because the presence of domestic workers was a long-standing phenomenon just reaching a critical point towards disappearance. These films, however, present a clear message concerning modernity: the professionalisation of work and more concretely the view of domestic work as a worthy occupation.

But even if films promote a more positive evaluation of the domestic worker, they do not present their work as particularly rational. Domestic workers sometimes do not get many things done, and those who do, do so without the help of labour-saving machines.

In her doctoral thesis, historian Karin Carlsson reminds us that, historically, paid domestic work has had a special status in relation to other types of jobs. Carlsson asserts that people employed in private households have been excluded from the general labour regulations and the job has had a lower status both economically and in terms of social status. Nevertheless, Carlsson continues, there have been attempts to change this situation and make of domestic work a desired occupation through professionalisation, better regulations, etc.37 The ways in which Swedish films present domestic work and the lives, wishes and

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rewards of domestic workers reflect these ideas, as is demonstrated by the fact that the agreeable employer in *Home Slaves* represents the righteous and modern woman as opposed to the elitist snobbish housewife.

**The Mexican Middle and Upper-Class Home**

The representation of the middle and upper-class family was common in printed media and advertising in Mexico. Usually the loving housewife, the husband and at least a couple of children would be part of the picture. In films, however, just as in the Swedish case, the domestic worker has an obligatory presence in the representation of family life.

In Mexican films there is also a visible domestic aesthetic of modernity. In *You are Missing the Point* (*Ahí está el detalle*) from 1940, the domestic worker Paz (Dolores Camarillo) works in an upper-class home for Lolita (Sofía Álvarez) and Don Cayetano (Joaquín Pardavé). The first part of the story takes place primarily in the kitchen because that is where Paz meets her boyfriend Cantinflas (Mario Moreno) in secret. The kitchen is equipped with an oven, refrigerator, and a comfortable eating space where Cantinflas gets his dinner every day. The kitchen is furnished with simple white cupboards and cabinets. The kitchen has two doors, one towards the inner yard and one towards the rest of the house, which the domestic worker uses to attend her work tasks in the house and to allow her boyfriend to enter the house unnoticed.

Cantinflas, the protagonist of the film, is not only unemployed, but also unwilling to work. Despite his naughtiness, Cantinflas is very lucky and, thanks to some comical developments in the story, he plays the role of a member of the family for whom Paz works. Cantinflas then takes the opportunity to leave the secrecy of the kitchen and enjoy the rooms in the house that had been forbidden to him. He then spends his days lying on the sofa, smoking cigars and drinking brandy.

Cantinflas temporarily changes his status in the house. From being the maid’s boyfriend who secretly eats the bosses’ food, he becomes part of the family when he pretends to be Lolita’s brother.

The film suggests all along that Paz is, in fact, not allowed to have a love life as an employee in the Del Paso family. Her nervous behaviour, her eagerness to hide her romantic relationship and her attempt to always do her utmost to please the boss and obey without making a sound show her totally powerless position as a worker and the obliteration of her personality.

The housemistress, Lolita, is never depicted in the kitchen. She is sometimes in the living room sitting on the sofa or in her bedroom. When her husband is around, she is usually next to him, trying to keep him calm and pleased and trying to drive his jealousy away. When Don Cayetano is at home, he is usually tending to work matters in his office or is in the bedroom with his wife giving expression to his jealousy. There are, however, hints of his
Figure 5. Cantinflas flirting with his girlfriend Paz before getting his dinner. From You are Missing the Point, (1940), Grovas-Oro Films. Filmoteca UNAM Collection.

Figure 6. Cantinflas pretending to be Leonardo del Paso chatting with the head of the household Don Cayetano. From You are Missing the Point, (1940), Grovas-Oro Films. Cineteca Nacional Collection.

Figure 7. Cantinflas hugging his ‘sister’ Lolita. From You are Missing the Point, (1940), Grovas-Oro Films. Filmoteca UNAM Collection.
public life. Even though he is not depicted outside of the home, we learn that he works at an office and goes on business trips.

In *Owner and Mistress (Dueña y señora)* from 1948, we also observe an upper-class home. In this house live a widower, his three adult children and the domestic workers. The chief domestic worker is a mature woman called Toña (Sara García).

In this house the kitchen is spacious and well organised. It is not very different from the kitchen in *You are Missing the Point*. There is white furniture, with simple lines, and cupboards to keep food, dishes and utensils. In this kitchen there are also electrical appliances such as a kitchen assistant, an electric stove, a fridge, a washing machine, iron, etc. Toña supervises the work of all the domestic workers, two female cooks and one male butler.

No family members are freely allowed in the kitchen. One sequence in the film illustrates this: Toña is in the kitchen ordering each of the domestic workers around when one of the sons steps in and pinches the young domestic worker on her rear. Toña scolds him and drives him away saying that he has no right to be in the kitchen.

The house in this film is very spacious. There is a dining room where the family and their friends eat together. They are waited on by Toña and the other workers. We can see Toña’s bedroom, which is simple, but big and comfortable. The house has a large living room, a library that is Don Fernando’s (Domingo Soler) home office, and several bedrooms for each member of the family and the domestic workers. There is, moreover, one special room, referred to as the mistress’s bedroom, which belonged to Don Fernando’s former wife Laura (Esther Luquín).

We can observe in these films that the homes have a modern set-up, visually. They have novel electronic devices, all the services that could be found in urban environments and are uncluttered and well-organised. However, the
interactions of family members and domestic workers within these spaces do not necessarily reflect modernity.

The ways in which spaces are organised in the house in *Owner and Mistress* and the ways people move within these places say a great deal about the roles people have and their status within the social structure. A few scenes in this film prove this point.

A turning point in the story occurs when Don Fernando’s new fiancée, Isabel (Marga López), arrives in the house. It must be noted that Toña had, after the death of Don Fernando’s wife, taken the position of mistress of the house. In her youth, she had been Don Fernando’s lover and had a son with him, Luis (Rubén Rojo). Don Fernando’s wife Laura raised Luis as her own child, and, when Laura died, Toña came back to the house and raised her son Luis and Laura’s children Lalo (Manolo Fábregas) and Beba (Alma Rosa Aguirre) as her own. Toña’s position in the house is thus well established because, apart from being a domestic worker, she has an emotional attachment to the head of the household and his children.

When the newly-arrived fiancée Isabel steps into the kitchen trying to take the role of mistress of the house, she is immediately met with rejection. Toña tells Isabel that she does not need any help and there is no need for her to get involved in domestic work. Offended, Isabel leaves the kitchen.

The kitchen is one of the places in the house where Toña’s role as manager is clearest. However, the spatial organisation and appearance of the house in its entirety is an important part of the plot. The bedroom of the *señora*, or the mistress’ bedroom, had not been in use since Laura died. Hence, when Don Fernando commands Toña to prepare the room for Isabel, everyone reacts with surprise. The fact that the room will be occupied again suggests a new organisation of work, but also new emotional arrangements.

In a physical space that signals modernity, we can observe a strict hierarchy based on gender, class, marital status, but also emotional attachments. The

*Figure 9. Toña scolding Lalo, one of the sons in the house, for coming into the kitchen. From Owner and Mistress, (1948), Cinematográfica Filmex S.A. Cineteca Nacional Collection.*
married couple occupy the highest echelon, and this is represented in the ways the members of a household use domestic spaces. The fiancée climbs up from the guest room to the señora’s room. The domestic worker can command other domestic workers and make decisions in the house based on her role as the mistress of the house, which she earned by being the mother of the head of the household’s first-born child.

Another sequence in the film illustrates the relationship between spatiality and the roles of family members in the house. Everyone in the family, including Toña, is talking in the living room. Luis, who does not like his future stepmother, expresses his anger after Isabel reprimands Toña for interfering with family issues. In protest Luis leaves the living room and enters the house library, closing the doors after him. Don Fernando follows Luis, but when Isabel is about to enter the room as well, she is stopped by Toña, who places herself in front of the closed doors and says, ‘Not here miss, you are not allowed to enter this place. You can command me, humiliate me as much as you like, but when it comes to my boy I jump and claw at whatever is needed to defend him’.

Toña then steps into the room herself, closing the door after her, marking that she has a better right to intervene in the conflict. The discussion, taking place in the privacy of the library, is a confrontation between Don Fernando and Luis. Luis says he will never accept Isabel. Don Fernando replies that he would rather Luis left the house if he had to choose. For Don Fernando, Luis is the son with the least right to complain. He is about to confess who Luis’ actual mother is when Toña intervenes and stops him. Luis leaves the room and Toña convinces Don Fernando to make their son come back, and in exchange she promises she will make Luis apologise to Isabel and be humble and obedient.

In this sequence, there are several spatial elements at work. On the one hand, we observe the separation between public and private domestic spaces.
In the public, family relations must be harmonious; hierarchies and the authority of the father must be adhered to and accepted by everyone. The power conflict between Toña and Isabel, as well as that between Don Fernando and his illegitimate son, are played out with different tools and in different ways in the home’s public and private spaces. The tension between Toña and Isabel is perceptible in the kitchen, a private space, when the latter attempts to take over the organisation of work there. The discussion between Don Fernando and Luis is centred on Luis’s ability to keep living in his father’s house and his acceptance of the change in the roles of household members. The fact that Luis lives in his father’s house is not depicted as a mere living arrangement; he is in fact a successful architect who could afford an independent living situation. But Luis is also a bachelor and the son of a respected and wealthy man and hence living in his father’s house is a token of respect and recognition of the father’s authority. Power and legitimacy are exercised and shown by the spaces every person is allowed to occupy and the extent to which they are able to restrict others’ access.

Don Fernando is depicted as the guardian of his family’s respectability. He is responsible of making his children accommodate to social rules and look after the reputation of the family name. Part of belonging to the family is expressed by living in the family house. Thus, when Isabel moves into the family house as Don Fernando’s fiancée and is later presented to family acquaintances at a party and finally moves to the señora’s room, her new role as the respected mistress of the house is indicated. Toña’s presence in the house varies throughout the story according to her role. When she is a young girl in a romance with Fernando, she is able to live in the house as a domestic worker, since nobody knows about their affair. However, later on, when Fernando marries Laura, a woman from his own social class, Toña leaves the house because there is no room for her in the home of a respectable married couple. When Laura dies, Toña is able to return, although not as a
romantic partner but rather as a domestic worker and childrearer. Toña is able to retain her respectability because she sacrifices love for the wellbeing of her own and Laura’s children. Yet, as a motherly figure, Toña is able to occupy an important place in Fernando’s house even after the arrival of a new mistress of the house.

Mexican film *A Family Like Many Others* (1949) (*Una familia de tantas*) depicts an upper-middle class family characterised by its patriarchal structure. The Cataño household is comprised of the family’s patriarch Don Rodrigo (Fernando Soler), his wife Doña Gracia (Eugenia Galindo), their five children, and domestic worker Lupe (Enriqueta Reza). Although the Cataño family is wealthy and has access to the loyal domestic help of Lupe, the kitchen is not characterised by a modern and functionalist appearance. Domestic appliances are not visible, and in fact the kitchen is the workplace of not only Lupe, but all the women in the house. The kitchen looks like a stylised countryside kitchen, with large clay and wooden utensils hanging on the walls, and no cupboards to store food or kitchenware. We observe in a morning scene that, in the kitchen, Doña Gracia and Lupe cook breakfast and Maru (Martha Roth), the daughter, who is almost fifteen years old, helps out and feeds her infant brother.

Fifteen years of age marks female adulthood in Mexico. Often celebrated with a church ceremony and a ball, the *quinceañera* celebration has traditionally marked the presentation of middle and upper-class girls into high society. This ritual, depicted in *A Family Like Many Others*, indicates Maru’s passage into adulthood. This entails that Maru’s father will have to decide whether she will stay at home and focus solely on a life-long vocation as a housewife or will start working until she gets married, like her older sister.

In the Cataño household three women are in charge of domestic work, and three family members, Don Rodrigo, the oldest son Héctor (Felipe de Alba) and oldest daughter Estela (Isabel del Puerto) work for pay outside of the house.

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38 For an account of the *quinceañera* celebration, see Napolitano (2002).
The predominant ideal of femininity in Mexico during the period from the 1930s to the 1950s was, just as in Sweden, the housewife ideal, in which women devoted their time to caring for their family and home. Sociologist Elvia Montes de Oca shows that in women’s magazines of the 1930s, the explicit message addressed to women was that they should be good housewives and should not forget that they, more than anything else, were mothers and wives. Part of their obligations as housewives was to make their husbands feel loved and appreciated, keep them clean and presentable, to relate with intelligent people so that they could keep up an interesting conversation with their husbands, protect their children and sacrifice themselves for the sake of their families.39

In *A Family Like Many Others*, this is the role of femininity that is forced upon young Maru by her father and to a lesser extent her mother and the domestic worker. This normative role of femininity is clearly observed in the spatial restraints that members of the family have within the house and how they move between private and public spaces.

The oldest daughter Estela has an official boyfriend whom she can meet certain days of the week in the living room under the watchful eye of Doña Gracia. The mother can also be a figure of authority within the house when Don Rodrigo delegates tasks to her.

Don Rodrigo, however, controls most things occurring in the home. Unlike the home arrangement that we observe in many Swedish films in which domestic matters are the prerogative of the housewife, in this family the male head of the household is involved in most domestic and family concerns.

The Cataño family’s home is in fact very lively. Many people live there and occupy different parts of the house. Spatiality determines the role of family members, their relative power and gender hierarchies. The following sequence exemplifies how the use of domestic spaces strengthens the patriarchal structure that organises this family.

It is a weekday morning. The alarm clock has gone off, announcing that it is time for the three sisters who share a room to start getting ready. They all want to use the bathroom, but their brother Héctor has gotten there first and he is taking too long. Annoyed, the girls knock loudly and ask him to hurry. Héctor puts on his bathrobe and says they can come in while he is shaving. All the siblings are in the bathroom: Maru tries to wash the face of their little brother; Estela, upset because her brother did not bother to wash the bathtub after himself, scrubs it in preparation for her bath; and little Lupita (Alma Delia Fuentes) is half-asleep on a stool. Maru and Héctor fight for their place by the sink when Héctor realises Lupita is sitting on his clean shirt. Héctor then pulls Lupita up and throws her into the tub, which makes Lupita scream and cry. All the noise makes Don Rodrigo enter the bathroom to see what is going on.

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Upset, Don Rodrigo says, ‘What does this mean? What is this uproar about?’ Addressing Héctor he adds, ‘What are you doing here with your sisters?’

Héctor nervously replies, ‘Ehm… I’m on my way out, Dad.’ ‘That is no excuse!’ says Don Rodrigo. Now addressing the girls he says, ‘How many times have I told you that I don’t like you being in the bathroom when your brother is here?’

‘But he was already dressed, Daddy,’ Maru replies. ‘It doesn’t matter! Out everyone! What are you waiting for? Out!’ says Don Rodrigo.

Everyone except Héctor leaves and Don Rodrigo tells him, ‘You are acting like a child. You are the one who should be making sure my commands are followed.’

Héctor tries to excuse himself, saying, ‘They were almost knocking down the door, Dad. I thought that while they washed and filled up the bathtub I could finish getting ready.’

‘In that case…’ says Don Rodrigo, still upset, ‘…you should leave the door open and not lock yourselves in as if you were doing something wrong.’

‘Ok Dad, I’m sorry,’ says Héctor, and they keep talking for a while, although now about work.

What the previously described sequence shows is that the home and the rooms within it are social spaces where the hierarchies and the organisation of gender are made clear. This sequence strongly emphasises the power of the patriarch and his expectations the son whom he considers his successor.

As Estela is an adult woman and Maru is on her way to becoming one, they cannot be in a private room with an adult man without parental supervision, regardless of whether it is a family member. Moreover, it becomes clear in the scene that, within the home, men have a role as overseers and decision makers.

The very strict spatial demarcation within the household and the power position of Don Rodrigo is presented as a microcosm of society in which every member has a pre-determined role. We can observe that, in this microcosm,
women are in charge of domestic work, but paid work is allowed in some circumstances when the woman is single and enjoys the protection of a man. A highly controlled courting period is the prelude to marriage. Courting must, moreover, be accepted by the head of the household and follow the moral principles of sexual abstinence and discretion, while marriage must be based on submission and self-sacrifice. The male head of the household must be the provider and the guardian of the family’s respectability.

Maru meets vacuum cleaner vendor Roberto del Hierro (David Silva) when he knocks on the door and steps into the house with the machine without asking for permission and begins to demonstrate the benefits of the product. In his speech Roberto talks about the time-saving and hygienic benefits of the vacuum cleaner, arguing that is a great companion for the housewife.

After this first encounter, Roberto and Maru meet a few more times, and Roberto begins courting Maru. The courtship, however, occurs outside of the house, the couple walking together on the street where Don Rodrigo cannot see them. During these walks, Roberto talks to Maru about the importance of the wife’s involvement in the life of her husband, his work and her role in decision-making in family matters. Thus, in addition to the modern appliances Roberto brings to the Cataño’s house – a vacuum cleaner and a refrigerator – he also brings in novel ideas about modern marriage. At the end of the story Roberto and Maru get married without the permission of Don Rodrigo, who prefers to cut all relations with his daughter before accepting what he considers to be a shame for his family.

These films show a highly patriarchal organisation of the household in which the head of the household decides over most matters, including the behaviour and the future of his children. This patriarchal structure is made clear in the organisation of space within the house. *A Family Like Many Others* shows that, for the older generation, it is the husband who decides how much room for manoeuvre the wife has in the household and what occupational and family choices their children will make. The younger generation, represented by Maru and Roberto, show that a modern husband allows his wife a greater
involvement in family matters and that she has greater freedom to make her own decisions concerning family issues. The film *Owner and Mistress* also showed that the ability of the mistress of the house to decide over family matters depended on the head of the household.

*A Family Like Many Others* showed very clearly how the use of space indicated the level of respectability of the different characters. In a conservative middle-class urban household, there is a clear delimitation of domestic spaces based on gender. The described bathroom sequence, for instance, showed that the respectability of women can only be kept through close watchfulness. Female-male interactions, particularly of unmarried women, must at all times be open and occur under the surveillance of married men, preferably the male head of the household. Similarly, courtship must be approved in advance and also occur under the surveillance of a family member (the mother or the father, for example). Thus, when courtship occurs outside of the home in an unsupervised manner, or when men interact with women regardless of whether or not these interactions have erotic or romantic connotations, women are in danger of losing their respectability. The film shows, however, that thanks to the modern approach to love and male-female interactions, women can retain their worthiness, despite the fact that they lose their respectability in the eyes of an older, non-modern generations.

Power relations based on gender are most visible in the spatial analysis, but I will examine these gender-based structures more closely in Chapter 5. What the configuration of space and the roles of different family members in the home say about modernity is that patriarchy is starting to decline. The endings in the films discussed here show how the authority of the father is challenged by the new generation.

While the Swedish films analysed here are light comedies and centre on the lives of domestic workers and how they relate to other family members, in particular the housewives, Mexican films are family dramas or more intricate farces. But even though genre differences can lead to a different treatment of film themes, it must also be noted that Mexican films put a greater em-
phasis on family matters and the tensions of family life. Swedish films, on
the contrary, seem more concerned with the changing labour conditions of
workers – in particular domestic workers. These tensions are an indication of
the difficulties in dealing with changing times and new gender roles, as well as
new work and love practices. The predominance of family themes in Mexican
films and labour matters in Swedish films signals the different concerns that
the process of modernisation generated in both countries.

**One-Room and Kitchen**
The spatial arrangements of wealthy urban homes are not necessarily machine-
like, as I showed above. Even though well-off homes might have domestic
technology and a functionalist architectural style, the organisation of work
and emotional life in films might still not follow the scientific, time-saving,
standardised impersonal space arrangements that functionalists promoted, and
the attitudes of the home’s inhabitants might still retain features from the past.

When films depict the life of the working classes, they tend to approach
contemporary concerns related to the process of modernisation. Questions of
the rationalisation of the use of space and time were more relevant to the more
disadvantaged households.

When depicting the living conditions of the urban working class, Swedish
films are often set in one-room and kitchen apartments. In Åkerman’s study
from 1941 on living conditions in Stockholm, 52 per cent of the randomly
chosen families lived in apartments comprised of one room and kitchen and
36 per cent lived in two-room and kitchen apartments. It is, therefore, not
surprising that films depict working-class youngsters living in these types of
homes.

Films such as *Factory Girls* (1935) (*Flickor på fabrik*), *King’s Street*,
(1943) (*Kungsgatan*) and *A Girl Comes to the City* (1937) (*En flicka kommer till
sta’n*) depict one-room and kitchen apartments in which young workers live.
The domestic worker is not present in this type of accommodation.

*A Girl Comes to the City* is a film about Ulla (Isa Quensel), a young girl
who believes a better future is awaiting her in Stockholm. But once she is in
the big city, she finds herself unemployed, with no money and nowhere to go.
Luckily for her, a former colleague, Gösta (Einar Axelsson), asks her to come
to have dinner at his place.

Gösta lives with his friend, painter Pålle (Åke Ohberg), in an apartment
that does not look much like a home. Instead, the apartment’s largest room
resembles an artist’s studio. As soon as Ulla steps in, she sees Pålle painting.
The place seems quite spacious because there are not many pieces of furni-
ture. In one corner of the room, there is a small eating place. The kitchen is
separated by a curtain – we glimpse it only briefly and note a few shelves
with some kitchen utensils. In the kitchen there is space for only one cook.

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ään (1941), p. 9.
This kitchen is separated from the rest of the apartment, and it is not a place for socialising, so in terms of function it follows functionalist ideas even if its physical configuration and aesthetics do not.

The protagonist of the 1943 film *King's Street*, Marta (Barbro Kollberg) is a farm girl who moves to the city seeking a better and more exciting life. In one sequence of the film, when Marta’s parents visit her for the first time in her new home, her apartment takes on an important role. Marta lives on her own in a one-room and kitchen apartment. In the room Marta has a bed, a bed table and a small eating area.

During the visit of Marta’s parents, we observe a clash between countryside and city lifestyles. The sequence that shows Marta’s apartment begins when she opens the door and steps into her home followed by her parents. Marta proudly says, ‘Here is where I live!’ But Marta’s mother replies bitterly, ‘How terrible!’ After this comment, Marta’s mother keeps inspecting every detail of the apartment, the decorations, linen and furniture. Everything seems to be very different to what she is used to back home in the countryside. While Marta is preparing lunch in the kitchen, or more correctly, warming up what seems to be pre-made food, her mother looks with amazement at the set table and the cutlery.

*Figure 16.* Ulla and Gösta chat by the kitchen before the latter starts making dinner. From *A Girl Comes to the City*, (1937), AB Irefilm.

*Figure 17.* Marta is getting lunch ready for her parents. This screenshot shows a typical functionalist (*funkis*) apartment. From *King's Street*, (1943), Film AB Imago.
The kitchen is small and simple and in fact the stove is not visible, if there is one. But we see some kind of oven, out of which Marta takes ready-served plates. Marta’s apartment symbolises her independence and self-sufficiency, as well as her belonging to a modern society, which is as unlike the countryside as possible.

*Factory Girls (Flickor på fabrik)* (1935) is a film about factory workers engaged in the labour movement. Young factory worker Karin (Birgit Rosen-gren) meets Harry (Fritiof Billquist), the son of the director of the factory where she works, who is impersonating a regular factory worker at the time they get acquainted with each other.

Karin and Harry meet at the working-class apartment building where Karin lives and Harry has just moved into. The kitchen in Karin’s apartment is rather small, and just as in Gösta’s and Marta’s kitchens, its spatial arrangement allows only domestic chores and very little socialisation. The living room of the working class apartments in *Factory Girls* is quite big and nicely decorated as a space for socialising and resting.

In this film we observe shots of female workers in the factory standing next to each other, all focused on their own work, without much chance to chat or socialise during working hours. In the apartment kitchen, the same girls work next to each other doing the dishes. In the domestic environment, however, they can talk freely about their most personal views on life and love. What is interesting comparing these scenes is that the arrangement of the kitchen seems more factory-like in this type of housing, though the home retains its emotional features.

People who are expected to have paid work outside of the home live in one-room and kitchen apartments in Swedish films. In these types of apartments there are no domestic workers in charge of cleaning and tending to other household members: it is the inhabitants of these apartments who carry out domestic work. Thus, work combines with socialising only to a small extent. When socialisation occurs within the home, it does so more regularly in spaces created for that particular function, such as the living room, which is also the place where people have guests, including romantic partners.

The one-room and kitchen apartments in these films are small and do not neces-
sarily follow the recommendations of functionalist architects regarding size, ventilation, access to natural sunlight, etc. Only the apartment observable in *King’s Street* can be regarded as functionalistic. However, they allow more modern living conditions to the extent that they do not accommodate entire families in multi-purpose rooms.

The kitchens we observe are separate rooms where only work chores take place and not so much social and family life. This type of kitchen is characteristic of its time. Historian of ideas Kerstin Thorn claims that the reduction of the kitchen’s area, the introduction of modernised fittings and the attempt to rationalise household work occurred at the same time.41

The films I have mentioned above use domestic spaces very little as settings for stories. In turn, working-class people live their romantic lives more often at their workplace and in leisure spaces. Even though the working-class homes do not show that domestic work is entirely rationalised, and, in fact, we can observe that the kitchen and other rooms in the house are not completely devoid of emotional practices, it is more common to see these kinds of spaces as temporary accommodation for single working-class youngsters.

Working-class apartments are depicted in these films as respectable accommodation arrangements for the young workers. While in Mexican films most bachelor workers live in their parental home, we can observe that their Swedish counterparts retain their respectability in their independent and unsupervised living arrangements. In apartments like those shown in *Factory Girls*, for example, it is also possible to observe that working-class housing complexes contributed to enhance the spirit of class belonging in the workers. For this reason, romance appears as more freely occurring in both workplaces and domestic spaces.

**The Inner-City Slum (La vecindad)**

In Mexican films we also observe one-room and kitchen apartments, but these homes have rather different connotations from similar-sized homes in Swedish films.

In downtown or inner-city areas of Mexico City, housing settlements were created during the first half of the twentieth century. These places had been ‘old colonial or post-colonial elite residences that [were] sub-divided to provide one-room rental tenements for certain poor groups.’42 Thus, although we cannot say that these places represent modern living standards, they denote one of the consequences of the process of modernisation in the Mexican metropolis: overcrowding in urban areas. Inner-city slums became populated first by immigrants from the countryside in the nineteenth century; later in the twentieth century they became the homes of poor urban groups who were

to be located in the vicinities of the city’s job market.\textsuperscript{43} Often, these homes accommodated large families in small spaces.

The depiction of inner-city slums is a common feature of Mexican films from the end of the decade of the 1940s onwards, a period in which the city acquired a predominant role in Mexican cinema. These types of living arrangements are the most common when depicting working-class urban environments.

A few examples can be observed in films such as: the Pepe el Toro trilogy composed of the films We the Poor (Nosotros los pobres) (1948), You the Rich (Ustedes los ricos) (1948) and Pepe el Toro (Pepe el Toro) (1953), Illusion Travels Streetcar (La illusion viaja en tranvia) (1954), When the Children Hate (Cuando los hijos odian) (1950), The Young and the Damned (Los Olvidados) (1950). These films portray the ways in which modernity created a destitute urban class. One of the central themes of the films is the contrast between the flourishing city and the standard of living of the urban poor.

The typical spatial arrangement of the working class urban neighbourhood in Mexican films is characterised by the proximity between the workplace and the home. In the Pepe el Toro trilogy, Pepe (Pedro Infante), the protagonist, is a carpenter and his workshop is attached to his home. In the film When the Children Hate, the bakery that female protagonist Lolita (Amanda del Llano) runs is also connected to the house. Both neighbourhoods are inner city-slums or vecindades.

The vecindad had been a common accommodation arrangement in Mexico City since before the Revolution, characterised by having a central court yard, surrounded by small apartments or rooms hosting entire families, workshops and shops. Most frequently, vecindades had shared washing places where women met and socialised and usually also shared kitchens and latrines.\textsuperscript{44}

In When the Children Hate, everything takes place in the vecindad and its surroundings. Children play in the inner yard, while women work in their homes or do laundry together in the common washing places. Family quarrels and courting practices also occur right there in the common areas. Even the most intimate rooms of the homes such as the bedrooms are very much accessible. A sequence in When the Children Hate illustrates the public nature of the vecindad, as we will observe next.

Tachito (Carlos Orellana), Lolita’s physically and mentally handicapped brother, who is forbidden by their father from leaving the house, goes out to the inner yard to play with the children from the neighbourhood. Tachito is a grown-up and his appearance is grotesque, but he behaves like a child and enjoys being around children. When the mother of one of the girls Tachito is playing with realises he is there, she, alarmed, asks Tachito’s father, drunkard Ramón (Miguel Inclán), to take his son away. Ramón, enraged, goes to see Tachito, pulls him up and starts to beat him up in sight of all the neighbours.

\textsuperscript{43} Toscano, et al. (1975), p. 131.

\textsuperscript{44} Rhoda & Burton (2010).
and says, ‘I’ve told you that you have to be locked up so you won’t embarrass me!’ As soon as Lolita and domestic worker Nicolasa (Delia Magaña) realise what is going on, they pull the two men apart. Lolita knocks her father over, so he, infuriated, grabs her and threatens her, saying that he will teach her how to respect her father and that he will kill her. Lolita says, ‘Go on, hit me, kill me, smash me to pieces but don’t hurt a poor helpless human being.’ Ramón responds, ‘Yes, I’m going to kill you, because children who hate their father deserve to be trampled on like poisonous animals’. He then slaps Lolita forcefully and at that moment his wife, Doña Carmelita (Lupe Inclán) arrives and puts herself in the middle. Doña Carmelita, crying, makes him turn around and see all the neighbours who are looking. He then realises there is a threatening crowd passing judgement on him. Several men are standing in the front line with clenched hands, ready to act if necessary. ‘No worries’ says Ramón before leaving, ‘I’ll go after you another time when there’s nobody to defend you.’

This sequence shows the openness of the neighbourhood. Everybody can hear and get involved in family disputes, but neighbours can also act like guards and pass judgement on the actions of others.

The same type of neighbourly relationship is depicted in the Pepe el Toro films. In the first film, carpenter Pepe is a bachelor taking care of his elderly handicapped mother and his daughter Chachita (Evita Muñóz) – whom we later learn is in fact his sister’s daughter whom he raises as his own.

We observe several types of spaces in these films. The opening scene of all three films in the trilogy consists of a musical number depicting the

Figure 20. The inner-yard of the vecindad in Pepe el Toro trilogy, from the film You the Rich, (1948), Producciones Rodríguez Hermanos. Cineteca Nacional Collection
films’ characters in their everyday life (See figure 20). The first part of the performance takes place on the street where the vecindad is located. Facing the street is Pepe’s carpentry; his workshop constitutes the boundary between the street and the neighbourhood. Pepe can see what is happening on the street while he works. On the street there is a food-vending stall, street vendors, loaders, the neighbourhood drunkards, construction workers, the prostitute, the bread peddler, the newspaper boy, the milkman, the street musicians, and many people passing by, women with their shopping bags, children playing in the garbage cans, and so on. When Pepe opens the window at the rear of his workshop to dedicate his song to his girlfriend Celia La Chorreada (Blanca Estela Pavón), the vecindad becomes visible. Celia is taking some clothes off the line and washing them at the common laundry place, where Chachita and other women are washing too. In the inner yard we can see neighbours passing by, especially women, as well as a drunken man stumbling around. This sequence shows the connectedness between the street, the inner yard, the homes, and workplaces located in the neighbourhood. The song and the images depict a community sentiment and the spatial connection of the urban working-class rooms.

The home in the vecindad is not depicted as a private space. The following sequence shows that a space that might be thought of as an intimate closed space in an urban modern society could, in fact, be nearly as open as more public spaces such as the street.

The sequence begins with a shot of Pepe’s girlfriend Celia in the kitchen, preparing a meal. The camera then shifts to a medium close-up of Celia while she whistles and runs towards the entrance to make eye contact with Pepe, who is just across the hall in his workshop. This scene shows that they have a system to communicate with each other. There are a couple of neighbours standing on the threshold of the vecindad. They are not visible for the couple but can hear their whistling and, interested in the interaction of the couple,
translate their whistle conversation. Celia and Pepe are talking about how much they love each other. Pepe starts to sing a romantic song while his girlfriend cooks. Celia’s mother enters the room and, as she listens to the song, sighs with contentment. The sequence ends when Celia’s stepfather enters the room and slaps her on her head, scolding her for not paying attention to what she is doing. He points out that she is frying the eggshells and just threw the eggs on the floor. Then, Celia and her stepfather start arguing, while Celia’s mother tries to calm them down. At this point Pepe has gone back to his business, and no neighbours are around to see what is going on.

The home is public in many respects, but it can also be private enough to allow violence, abuse and immoral behaviour that would not be publicly accepted by the neighbours.

Another vecindad sequence is depicted in Illusion Travels Streetcar (La illusion viaja en tranvia) (1954). In this sequence we observe the Christmas party that joins the people living in several neighbouring vecindades. The film shows the closeness of the neighbours and their interactions in the common spaces. Some women cook and distribute food, and the rest work in the mise-en-scéne of the traditional Christmas story. The Christmas party also becomes an ideal situation for flirting and courting. The sequence of the Christmas celebration, which takes place in the vecindad, introduces the relationship between the protagonist couple Lupita (Lilia Prado) and Juan El Caireles (Carlos Navarro).

In The Young and the Damned (Los Olvidados) (1950) we can observe a poor urban home more closely. In the home depicted in the film, a single mother lives with several children. The oldest child is one of the protagonists of the film. The boy, Pedro (Alfonso Mejía), spends his days on the streets with a gang of children who devote their lives to stealing, slacking off and fighting. The family relations of most of the boys, including Pedro, are broken. The
following sequence shows the harshness of life in Pedro’s household and how spaces are arranged in poverty-stricken environments.

The sequence begins when Pedro’s mother (Estela Inda) enters her home carrying an infant child and a shopping bag. Two young children, who are waiting for her arrival, jump around her as she steps in, happy because they know they will eat soon. In the room there are several beds placed one next to the other, but otherwise the room is rather bare. The walls are decorated with an altar, a wall calendar and some religious images. As soon as the mother lays the bag on the bed, the boy opens it and realises there is meat in there. Happy, the little girls asks where she got it from. The mother says ‘la señora gave it to me’ (meaning the mistress of the house where she works). Then, as soon as the mother puts the baby on the bed, she takes the bag to the table and starts unpacking. The two children try to help her, anxious to get their hands on the food. At this moment Pedro steps into the house, and his mother says, ‘Long time no see, mister! Where did you see the sun rise today?’

‘Right around there,’ replies Pedro. ‘I was looking for a job,’ he adds.

‘Yeah right, the whole night, surely,’ says Pedro’s mother incredulous, while she feeds her other children.

‘What did you come for?’ asks the mother. ‘Mom, I’m hungry,’ says Pedro.
His mother, reprimanding him, says, ‘I told you that as long as you are hanging around on the streets, idle, you will not get any food in this house. I do too much scrubbing the floor like a beast to feed my children.’

‘But I am hungry!’ shouts Pedro.

‘Well, let your idle friends you hang out with feed you!’ says his mother, irritated. She then starts to feed the baby. There is only one piece of bread left, which the mother is about to make a sandwich with. As soon as she grabs it, Pedro attempts to take it, but his mother slaps his hand. Pedro then says, ‘Why are you hitting me… because I’m hungry? You don’t love me.’

‘Why would I love you?’ responds his mother, ‘Because you are so well-behaved, right?’ she adds while she eats the last piece of bread.

The mother then goes to the next room, where there is a hotplate, to put some water to boil. While she does this, she leaves the piece of bread next to the pot. Pedro enters the room, steals the piece of bread and runs away. For a short while we can observe the house, isolated, built on a dirt road.

This sequence shows that the living conditions of the lowest strata of urban poor entailed overcrowding and scarcity. As the oldest son of the family, Pedro had responsibilities that were not being fulfilled. Pedro was evading his responsibilities by being on the streets rather than at home or at work.

The home could also be a place for illegitimate intimacy. The following sequence illustrates how even the overcrowded home can become an intimate space, where illegitimate actions can occur as soon as the doors are closed.

The sequence begins with a shot of Pedro’s mother cooking. El Jaibo (Roberto Cobo), a friend of Pedro, steps into the house and asks if he is around. Before Pedro’s mother has a chance to answer, her young daughter lets her know that the baby has put pebbles in his mouth, so she goes to see what the baby is doing. El Jaibo follows her. The children are playing on the only small surface of the room that is cleared. El Jaibo asks Pedro’s mother about her life. Pedro’s mother tells him that she had Pedro when she was fourteen and...
that she is single. A close-up to El Jaibo’s face shows his delight. Music starts playing signalling the arrival of a street show of dancing dogs. As soon as the children hear it they run out, taking their baby brother with them. El Jaibo gazes at Pedro’s mother showing his desire; she gazes back. Then, as El Jaibo approaches the door, Pedro’s mother asks, ‘Are you leaving?’ El Jaibo then looks at her with a knowing smile and closes the door.

This sequence shows that the home that previously had only been depicted as a place for the woman’s domestic work and children’s play can also be an arena for love affairs. The people and the circumstances, created by both chance and will, determine the function of the home.

Romance in this case is not tied to expectations of marriage, and it does not imply any possibilities that romance can change the work situation of any of the involved. The film shows, rather, a type of passionate liaison that occurs spontaneously in a domestic space that very rarely is private enough to allow intimacy.

The inner-city slum is not as common in Swedish films. Nonetheless a similar type of neighbourhood (in terms of its spatial arrangement) constitutes the main setting of the film The Women around Larsson (1934) (Kvinnorna kring Larsson). In this film we observe a modest and outdated working-class apartment, the home of shoemaker Larsson (Edvard Persson). At the beginning of the film Larsson shares the apartment with his sister Sara (Katie Rolfsen) and later on with his domestic employee Mia (Dagmar Ebbesen).

The apartment consists of a kitchen, a workshop and a bedroom/living room. The kitchen fulfils several functions; among them, it is the sleeping place of the domestic worker. In the first part of the film, the kitchen is not visible on screen. We get some hints of the kitchen, however, when Mia brings a tray with nicely prepared food out to the inner yard, when she sticks her head out of the kitchen window to talk to neighbours or when she gives Larsson a
back massage on the kitchen table. The kitchen becomes a more visible room when Larsson starts doing domestic work once he marries Mia and she takes over the role of mistress of the house.

The kitchen is connected to the shoemakers’ workshop and the main bedroom/living room. The kitchen is not depicted as a place of socialising for the protagonist couple. Their courting takes place while they eat meals out in the inner yard, while they take walks outdoors or sit on a park bench. The rooms in the home have different connotations, and the position of the household members and their function in the household is reflected by the spaces they occupy in the house.

This is exemplified by an early sequence of the film when Mia comes to the interview for the domestic worker position. After talking about work conditions, Mia asks where she will sleep. Larsson answers, ‘Well, there is a master bedroom, but that is already taken.’ Mia seems worried about the possibility of a mistress of the house she had not counted on. Larsson says promptly that it is his sister’s room. Mia regains her smile. Larsson continues, ‘I sleep here in the workshop, so the only place left is the kitchen, that’s where you will sleep.’ Mia seems unhappy about this, but attempts to conceal it by accepting and smiling.

This sequence reveals that sleeping in the kitchen is not particularly desirable for a domestic worker, though as the story develops we learn that she was not planning to sleep there for very long.

For Mia, marriage means an improvement of her position in the house; thus the first thing she does before going to the civil registry to get married is put her nightclothes on the bed in the main bedroom. She also immediately changes the organisation of domestic work. Larsson, for the first time in his life, has to do domestic work, which is made clear by his clumsiness and incompetence, and his attempt to hide the situation from his male neighbour. The kitchen, here, is the room where power relations are played out.

Edvard Persson, a popular actor who came to represent a particular type in Swedish filmography, stars in The Women around Larsson. He often starred in films that dealt with the change from a traditional to a modern urban society.
Anti-modernism was a common theme of ‘Larsson-films’, a sub-genre to which *The Women around Larsson* belongs.\(^{45}\)

The shoemaker and the blacksmith, with their workshops right next to their homes, represent the traditional world that Larsson-films present in a romanticised way. The spatial arrangements in these types of films function as a way of advancing a particular spirit of modern times.

Many Swedish films, however, depict the urban working classes as a group on the rise, upwardly mobile.

While the Larsson-films are concentrated to the first part of my period and depict a situation that was not the most common among the urban working classes, Mexican cinema began to depict these urban stories and the living conditions of the urban poor from the late 1940s onwards. Before the 1940s, the most common setting in Mexican cinema was the countryside or the small town rather than the metropolis.

From the 1930s to the end of the 1950s, Mexico City grew explosively and most of the new inhabitants came from impoverished rural areas.\(^{46}\) Urban growth can be seen as an effect of industrialisation, although by 1925 only 13.7 per cent of the population were involved in industrial work. This entails that traditional trades absorbed a large proportion of the urban growth. Nonetheless, technological advances might have increased the lag between population growth and capital accumulation.\(^{47}\)

This is exactly what we can see in Mexican films of this period; the prevalence of the urban poor is a consequence of the process of industrialisation. Mexican modernity went hand in hand with poverty, overcrowding in the cities and the creation of urban housing complexes, such as those depicted in films, to accommodate the increasing number of immigrants from the countryside.

Some social progress occurred, particularly during the period 1934–1940 under the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas, a time when the government made investments in ‘public housing, education, electricity for rural areas, potable


\(^{46}\) Lomnitz (1977), p. 17.

water systems, rural road networks, subsidies for basic consumer food products, and public health projects,’ but neglect by subsequent governments resulted in few changes in the situation of the poor during this period. What we can conclude from the analysis of these films is that they depict the consequences that the process of modernisation brought to a sector of the population that received the fewest benefits from modernisation.

Thus, overcrowding, solidarity among the poor and the spatial configuration of everyday life in the vecindades represent one dimension of Mexican modernity. Similar living arrangements in The Women around Larsson, on the contrary, indicate a non-modern approach to change. The leading character in this film expresses repeatedly his refusal to get on board the train of modernity, and his environment represents this view.

Larsson’s attitude can be regarded as non-modern, but not necessarily for that reason non-respectable. On the contrary, Larsson is presented as a sympathetic character, despite his refusal to look forward and accept the consequences of modernity and to work harder to keep his place in society. In fact, his wife makes him work at home, which he finds embarrassing and therefore entails for him a loss of his sense of respectability. However, the general impression that the film offers of Larsson is that of an old-fashioned, yet likeable character.

In the Mexican films mentioned here, we can observe that the living conditions of the poor represent non-respectability. The lack of resources of the poor turns them into subjects of distrust. However, the closeness and openness of their living arrangements allow the creation of a network of support and solidarity among the least privileged of modern society. This very special configuration allows work and romantic love to intertwine in a natural fashion.

The Lodger

Swedish films commonly depict a type of living arrangement for the urban working class consisting of renting a room in someone else’s home. The lodger is usually a young worker who pays a rent in exchange for room and board. This type of arrangement is less common in Mexican films, although it does appear.

Just like the working-class youth who live in one-room and kitchen apartments, we can expect these dwellers to be depicted spending most of their time out in public spaces.

Swedish films like Love and Cash Deficit (Kärlek och kassabrist) (1932) and King’s Street (Kungsgatan) (1943) depict working-class lodgers.

In Love and Cash Deficit workers in an import company share a working-class apartment. Andersson (Sigurd Wallén) and Augusta (Dagmar Ebbesen) are a middle-aged pair who hire out a couple of rooms from their apartment to secretary Margit (Tutta Berntzen) and accountant Bengt (Edvin Adolphson).

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Augusta is the housekeeper in the house; she is in charge of tending to her husband and the two young lodgers, taking care of the administration and rent payments.

The home is comprised of a large kitchen, a dining room and some bedrooms. All four household members meet in the dining room, a separate space next to the kitchen, where Augusta carefully sets the table before every meal. In the dining room they eat breakfast together and socialise. In this common room the rent is also collected the last day of every month.

In a home like this one, where having lodgers is part of the economic support of the household, space is organised in a way that the home can function as a business and can offer everyone a service that meets their needs. We observe, for example, that before breakfast Margit reads romantic novels and dreams about Bengt in the privacy of her room and Bengt works out before getting ready for work with weights and exercise devices he keeps in his bedroom.

In *King’s Street* we observe the living situation of Adrian (Sture Lagerwall), a young man from the countryside, who, encouraged by his girlfriend Marta, arrives in the city seeking better work opportunities. Adrian is a lodger in the house of Moderat (Sven Bergvall), a successful worker in the construction sector, and his wife. Moderat’s house seems in fact to be wealthier than that observed in *Love and Cash Deficit*. The sequence in which we observe the home is during Moderat’s sixtieth birthday, which he celebrates by having a dinner with his friends, wife and Adrian. In this scene, the dialogue reveals that Moderat has worked hard and built a spotless reputation for which he is rewarded. During the birthday dinner Moderat suggests that if Adrian follows his example, he can also achieve success.

The depiction of Moderat’s home is not thorough: the dining room is the only room that appears in the film. What is relevant in the representation of this space, however, is the fact that it shows the relationship between family members and their lodger, which is based on the solidarity of their class belonging. In this case Adrian is not a family member, but he is treated as though he were.

In these films it is made clear that the living conditions of lodgers are only temporary for they will move out once they are ready to start a family of their own. Regardless of their sex, lodgers live in homes that provide them with some sort of family-like network even though they are living an independent adult life. Romance is not played out in the domestic space; for all the characters, romantic life develops at work, on the streets or in leisure spaces.
In the Mexican film *I Need Money* (*Necesito dinero*) (1952), there is a working-class family composed by the female protagonist María Teresa (Sara Montiel), her mother Doña Rosario (Maruja Grifell) and her younger sister Lucy (Irma Dorantes), who live in a working-class neighbourhood in Mexico City. María Teresa is the only member of the household who has a paid job; she is a shop assistant at a jeweller’s. As Doña Rosario believes that she is in good shape to work, and the burden María Teresa carries on her shoulders is too heavy, she decides to rent out one bedroom despite her older daughter’s refusal. Doña Rosario finds a tenant very quickly; it turns out to be Manuel (Pedro Infante), a man who previously in the story had met María Teresa and courted her, but was met with rejection.

María Teresa’s home has a large living room – big enough to hold the dancing parties young Lucy is very fond of. There is a bedroom where the three women sleep and another one for the lodger. The kitchen is also big, and it is attached to a dining room.

The fact that a family, constituted by two single women and a widow, need to rent out a room to a man to solve their economic difficulties is not presented as totally acceptable. An argument between María Teresa and her mother when the latter says she has found a lodger shows the concerns of the former about the loss of respectability that will come from having a man living with them in the house. María Teresa argues that she is able to support the family on her own, without the need to jeopardise their respectability and privacy.

Manuel has taken the extra room knowing that María Teresa, the woman of his dreams, lives there, expecting to get to know her better and win her heart. María Teresa and Manuel’s interaction in the house is, however, characterised by the former’s hostility and the latter’s continuous flirting. Having a lodger in the house does not merely imply that the household members share their living space with another person; rather, his rent also includes board and special treatment. Thus, the presence of Manuel in the house changes the lifestyle of all family members because they must all make sure he is comfortable and has his needs met. He soon becomes a well-liked member of the household, even for María Teresa, despite the fact that she explicitly denies it.

The relationship between María Teresa and Manuel changes one day when Manuel arrives in the house beaten up after having boxed for money, and María Teresa is in the apartment on her own. The sequence takes place in the kitchen. While María Teresa treats Manuel’s wounds, they finally have a profound conversation. Manuel talks about the importance of knowing what one wants in life, while María Teresa talks about the sadness and monotony of living in a deprived environment. The kitchen thus becomes a symbolic space for intimacy. Just as the kitchen is the room where Doña Rosario works serving the meals for the lodger, it is also a semi-private space where María Teresa and Manuel can have their first intimate moment without going beyond the boundaries of respectable closeness.
Thus, the kitchen and the living room are common spaces where work, socialising and intimacy occur and are visible, but also respectable. The rooms in the rest of the apartment (bedrooms, bathroom) are private and not visible in the story.

These examples reflect the times in which the films were made. It could be argued, however, that the lodger is not a modern character in Swedish films, but rather the result of a situation that modern social reformers wanted to leave behind as they attempted to build overcrowding away. The living standards of the lodger are more representative of a non-modern arrangement that had been in place for some time, before measures were taken to modernise housing structures in Sweden.

Nevertheless, we observe a modern attitude in the lodgers when they seek to advance in their careers and build a family. In these films the stories end when the lodgers change their work situation and their living arrangements. Thus, lodgers go from a non-modern living standard and a low status job to an improved working and living situation: they have entered modern society. In the Mexican film, modernity is not expressed in the living arrangements of the lodger nor in the spatial organisation of the home, but rather in the attitude that the characters have towards work and love, and their relation to proper gender roles. In *I Need Money*, the female character is not depicted as modern. Modernity is, in fact, not what a respectable woman should be longing for. Rather, a woman must, in order to cope properly with the consequences of modern society, stick to feminine values such as modesty and self-sacrifice. Manuel in turn, is a modern man; this is not necessarily shown through his living arrangements, but through his relationship with his work.49 Manuel is a self-made professional, who, despite his modest origin, is able to attain a good enough living standard to offer a woman a decent home and a loving family.

The Cinematic Rural Home

Rural environments are common in both Swedish and Mexican cinematography of the period. I observed earlier that representations of the city often make reference to the countryside. Films depict characters who leave their homes in the countryside for better work opportunities in the city, or stories that present the countryside as the place where people are frank and genuine and where life is simple but mostly enjoyable.

The debate concerning what type of modernity Swedish films should reproduce from the beginning of the 1930s and during the following decades was strongly related to the rural/urban divide. Some filmmakers and film critics who engaged in this debate agreed upon the need to promote Sweden as an industrial country, where flying, driving and functionalism appeared clearly

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49 See appendix and the story of Manuel’s work situation in chapter five on class.
in film stories. Some voices in this debate levelled criticism at countryside manners, drinking and provincialism; critics hoped for a film production that would rather highlight ‘modern environments’ and ‘the modern young Swede.’ Nevertheless, this debate was not one-sided and well into the 1930s, the critics’ appeals for images of modernity transformed into a wish to see more ‘Swedishness’, which could be interpreted as images of tradition and nature.

From the beginning of the twentieth century, Sweden experienced a depopulation of the countryside. By 1910 the share of the countryside in the national economy was under 50 per cent, while the share of industry and handicraft increased to 32 per cent, although the big decrease in the number of people active in agriculture occurred after 1945. Hence, during this period there was a transformation of the countryside as part of the process of modernisation: men could find more attractive jobs in industries and women and youths could join the ranks of certain industrial branches and the growing service sector.

In Mexico, after the Revolution in the late 1910s, 70 per cent of the population still lived in the countryside. The majority of the rural population, of which about 90 per cent did not have access to goods and services such as trains, telegraph, postal service, telephone, doctors, pharmacists, markets, tractors, etc., lived under pauper-like conditions. The average village consisted of around 300 inhabitants and lacked access to drinking water and electricity; their populations were also for the most part illiterate. In light of this situation, the government conducted an education campaign in order to bring progress and modernisation to the people from the rural areas in Mexico. It is in this context that films try to make sense of the tension between non-modern and modern forces in the rural areas.

Historian Mary Kay Vaughan studies the role of the education programme that the Education Ministry launched in the 1930s and 1940s in the countryside. Among notions of hygiene, secularism and temperance, stress was placed on questions of health and nutrition as the basis for the modernisation of the countryside. In practice, this meant spreading the use of certain home comforts and devices. Rural teachers taught peasant women new practices: building of latrines, soap-making, garbage burning, swatting of flies and boiling water. Thus, bringing modernity to the countryside meant getting people to adopt hygiene practices and place greater stress on education.

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A phenomenon in Mexican cinema that has been noted in research on film production connected to the urban/rural divide and the process of modernisation is the predominance of the genre *comedia ranchera* (a musical comedy in a rural setting) in Mexican film production of the 1930s. In *comedia ranchera* films, the Mexican cowboy and the *china poblana* (the female stereotype of the peasant woman) became synonymous with Mexicanness. In these films the countryside is always part of the story; big farms and land-owners are often represented, even though farm labourers and landless peasants could at times be primary characters. This genre, it has been argued, functioned as a means of channelling the anxieties that the process of modernisation occasioned by idealising the good old days and the benevolent ranch owner who cared for his peons. Emilio Fernández, a prolific filmmaker from the period, affirmed that the purity of the countryside was being threatened by progress, and for that reason he considered it important to make rural dramas where he could reflect on the things that remained the same. The Mexican countryside and the Mexican cowboy became national and international symbols of Mexican nationalism. So if what film scholars affirm is accurate, then Mexican cinema and, in particular, the *comedia ranchera* genre, should offer a view of modernisation that puts the Mexican countryside in a positive light and treats urbanisation and other changes with scepticism. We will see next how films depicted the countryside home and its contacts with modernity.

**The Swedish Countryside Home**

The images of countryside homes vary from those we observe in the city. In Swedish films, for instance, we observe two types of homes, those of the well-off landed élite and those of the less privileged country folk. These two types of homes have a different relation to modernity.

There are several films whose theme is the intermingling of city and countryside people; in many cases a young woman from the city arrives in the countryside and faces a lifestyle that is very different from the one she is used to. Often, countryside people are depicted as experiencing a sort of culture shock in their encounter with the newcomer.

In the film *Servants’ Entrance* (*Vi som går köksvägen*) from 1932, Helga, a spoiled city girl takes a position as a domestic worker in a farmhouse in the countryside. The environment she moves into is a wealthy one, so the family she works for is used to the same comforts she herself has back home in the city; the difference, however, is that now she is an employee and has the same status as the less privileged farm workers.

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60 Reyes (1986).
The kitchen is the place where Helga and her colleagues spend most of their time. The kitchen is not entirely different from those we observe in films depicting well-off urban homes. The only difference is its size.

The countryside kitchen is suited to the preparation of food for a larger number of people. The kitchen has an electric stove with several hot plates, shelves to keep food and store kitchen supplies, a couple of sinks with running water and all the kitchen utensils needed for advanced cooking.

The kitchen is the place where all the farm workers get together, even those who do not normally work in the kitchen, such as the driver and the farmhand. The family occupies other spaces in the house, such as the living room, the farm gardens, the study and the bedrooms.

Helga provokes suspicion in some of the people at the farm. Her colleague Olga (Rut Holm) is jealous of the attention she is receiving from Olga’s beloved Anders (Siegfried Fisher), and the young daughter in the house Astrid (Renée Björling) is jealous of Helga’s increasing closeness with driver Bertil Frigård (Bengt Djurberg) whom Astrid is in love with. Frigård himself regards with suspicion the fact that Helga speaks, dresses, and behaves so differently from other country girls. He also finds it strange that she can speak English and sing so well. He seems to like her, but he also appears to feel uncomfortable about the fact that Helga comes from a different socioeconomic position to his own.

Helga represents modernity because she brings to the farm her city manners, her education and a series of products her country colleagues are not familiar with, such as cosmetics, clothes, and cigarettes. The sequence I describe next illustrates the contrast between city and countryside lifestyles:

After Helga’s first day at work, she goes to her bedroom which she shares with her colleague Laura (Karin Swanström), a robust middle-aged country woman. The sequence begins with a shot of the big estate house, then the focus shifts to an open landscape, then back to the house, and finally to the domestic workers’ room. Laura is sitting on her bed undoing her corset, followed by a sigh of relief and some self-massaging. As she keeps undressing, Laura asks about Helga’s love life. Helga is standing in front of the mirror putting on some face moisturiser. Her dressing table is full of perfumes, lotions and cotton balls. Helga says that she is not engaged, and Laura responds that it is a good thing, because their employer sleeps in the room below them, which means that they have to walk barefoot in the room and cannot have any guests. While Laura talks, she takes her purse out of her brassiere and puts it under her pillow. She then says that their colleague Olga has a better situation in that respect because her room is located next to the kitchen. As Laura speaks, Helga undresses. Laura gazes at Helga, who is wearing only her underwear and is taking her shoes off. Laura stops talking and looks at herself, suddenly becoming self-conscious. The embarrassment makes Laura stand up, grab her clothes and continue undressing behind the folding screen. She keeps talking, this time about the man she keeps ‘regular company’ with: Bengtsson. Laura describes him as a majestic man. Helga wonders if he is tall and corpulent.
Laura says that he is rather short and skinny.

Helga then makes a reference to Napoleon, ‘small physically, but big in spirit!’

Laura says she does not know who Napoleon is and she does not know what Helga means, ‘but he is majestic anyway!’ The conversation is interrupted by Laura’s sudden burst into laughter.

‘That is the funniest…do you wear coat and trousers when you are going to sleep?’ Helga is wearing satin pyjamas, while Laura is wearing a cotton nightgown.

‘Yes’, says Helga, ‘Believe it or not, this is nice’.

This is one among several sequences in this film in which country workers are confronted with modern city lifestyles. In this case, the role of spatiality is clear. The countryside is presented with a shot of the farmhouse surrounded by the open leafy landscape, alternating with a shot of the untouched outdoors and a running river, with a musical background of calm accordion folk music, before we see a medium close-up of Laura confined by a corset. The conversation, the clothing and the habits of both women show the contrast between city and countryside lifestyles.

In the film *Lady Turns Maid* (*Fröken blir piga*) from 1936, there is a similar narrative line. A city girl from a well-off background takes a position as a farm maid in the countryside. The protagonist of the film, Alva Rosengren (Marianne Löfgren), changes her name to Anna Anderson – just as Helga changed her surname from Breder to Haraldsson when she introduced herself at her new job in *Servants’ Entrance*. Anna, however, is much more used to domestic work than Helga, as she has just received her degree as a domestic science teacher. Thus, the modernity
that Anna brings to the farm is not related to the way she dresses or her city manners, but to the professionalisation of her work and her cultured behaviour. Once again in this film, the kitchen is central to the story. The kitchen that we observe at this farm also has all the comforts that we observe in city kitchens of well-off families, though somewhat more rudimentary. There are not so many shelves for utensils, and there are no electric devices. There is, however, running water and a stove. In this film the domestic workers also spend plenty of time outdoors. Anna chops vegetables sitting on the outdoor stairs so she can enjoy the view before she needs to go into the kitchen again and cook them. She collects eggs from the chicken hut, picks strawberries and serves the meals for her employer and his guests at the outdoor dining table.

As soon as Anna arrives at the farm, she becomes good friends with her colleague Hildegard (Carin Swensson), a young farm girl from the village. The farm owner Karl-Axel (Ernst Eklund) decides that Hildegard will do rougher tasks and work with larger animals, while Anna will be in charge of cooking and taking care of small animals. Anna and Hildegard, however, despite their close friendship, have a falling out when Arthur (Sten Lindgren), the driver that Hildergard loves, becomes interested in Anna. The situation is solved when Anna kindly dismisses Arthur and makes him realise that it is Hildegard he loves.

Tension is created in the film when the Karl-Axel’s brother and sister-in-law arrive at the farm for a visit. Karl-Axel’s sister-in-law, Laura (Hjördis Petterson), behaves arrogantly towards the domestic workers and assumes the role of the mistress of the house while she is around. Anna endures the situation with patience, but Hildegard gets easily upset whenever Laura treats her badly or tries to take advantage of her situation. The arrival of a city woman into the countryside who acts as a snobbish mistress does not bring with it a hint of modernity. On the contrary, Laura’s attitude is ridiculed in the story and depicted as too conservative and non-modern and thus unworthy.

Anna, in turn, is depicted as a modern girl, not because she smokes and dresses stylishly like Helga in Servants’ Entrance, but because she has a professional approach to domestic work – she is good at preserving food, cooking and finding ways to offer high quality food even with scarce ingredients. Moreover, she appreciates the simplicity of life in the countryside and upholds a view of equality, which makes Anna a respectable woman.

The appreciation of countryside lifestyles over urban bourgeois ones is also part of the plot of Swedish film Hanna in High Society (Hanna i societén) from 1940. This story develops in an upper-class countryside environment, mainly in the house of retired Colonel Rutger (Carl Barcklind). Hanna (Rut Holm) is a domestic worker there and has been so for a long time. Rutger’s farmhouse is big and comfortable. The kitchen, where Hanna works and socialises with her friends, is, like the kitchens we have observed in other films, spacious and modern.
The house is a bone of contention in the story because, when Rutger dies, he leaves it to his loyal employee Hanna, but his family do all they can to take it away from her. The tension between Hanna and the family represents the tension between the traditional countryside lifestyle and a conservative upper-class city lifestyle. However, Hanna and her friends from the countryside are depicted as holding a more modern attitude than Rutger’s relatives.

When Hanna is in the kitchen, either working alone or with her friends playing music and having coffee, she is contented and free. Whenever her employer interrupts her activities in the kitchen, she takes her time and then goes to attend her duties with enjoyment. Hanna and Rutger make a good team; despite their constant fights, they show a strong mutual appreciation. Rutger’s family, on the contrary, treat Hanna with disdain when they visit Rutger’s farm, except for Rutger’s niece, Monika (Eivor Landström).

The house cannot be regarded as modern in aesthetic terms because it looks like an old-fashioned upper-class manor house, but the kitchen has all the comforts of a modern urban kitchen. The relationship between Hanna and Rutger’s family is also reminiscent of an old-fashioned hierarchical division between gentlefolk and the serving staff. However, the relationship between Hanna and her employer Rutger is based on, if not equality, than at least appreciation, which signals a more modern approach to domestic work.

All these films are set in well-off farm houses in the countryside and even though aesthetically there is no indication of these being particularly modern spaces, except for some kitchen set-ups and devices, there is usually an indication of modernity based on the people that use these spaces and the way in which they relate to others and their environment. All of these films accentuate equality and an appreciation of the employees’ work as a positive trait that characterises the righteous countryside employers. The modern is also indicated in the presence of city people; the modernity of city characters is marked by their manners, the products they use (clothes, cosmetics) and their educational backgrounds.

There are other films that depict countryside environments in a different light. Apart from the well-off landed farmers and their employees, films also depict modest rural families living in small cottages. In these films, modernity has different nuances.

In *The Storholmen Brothers (Pojkarna på Storholmen)* (1932), the story once again involves a city girl who moves to the countryside. Sonja (Margit Manstad) is sent by her guardian to the island of Lillholmen in order to protect her from the dangers of the city. After the initial credits, the film begins with images of a fancy city night club. In this nightclub we meet Sonja for the first time. She is there with some friends who, unlike her, seem used to Stockholm’s nightlife. Sonja is presented in this scene as a vulnerable girl in a city of perils, represented by the alcohol she is encouraged to drink and the many male gazes she gets. The next sequence begins with happier folk music and images of the untainted nature in the countryside. Already in these first sequences we
can deduce that the contrast between the dangerous city and the pure countryside is a central theme of the film.

Even though Sonja is depicted at the beginning of the story as a naïve girl, as soon as she finds herself in a countryside environment, she becomes a sophisticated, almost impudent woman. This is illustrated in an early sequence.

The day Sonja is to arrive in Lillholmen has come and one of the Storholmen brothers, Ivar (Sture Lagerwall), picks her up from the harbour. His duty is to take her to the Sjölunds’ home in Lillholmen. On the boat Sonja asks Ivar to take a little detour. He does so, and they stop for a while to enjoy the beautiful surroundings. Sonja, amazed by the landscape, sighs and talks about its beauty. Ivar seems, in turn, more amazed about Sonja’s beauty. Right there, on the small boat in the middle of nowhere, Sonja and Ivar have a romantic moment. Ivar hints at his interest in Sonja, and she responds by initiating physical contact. She first extends her arm to reach Ivar, and, as he grabs her hand, Sonja approaches him even more, creating enough closeness for a romantic kiss. Ivar seems frightened and does not know what to do. He says, ‘What is this? What does she want?’ He then holds her tightly, but Sonja pulls away from him and asks him to sail home as fast as possible.

After this scene Sonja becomes the object of desire of Ivar, but later on also of the rest of the young men in Storholmen: Sixten (Fridolf Rhudin) and Gunnar (Bengt Djurberg).

Unlike the large estates depicted in Hanna in High Society, Lady Turned Maid and Servants’ Entrance, the Sjölunds’ home is much more modest and outdated. Sonja herself comments with a sarcastic tone on the appearance of the house when she first sees it: ‘What a nice palace! Although we can’t really call it functionalist style!’
The countryside depicted in films is characterised by the proximity of country people to nature, beautiful untouched natural surroundings and the innocence and frankness of the people. The Sjöllunds’ home and the lifestyles of the people from the islands, however, is also characterised by their lack of modern comforts.

The Sjöllunds’ house consists of one large room that functions as a kitchen, dining room, bedroom and workplace. The cooking area takes up a large space in the kitchen, and it is comprised of a built-in stone woodstove, a dining table, a long kitchen bench for sleeping on, some chairs, and a smaller table. There is neither running water nor electric devices.

All household members do their everyday chores in the kitchen. In a scene previous to Sonja’s arrival in the house, the mother, Kristin Sjölund (Emmy Albiin), is washing by hand in a washbasin, August Sjölund (Sigurd Wallén) is fixing his fishing net, their daughter Aina (Birgit Tengroth) is mending clothes and young Kalle is having a meal before he goes off work in the fields.

In The Storholmen Brothers, domestic spaces indicate that life in the countryside can be rather harsh and basic. There is no room for entertainment or modern leisure. However, as most films depicting the countryside are set during summer, life takes place largely outdoors. The outdoor environments in this and several other similar films are highly relevant to the story. Even though the domestic space is poor and rudimentary, the open landscape is capable of offering leisure and enjoyment.

In The Storholmen Brothers, it is in the outdoor spaces that emotional life plays out, and the youth find the privacy necessary for romance. People work at home and in the surrounding fields, but courting takes place in the parts of the natural landscape furthest away. Dancing and community life also occur outdoors. One of the final sequences of the film, in which each character in the film finds their perfect match, occurs at a dance.

Despite the fact that the countryside is depicted as a non-modern space, with few comforts and even fewer opportunities for leisure, life is not depicted as boring or meaningless. On the contrary, even Sonja, a city woman who has tasted the joys of the entertainment business and who has been in sophisticated nightclubs in Stockholm, finds in the modest fishing community all that she needs to be happy.

The dangerous influence of the city, embodied by Sonja, who had turned all men crazy, stops when Sonja becomes one of them; this happens when she finds true love with one of the Storholmen boys. Once Sonja and Gunnar become a couple, Sonja’s life is expected to follow the pattern of the rest of the young women living on the island – a life of work and closeness to nature.

In this film, life in the countryside is depicted as lagging behind the modern city in terms of comforts and living standards. However, the rural lifestyle is presented as enjoyable and free from the dangers that the city entails. It can hardly be said that this film depicts the countryside as modern in any way because in this case we do not see the contrast between the patronising
manners of the wealthy and the egalitarian views of the country people that we observed in other films. On the contrary, this film emphasises the traditional life of the countryside and the traditional manners and outlooks of country people. Still, this film offers a view of countryside as genuine and enjoyable, more so than the dangerous city. Sonja’s transformation, from the sophisticated and seducing woman she was at the beginning of the story to a modest and caring one, increases her respectability and worthiness at the end of the story, for which she is rewarded with romantic love and happiness in her new home.

The film King’s Street from 1943 also depicts the countryside’s least privileged classes, to which the protagonist Marta (Barbro Kollberg) belongs. The film shows a type of lifestyle that is far from desirable, depicted by the material standards of the home where Marta lives.

An early sequence in the film depicts the appearance of the home and Marta’s opinion of her living situation. The sequence begins with a long shot of Marta’s house. Several children are playing outside. A cut leads to a medium shot where we can see Marta’s adolescent sister, Josephine, sitting on the stairs combing her hair, and Marta standing on the threshold, wearing an apron and holding a bucket, calling her siblings in for dinner. All the children run up the stairs and enter the house. While everyone sits around the table, Marta complains about how little there is to do in the countryside.

While the family are having their meal, we can observe the large room that functions as kitchen, eating place, place for drying clothes, and perhaps too a sleeping place, judging by the long sofa placed against the wall. The mother is standing by the stone stove washing potatoes while the rest eat. Marta and Josephine inform their family about their intentions to go out that evening, but the father reminds them that their mother might not agree. The mother then intervenes and says decidedely, ‘Oh no, you and Josephine are staying at home this evening!’ Marta stands up and with a dreamy voice says, ‘If I lived in the city, I could go to the movies on an evening like this.’ She then picks up a magazine from the kitchen shelf while her father says, ‘Nothing grows on the streets of the city.’ Marta replies, ‘Are you sure about that?’ Marta’s mother says severely, ‘You shouldn’t fly higher than your wings allow.’ Marta, disappointed, says, ‘You wish I stayed here and became a peasant crow like everyone else. But I will never do that!’ as she forcefully throws the magazine on the floor, to which her parents react with a surprised gaze. With a more serene voice Marta says she will go out while she takes her apron off. The sequence ends with the rest of the family finishing up their meal, and the mother serving her husband coffee.

In this film the living standards and the lifestyle of the country people is very similar to those in The Storholmen Brothers. The main difference, however, is that in this film the protagonist expresses a clear rejection of the rural life and characterises it as dull and meaningless. The countryside in this film is more actively presented as non-modern in comparison with the city, which is depicted as modern and exciting.
These films demonstrate that there is no single unified view of the Swedish countryside in films. Domestic environments can be depicted as having all the novel comforts of the cities in wealthy households, although in these cases it is the employees who stand for the righteous rural values of humility, equality and solidarity, which are depicted as indispensable for modernity. The films that depict the countryside as non-modern tend to characterise it as safe – or at least safer than city environments – even if it appears less attractive for the youth. In these films Swedishness is represented by closeness to nature and a natural inclination towards equality, which are characteristic of the country people and are desirable traits in the modern urban society. These traits are also related to respectability. Regardless of their approach to modernity, countryside women and men are depicted as respectable and worthy people, and are often contrasted against non-respectable city people. People who are respectable or become respectable throughout the story are usually rewarded with romantic love, though not necessarily with an improvement in their work position. Married women do not seem to change or expect a change in their occupation like women who live in urban environments.

People from different social classes are depicted in films; when class differences are highlighted in a story, there is always an indication of class reconciliation, which can be expressed in a reconsideration of the relationship between employers and employees towards increased equality and inter-class marriages.

**The Mexican Countryside Home**

The countryside is also a common motif in Mexican films. Just as in Swedish films, the countryside in Mexican films has a special relevance in the process of modernisation. The countryside in Mexican films usually depicts the contrast between the wealthy landed elites and the less privileged landless rural population.

Various spaces are depicted in countryside films. Film stories are set in domestic and public spaces in the rural villages, but fields and isolated pieces of land are also seen. These spaces – homes, farms (haciendas), villages, small provincial cities, crop fields, seaside villages, huts, etc. – take different meanings and allow different social practices.

In the film *Rosenda* from 1948, we observe the role of different rural spaces and how each them is attributed characteristics that allow particular work and love practices.

The film is primarily set in a small rural village in the state of Michoacán, Mexico. The first sequence of the film juxtaposes two images; the first is an extremely long shot of an open landscape. In the upper part of the shot, there is a village located on the side of a hill; at the bottom of the shot, a train is travelling towards the village. This image dissolves to a close-up of the train.
moving towards the camera; this in turn dissolves to a medium shot where we see a railway worker and another man approaching him. The second man is Don Ponciano (Fernando Soler), the wealthy patriarch of the village. This first sequence shows a contrast between the intact nature around the village, the humbleness of the small community and one of the foremost symbols of modernity: the train. Don Ponciano, who is at the train station checking if his merchandise has arrived, is the character that stands for modernity and entrepreneurship even as a rural village dweller.

In the village Don Ponciano owns a grocery shop where he sells all kinds of products. It is also a meeting point of the villagers, who stand in line to ask Don Ponciano for loans and favours. The shop is Don Ponciano’s main workplace. It is also the place that signals Don Ponciano’s superior position socially and economically. Don Ponciano sees it as his responsibility to help everyone in the village.

The following sequence shows how the countryside in Mexican films is composed of a multiplicity of spatial environments: Mule driver Salustio (Rodolfo Acosta) asks Don Ponciano to ask for the hand of his girlfriend Rosenda (Rita Macedo) on his behalf. Don Ponciano accepts and the following sequence begins when he and his friend Perea, the pharmacist, embark on a long walk to Palma Sola, where Rosenda lives with her parents. During Don Ponciano and Perea’s walk in the sun, we can observe the solitude of the uninhabited rural areas, but also the conditions of the agricultural labourers, who must travel long distances in order to work and get supplies.

The subsequent sequence of Don Ponciano and Perea’s arrival in Palma Sola is illustrative of another spatial dimension of the countryside. Palma Sola is comprised of two poorly built houses, erected far away from each other. The fields are within walking distance from the homes, but the houses are located in a barren landscape, which signals the isolation of their people.

Thus, even though Don Ponciano lives in a small village in the countryside, there is yet another level of isolation, represented by the living conditions of Rosenda’s family.

A similar contrast is shown in the film Soledad’s Shawl (El rebozo de Soledad) (1952), which begins with images of the city: cars moving around in a dynamic metropolis, tall buildings, honking and whistling noises. The long shot suddenly starts focusing until the attention is entirely on one person. A medium close-up of a man is followed by a close-up of his shoes; he then starts talking about his broken shoes and the humbleness of his appearance, which in his opinion does not match his profession and the things he has done in life. The character is forty year-old Doctor Alberto Robles (Arturo de Córdova). During his walk, which the camera follows until his final stop at the hospital, we learn that he used to have ideals and a promising career, but then things ‘just happened’, turning him into the person he is now: someone many could consider to be a failure.
The subsequent sequence depicts a modern hospital, in fact, a private one, which is made clear in a scene that shows a meeting of the board members concerning the employment of Doctor Robles as a new staff member. The functionalist style of the hospital matches the appearance and the seemingly modern ambitions of the members of the board. The modernity of the city, which in this film is linked to the shallowness of some economically successful groups, is in stark contrast to life in the countryside.

The countryside is subsequently observed in a flashback to Alberto’s life in the small village of Santa Cruz. The village is presented by the narrator as ‘a poor land; a soil that does not yield enough to keep the people well-fed; a place that has been victim of a series of calamities. At the same time Santa Cruz is a loved land, where people, out of pure hope and as a way of honouring their dead, stay and endure.’

The spatial arrangement of Santa Cruz is similar to the one we observe in Rosenda. There is a village centre with some shops, some houses, the church and the municipal office. Agricultural labourers tend to live far out in the fields, isolated. In this type of spatial context, the role of the doctor is important, because he finds himself with the need to travel long distances in order to see his patients.

The sequence that depicts the first encounter between the female protagonist, Soledad (Estela Inda), and Alberto shows the movement between spaces that is required of the doctor in Santa Cruz. Soledad lives with her brother Mauro far out in the fields. The sequence begins with Soledad knocking on Alberto’s door in the middle of the night to ask him to come and cure his brother who has fallen off a horse and is in terrible pain. Although the shot dissolves from Alberto’s house to Soledad’s hut, we can observe that the house is located in a secluded piece of land, surrounded by trees. Soledad and Alberto stay awake all night after Alberto gives Mauro some medicine and bandages his arm. The sequence ends with a daylight scene. Alberto checks on Mauro and then leaves the house. Again we see the isolated hut, although now the plot of land located right next to it is also visible. There is a large area of arable land bordering some bushes, far away from the home.

Domestic spaces in these films fulfil an important function in the plot. The spatial arrangement of the home, its size and the material out of which it is built signal the status of its inhabitants and thus the type of work and love practices allowed.

I have called attention to the different homes in the countryside, such as those within or near the village and those that are more isolated. In Rosenda and Soledad’s Shawl we can observe several examples of homes located in the village.

In Rosenda we see Don Ponciano’s house, which is a sort of multi-room complex. The entrance to Don Ponciano’s house is through his grocery shop, open not only to customers, but also to friends and villagers who come to see
him. From the back door of the shop there is access to the office, the printing press, the living room, the bedroom and an inner yard.

One sequence in the film allows us to see into the interior of Don Ponciano’s house. It begins when Rosenda walks around the village for the first time since moving there with Don Ponciano’s friend, seamstress Doña Pomposa (Lupe del Castillo). Rosenda wants to show Don Ponciano the dress she made herself with the fabrics he gave her. She then walks to the shop and surprises Don Ponciano while he is playing chess in the shop with his friends. Rosenda asks him to show her around. She, astonished, observes carefully the paintings and sculptures that decorate Don Ponciano’s house. She even climbs on the sofa in order to appreciate a painting more closely, before Don Ponciano scolds her. When Rosenda and Don Ponciano stop for a while to talk, Rosenda sits on the floor. When Don Ponciano asks why she does so, Rosenda answers she does not want to stain his furniture.

A later sequence shows Doña Pomposa’s house, where Rosenda lives. The house is spacious, but very modest. By the entrance there is a small hall where Don Ponciano and Rosenda sit and talk. They need to go down a staircase in order to enter the bedroom where Doña Pomposa’s bed is found. Next to the bed there is a palm mat on the floor, where Rosenda sleeps. The kitchen is placed across from the bedroom.

Doña Pomposa’s house and Don Ponciano’s house are very different from each other in the decorations and comforts they display. The rooms adjacent to Don Ponciano’s home are workplaces that function as public rooms and are always surrounded by people. For this reason even Don Ponciano’s intimate rooms are very much open to the people of the community. Doña Pomposa’s home seems to be located further away from the centre, and it is part of an housing complex. The houses in the neighbourhood are not workplaces or
workshops, even though Doña Pomposa’s home is also her workplace because she works from home mending clothes.

Rosenda’s role as a new member of Doña Pomposa’s household is to be in charge of domestic work and to take care of her during sickness, but she is also Doña Pomposa’s apprentice in the tailoring trade. Rosenda’s home, however, becomes an intimate, though somewhat exposed, space in the development of her romantic relationship with Don Ponciano.

Since the relationship between Don Ponciano and Rosenda is illegitimate for the most part, the former is particularly careful to avoid suspicion. One day he decides to teach Rosenda how to read and write, and he realises that this project implies visiting her regularly. He decides to rent the house adjoined to the back entrance so that he can enter the house unnoticed.

Figure 38. Doña Pomposa teaching Rosenda how to use the sewing machine. From Rosenda, (1948), Clasa Films Mundiales. Cineteca Nacional Collection.

Figure 39. Rosenda kneading tortilla dough; prelude of the first erotic scene between her and Don Ponciano. From Rosenda, (1948), Clasa Films Mundiales. Cineteca Nacional Collection.
The first romantic encounter between Rosenda and Don Ponciano occurs in the kitchen. The sequence starts when Don Ponciano arrives at the house as Rosenda is making dinner. He comes in and sits down by the kitchen table while she is kneading the corn dough on a flat stone. The first suggestion of erotic feelings is expressed with a close-up of Don Ponciano’s admiring gaze, followed by Rosenda’s hands, then up to her breast and finally to her angelic face. The tilting shows Don Ponciano’s attraction to Rosenda. Then a close-up of Rosenda’s face shows her noticing Don Ponciano’s contemplation. Embarrassed, Don Ponciano looks down and breaks the silence by asking Rosenda if there is anything else she needs. Rosenda keeps working and says she has everything she needs thanks to him. Then they begin talking about reading. At this moment Don Ponciano cannot hide his feelings anymore and gives way to his emotions. A sexually charged scene then occurs in the kitchen. Rosenda’s hands are touching the dough while Don Ponciano holds her shoulders. As she manipulates the dough, he touches her body. He forcefully rips her dress and a roaring thunder signals their bodily union. From this day on, Don Ponciano is not only Rosenda’s teacher who seeks to improve her mind and behaviour, but also her passionate lover.

In *Soledad’s Shawl*, domestic environments are depicted as more deprived than in *Rosenda*. The village is so poor that even the doctor’s house is modest; yet, Alberto’s house is probably one of the wealthiest in the neighbourhood, except for the houses of the mayor and the unscrupulous landholder. Soledad’s home is a small straw hut, with nothing more than fold-up bed, a lamp, and some buckets and work utensils. Outside of the home there is a washing place without running water and a small brazier, placed close to the ground. Soledad’s kitchen is outside of the house, so she works on her everyday domestic chores in sight of passers-by.

The very basic home of Soledad and Mauro is the place where the latter rests after his strenuous work in the fields and recovers from illness, but also the place where Soledad cooks and nurses her brother.
In rural domestic spaces the extent to which work and romantic love are practiced and are visible, depends very much on the level of wealth of the household, which in turn determines the location and level of openness. Although we might expect that in the countryside, people live a more communitarian life, with open spaces and close interactions among kin and neighbours, films show a more complex spatial arrangement that is closely related to social position, ethnicity and gender.

In *Soledad’s Shawl* there are two types of love relationship that the female protagonist experiences. On the one hand, she is truly and almost chastely in love with Alberto, the doctor. Her love originates in the gratitude and admiration she feels for what Alberto does for her brother. After Alberto cures her brother, she starts spending lots of time at the doctor’s house, tending to him and taking care of all of his domestic chores. As they spend time together, Alberto falls in love with her, though he fails to realise and express his feelings in time. The relationship between Soledad and Alberto develops mainly in the latter’s home. Despite hints of romance and the fact that Soledad declares her love to Alberto soon after they meet, their relationship remains platonic.

There is, however, another man, Roque Suazo (Pedro Armendáriz), himself native of Santa Cruz and of indigenous origin, but at the same time a well-respected peasant leader, justice-seeker, and landowner – though not officially. The first time Roque meets Soledad, he becomes obsessively attracted to her. Soledad, while captivated by this man, also feels fear and aversion towards him. The relationship between Roque and Soledad takes place primarily outdoors or in public spaces: in Soledad’s kitchen, in the village shop, on the street while she is vending food, and far away in the fields.

The turning point in Soledad and Roque’s relationship and one of the climatic points of the film occurs one day when Soledad is making food at a wedding and Roque arrives and attempts to get her to climb up onto his horse and ride away with him. Soledad, fearful, rejects him in front of the wedding guests. Soledad, afraid of how Roque will react, runs away. The last part of the sequence shows Soledad running in the fields, while Roque, riding, finds her under a bridge. A rape scene is subsequently implied. Finally, we see Soledad, walking home with difficulty.

The representation of love in *Soledad’s Shawl* is very much related to morality and marriage. Forbidden desire is present, but it is constantly restrained. Spatiality constructs the boundaries of romantic love practices. The interaction of unmarried women and men in domestic environments is depicted as non-respectable. Alberto and Soledad’s innocent relationship was disapproved of by the priest, just as Roque’s presence in Soledad’s house was interpreted as an illegitimate intrusion by the latter. Illegitimate sexual practices might also occur in another open but private space: in the fields. When Soledad becomes pregnant, she decides to accept the marriage proposal of Roque, the man who raped her, because it is the only way she can retain her respectability. Roque also appears as a respectable and a worthy man when
he decides to legitimise his relationship with Soledad. Alberto, in fact, also proposes marriage to Soledad when he finds out she is pregnant, not only because he loves her, but also to prevent her from being considered a non-respectable woman. People in the village have started to talk about Alberto and Soledad because the latter spends too much time alone with him in his house. However, despite the fact that Soledad loves Alberto, she decides to marry Roque because he is, after all, the biological father of her child. At the end, Soledad dies in childbirth, but Alberto manages to save the child. Soledad dies as a worthy woman because she sacrificed everything for her child, even love and happiness. Alberto leaves the village, disappointed and with little sense of respectability because he considers himself responsible for Soledad’s death. The film, however, presents him as a worthy man because he does all he can with the resources he has, which his friend, the priest, acknowledges in a book he writes about his life.

These films show that the process of modernisation in the countryside is embodied by educated men who through their relationships with good-hearted, but ignorant women spread modern ideas and behaviours. The countryside is governed by a patriarchal structure in which the wealthiest, most educated and usually whitest man is placed at the top of the hierarchy. Below the top level, other less powerful men can exercise authority, and at the bottom of the hierarchy are the women, who have little economic, social or cultural resources.

The films show, through the spatial configuration of the countryside and particularly the appearance of domestic spaces, that social classes are highly differentiated and the lower the class the further away the individual is from modernity. Peasant women are characterised by their closeness to nature (the soil, the fire, and the food), their endurance, their good attitude towards hard work, their inherent purity and their naivety; however, it is these very char-
acteristics that make them good candidates for improvement, which they can achieve through love.

Conclusion
At the beginning of this chapter I set out to investigate how films depicted modernity and the process of modernisation through the spatial configurations they presented in films stories. I focused on domestic spaces in city and countryside environments. I started by hinting at the kind of modernity I expected to see in films, based on studies of Mexican and Swedish urban and rural environments and modernisation.

I hypothesised that films would most likely depict a modernity based on the image of ‘the house as a machine for living in’, at least aesthetically, in both Swedish and Mexican films. I also expected Swedish films to advance a modernity that was close to the domestic ideals of social reformers, or at least react to them. In the case of Mexico, I expected to find functionalist homes with the technological advances of the times because, even though they were not widespread in reality, they were so in printed media and advertising; and I also expected to see a romanticised view of the countryside that counteracted the fears of modernity.

But what did I find? What were considered modern and non-modern spatial configurations in city and countryside environments and how did these affect the ways in which people related to work and romantic love?

This chapter showed that spatial arrangements are clear markers of respectability and non-respectability. In domestic urban environments, we observe that Swedish films depict male and female workers living in working-class apartments or as lodgers, and their sense of respectability is derived from their work practices and the truthfulness of their relationships. The living arrangements of the workers do not necessarily endanger their respectability, as these are depicted as temporary. The respectability of domestic workers, on the contrary, is more closely related to the ways in which they occupy domestic spaces. In households where the work of domestic workers is regarded as professionalised, the presence of the domestic worker in public and private domestic spaces appears respectable. When work is not regarded as professionalised, there are clearer distinctions as to which spaces and which practices are regarded as forbidden for domestic workers and can lead to non-respectable behaviour.

In Mexican films we observe that spatial configurations very often signal social and gender-based hierarchies. Spatial transgressions can easily lead to non-respectability, such as those occasions when unmarried women and men share unsupervised spaces. Mexican films also show that impoverished tenements directly create an association with non-respectability. Thus, the poor are non-respectable, judged by their living conditions, even though they can,
in fact, be judged as worthy based on other values and the emotional capital they possess.

When it comes to the representation of rural environments, we can observe that Swedish films very often associate the countryside with genuineness, solidarity, equality and the core of Swedishness, which in general signal respectability and worthiness regardless of whether rural homes are depicted as modern or non-modern. In Mexican films, there are similar traits attached to countryside people, but more often film stories show that for countryside people to reach their potential and keep their respectability, they need to be helped by the modernising male hand of a protector/saviour.

This chapter showed that the dichotomy ‘city/modern, countryside/non-modern’ does not account for the complexities of modernity in Sweden and Mexico as depicted in films.

Swedish Modernity

In Swedish films, the appearance of the home — in terms of modern arrangements and the presence of novel objects — was related to the class of belonging rather than whether the home was located in the city or the countryside. Well-off homes were similar in city and countryside environments. Urban working-class homes were, on the contrary, different from rural workers’ homes because of their dissimilar access to basic services such as running water and electricity, and the physical arrangement of the homes. Thus, what we can observe in film stories is that regarding access to modern advances, class matters more than whether the home is located in an urban or rural setting.

The main differences between city and countryside, however, were the mind-sets of the people, which could roughly be categorised into egalitarian and elitist. Countryside mind-sets were characterised by their egalitarian nature, and city mind-sets could tend towards elitism, although the modern Swedish society was expected to be based on egalitarianism.

In this chapter the domestic worker was focused on in Swedish films because of their common presence in films depicting city and countryside environments and the relationship between domestic work and modernity. Swedish films give a picture of domestic work as a modern practice when it was connected with the notion of work professionalisation.

Mexican Modernity

In Mexican films, we see that well-off homes in city environments have a similar set-up to Swedish ones. Urban working-class domestic environments, however, are aesthetically far from modern when modernity is defined by functionalist architectural styles and the presence of state-of-the-art domestic appliances. These homes show that the process of modernisation has pushed a certain group of people to the margins and generated poverty and low living
standards. Urban workers in films work near their homes, sometimes in workshops attached to their domestic spaces. The homes of the poor are usually open and connected to neighbouring homes, courtyards, shops, common washing areas, etc. in such a way that social networks can be enhanced and people can help each other in order to facilitate survival in a deprived environment.

In these domestic settings, romantic love, but also friendship, play a fundamental role in the survival strategies of the unprivileged households.

Well-off urban environments in Mexican films might depict aesthetically as modern domestic spaces, but people can still be represented as non-modern due to their conservatism. In city environments, the representation of the patriarchal head of the household is characterised as non-modern. The patriarch, who decides over everyone’s lives, is no longer acceptable. However, there is a patriarch in rural environments, who is judged differently. The patriarch who, despite his power over other household members and his conservative views on gender roles, brings science, knowledge and civilisation into the countryside is considered modern.

Mexican films show a clear hierarchisation of domestic spaces. To a greater extent than in Swedish films, we observe the specific connotations of domestic private and public spaces, and how rooms like the bathroom and the study have a clear gender label. The gendered organisation of domestic spaces in Mexican films can be attributed to the more prominent role of the head of the household as the patriarch of the family. We see how in Mexican households, the husband has a larger involvement in the organisation of domestic work, domestic purchases and social life and the occupational choices of his children. Mexican films show that parents are, in general, more connected with their children’s choices at a later age than is the case in Swedish films, and part of the process of modernisation is related to the modification or the breakdown of this close guardianship.

Film historians consider that rural dramas romanticise the positive traits of the patriarchal social structure of the countryside; however, the analysis here shows that films were also critical of the immovability of rural structures by exposing their power. Still I agree with the fact that patriarchal structures were presented in a more positive light in rural than in urban environments.

Working-Class Urban Environments

The spatial configuration of working-class environments differs significantly between Swedish and Mexican films. Working-class domestic spaces tend to be modern in Swedish films, as they follow functionalist ideas and the people who inhabit these spaces are proud participants in the labour market. As soon as workers form families, however, their roles change and the partner adopt differentiated gender roles, and their living conditions also change. This is part of the modernity ideal.
The Mexican working-classes, on the contrary, live in more deprived environments. Their homes are characterised by being open spaces of a collective nature, in which family, romantic partners, neighbours and friends share living spaces and help each other out, but can also be a threat to the privacy and security of the family. The open spaces indicate both solidarity and vulnerability. This way of living originates with the development of the modern city, in which some enjoy benefits, but the majority are pulled to the margins.

Similarly to how Mexican films depict poverty and overcrowding as a characteristic of the development of the modern city in Mexico, Swedish films depict the phenomenon of overcrowding in the cities through the representation of the lodger. Films depict young city workers living at somebody else’s home, paying for room and board. This type of living arrangement hints at the difficulties that some face, especially young newcomers, in finding an apartment, and the need workers have for extra income through taking in lodgers, sacrificing their privacy. In Swedish films, young workers leave their restricted life and living conditions when they find love and settle down.

Countryside Environments

When it comes to the countryside, Swedish films present two overarching narratives of modernity. On the one hand, the countryside is represented as the embodiment of genuine Swedishness, which entails that people share values related to democracy, equality and solidarity, while at the same time they share an attachment to land and nature. This narrative portrays the Swedish countryside as modern inasmuch as the values it endorses are the basis of a modern mind-set that is valid also in the cities. On the other hand, the countryside can also be portrayed as dull and non-modern, or as representing tradition in opposition to modernity. We have observed in this analysis that these two overarching narratives are depicted both in terms of the aesthetics of space and spatial arrangements and the roles and mind-sets of people who inhabit those spaces.

Mexican films also depict the intertwinement of modernity and tradition in the countryside, though films tend to be more unified in terms of the view they offer. Usually, Mexican films show a contrast between the non-modern and backwards, and the modern and desirable. We observed that in city environments the family patriarch was depicted as a traditional character whose values and attitudes were considered outdated for the modern lifestyle. In the countryside, on the contrary, it is the patriarch who brings modernity. Films tend to introduce men of science or well-educated and relatively wealthy people whose aim is to teach the rural population, and in particular women, about modern living. The contrast embodied by the modern man and the traditional rural woman is clearly played out in space. The contact of traditional women with the earth and the food (i.e. the ground level brazier, the dough women work with by hand, ground level sleeping mats, sitting on the floor
instead of on chairs, etc.) is contrasted with modern men’s distance from the ground (they sleep in beds, sit on chairs, work on counters and desks) and their distance from farming and food preparation.

In this chapter I have sought to examine the workings of spatiality in films with a focus on the urban-rural divide, claiming that this binary relationship has often been central when discussing modernity.

Despite the fact that the films studied in this thesis belong to an era of modernisation, the countryside is a recurrent motif. The countryside functions as a way of contrasting modernity and non-modernity, as well as constituting the basis of national identity and modernity – though in largely different ways in Sweden and Mexico.
Chapter 4
Respectable Workers and Happy Couples: A Gender Analysis

In the previous chapter, the analysis was centred on how spatiality in films unveiled the relationship of work and romantic love with modernity in Swedish and Mexican cinema. The spatial analysis showed that work and romantic love relate to each other based on a number of other dimensions: one of them is gender.

I showed that women and men occupied differentiated spaces in the variety of environments I analysed. The city and countryside experiences of the individuals depicted in films varied in terms of gender and class. The domestic spaces that I highlighted in the analysis were gender coded. I also argued that gender roles constituted one significant difference between Swedish and Mexican cinematic representations. For these reasons, gender is an inescapable dimension of analysis in this thesis.

Here, I analyse the relationship between work and romantic love focusing on gender difference. The aim of this chapter is to investigate the role of gender in the relationship between work and romantic love. Is the connection between work and romantic love established following gendered patterns? If so, how are these patterns related to modernity? What gendered patterns in the relationship between work and romantic love are involved in the understanding of modernity that films advance?

In order to address these questions, I use a series of analytical concepts, such as emotional capital, worthiness, and respectability, that allow me to capture and assess gender structures. In the introduction to this study, I mentioned that emotional capital refers to the emotionally valued skills and assets within a social network characterised by affective ties.1 In this analysis, I talk about emotional capital when I refer to particular actions and attitudes of the individuals that derive from affection and constitute a resource that can be exchanged for other forms of capital. Examples of emotional capital that can be observed in film stories are when a character takes up a particular occupation in order to provide for a loved one or when an individual’s actions are originated by their attempt to ensure someone else’s wellbeing.

The concepts of respectability and worthiness are connected to emotional capital. Respectability is a concept that has been used by Beverly Skeggs as an

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analytical tool and refers to the mechanism by which some groups have been defined as the other, but it is also a mechanism by which people have been able to negotiate their self-representations. Respectability, Skeggs argues, contains judgements of class, race, gender and sexuality. Thus, respectability has been used by society to judge certain groups and certain individuals, but also by individuals themselves when attempting to assert their own value. When I refer to respectability in this study, I mean the assessment of value that comes from either the society that the film story depicts or the particular film character that I refer to. When I mention the individual’s view of her- or himself as respectable, I term it as ‘sense of respectability’ to differentiate it from others’ perceptions, which I refer to, simply, as respectability. In either case, respectability is limited to the microcosms of the film story.

A lack of emotional capital can prevent characters from acquiring resources derived from affective actions and attitudes. In contrast, however, possessing emotional capital can allow a character to exchange affective actions and transform them into other forms of capital.

But films also speak to a larger society outside the story’s world: the viewers, the film audience. Films convey messages and have a particular moral, which all film elements contribute towards building and communicating. In most cases, the respectability or lack of respectability of a character indicates a particular value outside of the film story; this value is what I, in this study, call worthiness. A character or an action can be worthy, even though all other elements in the film story signal that the particular action, or the character in question, are judged as non-respectable.

The films in this selection use a variety of settings to tell stories. In the previous chapter, I emphasised domestic spaces located in city and countryside environments. Here, I mainly focus on workspaces in which characters perform paid labour.

Gender and Modernity

In previous studies on how the process of modernisation has transformed gender structures, the changes in work organisation – both in society and within the household – have been emphasised. Western industrial societies, for example, have seen an increased participation of married women in the labour market. In the United States, for instance, the proportion of married women in paid employment was around 4.6 per cent in 1890, but by 1950 it had increased to 23.8 per cent. One of the phenomena that has garnered much attention has been the separation of the workplace and the household.

as a result of industrial capitalism. This has been, however, dated as far back as the middle of the eighteenth century in England and well into the twentieth century in places like Mexico.

The extent to which this separation entailed liberation for women or an increased limitation of their productive role in society is still being debated. A system of a gendered division of labour seems to have been established coterminous with the emergence of industrial capitalism, at least as an ideal case. This has been named ‘the breadwinner system’. It entails that the husband’s main responsibility is to devote himself to productive paid work outside of the household, and the wife’s main responsibility is to devote herself full time to the household and care of family members. The breadwinner system, however, has prevailed to different extents and in diverse time periods in various countries. In the United States, for example, it has been considered to be in decline from the 1920s onwards, while in Russia it never prevailed. Still, the breadwinner model has been deeply embedded in legal systems and political thought, and it is therefore inevitable to have it as a point of reference in empirical studies such as this one.

Eva Illouz defines modernity as the period after the First World War, which ‘marked a radicalization of the social tendencies inscribed in early modernity, and changed, at times profoundly, the culture of love and the economy of gender identity contained in it.’ Apart from the changes that the process of modernisation brought about in the gendered division of labour, Illouz identifies transformations in love, or what she calls romantic culture, derived from novel political ideals of gender equality and sexual freedom. According to Illouz, the most important cultural revolution of modernity in the twentieth century is ‘the individualisation of lifestyles and the intensification of emotional life projects; and the economization of social relationships, the pervasiveness of economic models to shape the self and its very emotions.’ These cultural revolutions are also gendered revolutions, because they touch upon gender structures and the role of women and men in marriage and the workplace, which are gendered institutions.

Gender has been the focus of several studies on modernisation. Particular attention has been paid to the view of women in popular culture. Historian Liz Conor, for example, argues that in the twentieth century, modern women, such as those searching for the American dream through class mobility in the United States, were constructed in media as morally dubious because of their

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5 According to Ruiz, in the city of Hermosillo, México, this separation became prominent with the transformation of agricultural production from the 1940s onwards. Ruiz (1994), p. 396.
6 For a discussion on this debate, see Berg (1987).
9 Illouz (1997a), p. 34.
flagrant visibility in the public sphere and their attempt to attract the male
gaze. The modern urban girl of the 1920s used her own image to gain a space
in the public sphere.\textsuperscript{11} Conor argues that at the beginning of the twentieth
century women’s ‘appearing’ in the public sphere took place within visual
technologies, and ‘modernity’s visions of women became part of women’s
self-representation as modern.’\textsuperscript{12} As a response to the increased participation
of women in the industrial workforce, a number of women’s types appeared,
such as the City Girl, the Office Girl, the Business Girl, and the Factory Girl.\textsuperscript{13}
These types that Conor finds in Australian media in the 1920s were in fact
present too in the films I study both in Sweden and Mexico and are related to
a view of modernity that prevailed during the whole period of study.

As part of the process of modernisation the role of technology has often
been stressed, especially the fact that it led to a particular gender division of
labour. There was a division of labour within workplaces in which the use of
machines was widespread, such as factories. In these workplaces, studies have
shown that men took skilled tasks and women unskilled. These studies have
called attention to the phenomenon of the masculinisation of technology and
how the dominance of technology by men has contributed to and has been a
reflection of men’s power in society.\textsuperscript{14} Technical expertise became a feature
of masculinity and, in particular, the white male, while femininity was seen
as incompatible with industrial technology during the late-nineteenth century.
The question of technology as a source of men’s power and women’s exclu-
sion from any technological pursuit has been studied by gender and historical
scholarship throughout the years.\textsuperscript{15}

These reflections on work and modernisation are related to how scholars
have perceived gender differences in work as a result of the process of mod-
ernisation. The films I analyse, to some extent, show similar concerns, but also
add emotional features to these reflections. In this chapter, I divide the analysis
into the representation of the female and the male experience. I also look at the
differences between higher status (entrepreneurial) and lower status (salaried
employees) workers.

Female Workers

The period 1930 to 1955 was characterised in Sweden and Mexico by the
state’s and other policy makers’ explicit view of women’s role as primarily
mothers and housewives. The process of modernisation came together with

\textsuperscript{11} Conor (2004).
\textsuperscript{12} Conor (2004), p. 8.
\textsuperscript{13} Conor (2004), p. 10.
\textsuperscript{15} For an account of the scholarship on gender and technology, see Wajcman (2012).
an attempt to adapt gender roles in such a way that women and men could effectively fulfil their family and social responsibilities. But the changes in the labour market and industrial structures in both countries could not be ignored, so the discussions on how to reconcile proper gender roles and work were highly debated.

In Sweden, the State Enquiry on Home and Family Questions published a report that, according to historian Yvonne Hirdman, articulated a project of modernisation based on the adaptation of a gender contract based on the state’s acknowledgements of women’s two roles. The main task for women in society, according to this document, was to get married, have children, raise them, cook, and care for their home in a rational way. At the same time, they should receive an occupational training that would allow them to go back to the labour market once children were old enough to care for themselves after school.\(^\text{16}\)

The enquiry stated that young women usually chose to take a paid job soon after their basic studies and were not interested in further education because marriage was part of their life prospects, entailing that they would stop working for wages. The fact that women did not seek further education, according to the document, meant that women were usually only suitable for unqualified work. The investigation concluded that there were other factors that contributed to this situation, such as the fact that there was a general view that some types of work were not appropriate for women and that families invested much less interest in their daughters’ education than in their sons’. For this reason, women who wished to keep working for wages after marriage or who remained single lacked both qualifications and opportunities for advancement possibilities. Women who had children and decided to continue working for pay, the document added, found themselves forced to work double, as they had to attend their family responsibilities and their wage work.\(^\text{17}\)

Hirdman argues that for the first time in Swedish history the state focused special attention on the situation of women or the everyday life drama.\(^\text{18}\) In the several social investigations that were carried out by the state during the 1930s and 1940s, the stay-at-home mother was put in focus and measures to improve her situation were advanced. Alva Myrdal’s argument concerning the right of married women and mothers to gainful employment was also taken into account, even though this was in fact referred to as a problem.\(^\text{19}\) The right of married women to work and the possibilities to combine family and work lives were heatedly discussed questions at a time when more and more women were joining the labour market.\(^\text{20}\) There was a reaction to the

\(^\text{17}\) SOU 1947:46 pp. 151–152.
arguments proposed in the investigations and by social engineers concerning the rational organisation of ‘the small life’ or the intimate life. Hirdman argues that some women also took part in the discussions, such as women from the labour movement, women from the feminist movement and women in the government.

So the question of women’s work in Sweden, at least in the public debate, was linked to questions of family life. Marriage and childrearing were discussed in terms of being a part of life that could eventually be threatened by paid work. At the same time, the premises for this part of life needed to change in order for women to join the work force on the same conditions as men.

In order to understand the development of the ideas that circulated in the Swedish public debate, I use Yvonne Hirdman’s theory that explains the historical formation of different gender regimes. Hirdman uses the concept of gender contract, referring to ‘the social norm that existed at different points in time with regard to gender: place, activities, attributes.’ Hirdman used the concept to capture change in the gender structures that took place in Swedish history, particularly in relation to the establishment of the welfare state. The predominant gender contracts that Hirdman discusses changed from one to the other due to the gender conflict that resulted from the historical processes of modernisation. The different contracts that Hirdman identifies are the housewife contract that prevailed from 1930 to 1960, essentially during the whole period this thesis deals with, before giving way to the equality contract in the period 1965–1970. From 1975/1980 to 1990, the equal status contract was predominant.

The housewife contract entailed that the man should be the family’s breadwinner, while the woman should have the main responsibility of the care of children, husband and household regardless of whether she contributed to the household income or not. Hirdman also notes that during the period 1920–1960 the content of the contract changed from a traditional sex complementary one towards a modern, rational contract created by the social engineers of the social democracy. In the 1930s the numbers of women in gainful employment decreased in Sweden; the rise in women’s participation in modern production that took place in the 1920s experienced a decline the following decade towards a higher dependence on marriage. If we exclude the agricultural sector, however, we can observe that even though the proportion of women in the labour force in relation to men decreased, there was an increase in the number of occupied women. This was particularly true among academics and public servants, while paid domestic workers decreased after 1930.

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23 SOU 1990:44, p. 94.
Historian Renée Frangeur argues that the numbers show that more women in the 1930s than in the 1920s sought modern gainful employment, often in combination with marriage.\(^{26}\) This means that even though a gender contract legitimised the masculine norm in the labour market and the question of whether married women should really have the right of gainful employment was raised, there were women participating in significant numbers in the labour market and public life, while following clear gender boundaries.

Views on marriage have also changed throughout time.\(^{27}\) Hirdman asserts in the 1990 State Enquiry on Power and Democracy that the grounds for the choice of marriage partner have changed in the industrial society from women’s selection a partner based on his ability to offer economic sustenance to one based on love.

The function of the family has been a concern of political debaters due to the fact that certain traditional family functions, such as the care of children and the elderly, have been turned over to the care of social experts, although the family has remained an important cultural resource in modern society.\(^{28}\) In 1921, there was a reformation of the Marriage Code in Sweden that changed the position of women as wives. Married women in this new code were granted equal legal and economic status with men; they were no longer legally incompetent nor required the permission of their husbands to engage in gainful employment.\(^{29}\)

In Mexico, the period from 1930 to 1976 was characterised by a state-led industrialisation. Industrial and social policies were put into place and established a specific gender contract that simultaneously endorsed a nuclear family ideal. A male wage package, understood as a family wage, was established, while the role of women as mothers and housewives was reinforced in social policy. The institutionalised strategies that were established after the Revolution included the reorganisation of social reproduction. The state-led factory regime involved a gendering of industrial development that entailed that women ‘continued to be represented, constrained and encouraged in their roles as mothers and housewives in numerous social and economic policies.’\(^{30}\)

The consolidation of industry in Mexico was a seen as a priority. This had to be reconciled with the revolutionary ideology that had, in fact, a clear gender agenda. The new woman in post-revolutionary Mexico was to be a conscientious mother and a productive wage labourer. In 1936, the Mexican state released an investigation on the Situation of Women and Child Workers. The work of the committee centred on the situation of garment industry


\(^{27}\) For an illustrative account of the changes in the views on marriage in twentieth century America and the expectations and values attributed to the institution of marriage during the course of a century, see Celello (2009).

\(^{28}\) SOU 1990:44, pp. 32–34.

\(^{29}\) Bersbo (2011).

\(^{30}\) Cravey (1998), p. 32.
workers, which was the industrial branch where the most precarious labour conditions were expected. The state saw its role as a conciliator between women’s labour rights and their post-revolutionary role and the expectations of women’s unpaid domestic labour. Just like in Sweden, there was a heated debate regarding women’s role in modern society in Mexico.

Post-revolutionary leaders promoted a certain image of the modern woman. In their view, she was less religious, but not less responsible for her domestic tasks. The fact that women were entering the industrial workforce was an important issue of discussion. Comments advanced by politicians and social reformers expressed concern about women who entered the industrial workforce. Others claimed that women were taking the jobs that men needed to support their families. The preoccupation was that working women were negatively affected psychologically in comparison with ‘domestic’ women.

This argument was countered by the fact that many households were in fact female-headed, which became known from the results of an industrial census and its subsequent media coverage. The debate turned into a rhetorical discussion of ‘deserving’ versus ‘undeserving’ women. This debate entailed that employment should only be promoted for those women with no male supporter.31

The process of industrialisation in Mexico, however, did not entail a complete transition towards an industrial capitalist mode of production; on the contrary, it coexisted with informal economic sectors in which women were active. In 1930 a major part of total production was concentrated in the agricultural sector where almost 70 per cent of the population lived and worked. Already in that decade, however, inter-state migrations were taking place, intensifying in the 1960s. A great part of the Mexican population retained an important attachment to the countryside, and certain southern states were characterised by their high share of indigenous population. By 1960, more than half the population lived in cities.32

During his administration, President Lázaro Cárdenas (1934–1940) articulated ideas on social change and modernisation that involved women’s role as wageworkers and as leading actors in temperance and anticlerical campaigns. His idea was to transform women’s labour into skilled labour through the establishment of training schools for women.33 So, for a period, there were direct actions from the state that endorsed women’s role as workers, even though they were still seen as primarily responsible of the care and formation of the Mexican modern citizen. Thus, ‘the “new woman” would enter the wage labour force without jeopardizing domestic stability or challenging patriarchal privilege.’34

33 Olcott (2005), p. 65.
34 Olcott (2005), p. 49.
Historians Gabriela Cano and Verena Radkau have studied three professional women whose work lives were developing in the period 1920–1940. Even though they were imbued with the predominant gender ideology of their time, in practice these women’s lives diverged from the traditional pattern to some extent. Although these women dedicated their time and efforts predominantly to their professional lives, they were surrounded by other women who took care of their domestic tasks, such as their mothers and domestic workers. In the case of these three women, a conciliation between the public and private spheres was simply not possible; when they decided to enter the ‘world of men’, they had to renounce a private life, both its limitations and its satisfactions. This study shows that the struggle of the Mexican regime and social reformers to balance between ideals of femininity and economic growth through an emphasis on productive work proved difficult in practice. There were many examples of contestation and deviation, despite moralising and normative gender discourses.

The Mexican government had, since before the Revolution, employed women in public administration, first as schoolteachers and later in public offices. After the Revolution, the number of women in public administration grew rapidly. Women in public offices represented the female face of the white-collar sector. Women who had access to these jobs were those who took advantage of the educational opportunities that started to open up in the first decades of the twentieth century. In the public debate, however, these workers were questioned regarding the economic necessity of their work, their sexual morality, and their habits of consumption.

It is noteworthy that the majority of women who worked in the public administration were heads of household and lived modestly, but the opposition against their work was fierce. Working women were portrayed in the press as frivolous. A commentator wrote in a national newspaper that a good number of young women only wanted their job to buy dresses, jewels, and concoctions of all kinds for their hair, skin, eyelashes, lips, etc. Additionally, the commentator continued, these women went to buy clothes with their friends or copy the models they saw in the boutiques and asked some dressmaker they knew to reproduce them. So for this author, the solution was not to employ the pretty and opportunist single woman, but a married woman instead. Another argument against the employment of women in public offices, also published in national newspapers, was that female workers were only interested in becoming the mistress of the boss. So the arguments against women in public offices were based on the fear that women would opt for behaviours that transgressed their class and gender roles.

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In the late 1940s, when the social policies of President Lázaro Cárdenas regime had been implemented and the post-revolutionary state had been institutionalised, the role of women retained, in the official discourse, its traditional features. President Miguel Alemán said in 1946 that ‘in Mexico women have been traditionally incomparable mothers, sacrificing and diligent wives, loyal sisters and modest daughters…The laws of the Revolution have pledged to conserve the legal and social conditions that are the foundation of women’s natural sensitivity. These conditions reside in the home.’

Even though we can identify a gender contract in Mexico that established that women’s main responsibility was the care of the domestic sphere, the welfare reform in Mexico differentiated women from different classes and backgrounds. Among the women who were part of the construction of the modern welfare state we can count the following: 1) A group of poor mothers, who were the main recipients of welfare aid. They received medical care and were taught modern and scientific childrearing techniques; 2) Middle- and upper-class women constituted another group of women who were often volunteers in mothers’ clubs and worked as fundraisers and instructors; 3) Welfare workers who taught poor women how to support themselves and their families. The professional field of social work allowed women from all classes a legitimate professional career.

The labour code of 1931 and the social security legislation from 1943 reinforced the attempt of the state to protect women from types of work that were considered dangerous or inappropriate. Even if this legislation recognised women as workers in their own right, it also reinforced the definition of working-class women as dependents on their partners. So, women could have a place in the public sphere and even as professional workers in the areas of social work and education, but women’s work was to be subordinated to the interests of national development. They were, at all times, to be respectable and honourable, with their sexuality controlled within the institution of marriage. Nonetheless, the process of modernisation touched upon patterns of femininity and, even though concerns about the morality of working women was a top issue on the public agenda, changes in the landscape of the public sphere and in the labour market were inescapable.

Industrialisation and the access of women to new occupations exacerbated social concerns, particularly when women participated in activities that required an interaction with people from social classes different from their own, for example salesclerk jobs. These concerns, which later were materialised in protective legislation, only pushed women into the informal sector with unregulated working conditions. It is important to observe here, however,

40 Blum (2004), p. 82.
41 Sanders (2009), p. 1545.
that discourses on women, work, and the visual representation of women are largely tied to class. Lower-class women were often regarded, both in the public discourse and popular culture, as ‘working in factories, as domestics, or selling tortillas on the street corner, while women engaged in what was deemed professional work were imagined as workers in very different ways.’

Despite the fact that the types of jobs discussed in the public debate were those of the factory worker, the shop assistant, the domestic worker, or the secretary, in Mexican film production from the 1940s and 1950s the presence of the cabaret dancer and the prostitute was predominant. The melodrama genre featuring the fallen woman was one of the most recurrent on the screen. Films from this genre are unavoidable in a gender analysis, so I will comment on how women portrayed in these films related to modern society, regardless of whether or not we can say they were representative of the majority of the workingwomen in Mexico during the period studied here.

Most historical accounts of women’s work in Sweden and Mexico during the period 1930–1960 describe women’s participation in paid work in commercial, industrial and secretarial occupations, and also in agriculture. More rarely are women perceived as participating to any large extent in entrepreneurial occupations. However, films depict women in these types of occupations as well and tend to make points about their roles as workers and partners. But films also – and perhaps more commonly – depict women in salaried jobs with little influence on their work performance and working conditions. In the following sections I will examine female characters in these two types of work situations in Swedish and Mexican films.

The Female Entrepreneur or the Managerial Worker

Women in films who have entrepreneurial, managerial, or professional jobs are depicted in a different way than other female workers. Usually their work situation is used to make a point in the story about how work (and love) should be regarded in order to be rewarded in life.

In films that depict these kinds of workers, I identify three main configurations in the relationship of work and romantic love. The first represents situations in which work and romantic love are in conflict with each other. In general, this means that as long as work is present, truthful love that leads to marriage is implausible. Another setup is when romantic love can be realised, but only after certain conditions are met. A final setup is when work and love are compatible.

Work Makes Love Impossible

In Swedish film *Pennies from Heaven (Pengar från skyn)* from 1938, we become acquainted with a female entrepreneur called Madame Angèle (Tollie

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Zellman). She is the mature owner of a fancy boutique for women’s clothes, who has achieved great success. Madame Angèle’s thoughts about love come suddenly one day when she meets Leopold Paseman (Carl Barcklind). He is the uncle of one of her employees, Hanne, the film’s female protagonist. The encounter between Madame Angèle and Leopold is infused with romance at first. It is clear that there is an attraction between the two characters.

However, when Madame Angèle insinuates that she is interested in a relationship, Leopold rejects the idea, saying that thinking about love would ruin her work achievements. Without much hesitation, Madame Angèle accepts Leopold’s argument and abandons all hopes of starting a relationship with him. Nevertheless, they become business partners, thanks to Madame Angèle’s persuasive arguments.

Madame Angèle values her work, and the man she sees as a potential partner does so as well. Her work gives her a sense of respectability, as she is proud of her own achievements, but also others consider her a respectable woman. As her friend, Leopold expresses his admiration for her success, while her young female employees dream about becoming successful businesswomen themselves.

This entrepreneurial woman is depicted in the film as a loner. She has neither a partner nor a family and is therefore able to dedicate all her time and energy to her work. But Madame Angèle is also depicted as a charming woman in her role as a worker. She knows very well how to talk to her female customers, but also to their husbands, who are the ones who decide and pay for the products she sells. This ability of Madame Angèle can be regarded as emotional capital; even if she is not using her allure and warmth to attract romantic partners, she is using them to be a successful salesperson. Madame Angèle is not rewarded with love and a complete and happy life in this story. However, she remains respectable and worthy. Moreover, her feminine role is fulfilled by her motherly attitude towards her employees and by being a model of feminine glamour and sophistication.

In Mexican film *Women Who Work* (*Mujeres que trabajan*) from 1953, produced almost twenty years after the Swedish film, we observe a female character in a position similar to Madame Angèle’s. Unlike *Pennies from Heaven*, a romantic comedy, *Women Who Work* is a drama, and the entrepreneurial woman is a main character, not a secondary one like Madame Angèle, so we can expect a more intricate fate for her.

Isabel (Columba Domínguez) is a young woman who owns a boutique for women’s clothes. She is very successful and credits her achievements to her hard work, her independence, and first and foremost to the fact that she is not interested in men and love. Isabel is not only self-sufficient herself, but

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Madame Angèle is a secondary character in the film. As can be observed in the appendix, it is young Hanne Paseman who in this film is rewarded with a successful love life. So Madame Angèle functions as a sophisticated woman to whom the youth can relate, even if the lifestyle she represents is not ideal.
she also recommends her fellow workingwomen to be so before they start thinking about romance. One day, however, Isabel meets Alfredo (Alberto Carrière) and falls in love with him. Somewhat against her will, Isabel starts trusting him, but he turns out to be a cheat. When Isabel finds out, she kills him. This changes her life forever as, by the end of the film, she is about to be caught by the police. Unlike Madame Angèle’s, Isabel’s fate is tragic. It became impossible for Isabel to reject love when it turned up, and when it finally arrived, it was not of the ‘right kind’.

Isabel is proud of her success at work, her economic independence, and her attitude towards men. She has a sense of respectability and promotes her lifestyle with other women. However, the people around her see her situation with suspicion, but also pity. Isabel is considered to be wasting her youth and beauty with her spinsterhood. Isabel is a calculating woman at work. She has good taste and is a rational work manager, but she does not show much warmth and sympathy in her work practices. Rather, Isabel sells her dresses, accessories and perfumes by acting as a fashion expert, rather than by creating an emotional connection with her customers.

When love arrives in Isabel’s life, she attempts to give her feminine side a chance and let go of her strict self-sufficiency. She, however, misjudges the man she falls in love with and loses her respectability when she kills him. There is no way out of her situation, and at the end of the story Isabel is trapped, with no exchangeable form of capital to save her life.

Madame Angèle and Isabel have a number of things in common. Their occupations and their success as workers, but also the fact that love is denied to them, connects the characters. There are also significant differences. In the Swedish film, the female character retained the respectability that her work provided; she gave up love, but her work gave her a high social status. In the Mexican film, the female character had a high economic status as a successful worker, but she was not regarded as respectable by the society depicted in the film. By the end of the story, she fell even deeper into social alienation when her attempt to love failed. The film puts part of the blame on the wrongful man who cheated Isabel. Isabel, however, is not depicted as totally guiltless because she decided to take upon herself a gender role that was not appropriate. At the end of the story, she lacked both respectability and worthiness and was depicted as undeserving of a happy and fulfilling life. This ending follows the logic of a tragedy, as the story does not offer a solution for the protagonist’s dilemma.

**Love Changes It All**

Entrepreneurial or professional women can also be faced with a variety of life events in films that affect their life choices and life outlooks. In the previous examples, we observed cases of women whose work activities constituted the basis for their sense of respectability; in the cases presented below, love does
not fit in their lives. Nonetheless, the relationship between work and romantic love can also look differently.

In Swedish film *King’s Street (Kungsgatan)* (1943), we approach the life of a group of young women who work as prostitutes on Stockholm’s most lively street at the time. One of them, Dolly (Marianne Löfgren), has a well-defined plan for her future. She is working as a prostitute and plans to continue to do so for a couple of years until she has saved enough money to open a perfumery. Dolly manages to leave prostitution and start her own business.

During Dolly’s life as a prostitute, she is depicted around different men, among them both friends and customers. One of them, a banker, remains a good friend to her after she has opened her perfumery. Dolly is a secondary character in the film, and her love life is not central to the story. Dolly’s friendship with the banker after she has left prostitution can indicate a love opportunity for her. Although from the story we cannot really assess if there is a romantic relationship between them, it at least indicates that Dolly is able to build a valuable social network with her new lifestyle. The fact that Dolly leaves prostitution is depicted as a positive change in her life because her success and well-being is compared to the protagonist Marta’s fall and her later sick-looking appearance.46

Dolly’s entrepreneurship and her success in reaching her goal are, hence, not depicted as obstacles to love. Dolly is able, thanks to her change in occupation, to gain respectability. This respectability acquired through legitimate work has the potential of bringing about a positive outcome in her love life. The fact that Dolly seems to have normalised her relationship with men is an indication of a gain in emotional capital. When Dolly was a prostitute, her relationship with men had an economic rather than an emotional basis, regardless of what Dolly’s true feelings were. Once Dolly acquires respectability through work, her liaisons with men have a more legitimate foundation and can therefore be considered to be part of her emotional capital, which could eventually lead to further emotional and economic rewards.

Even though Dolly is depicted as a respectable woman once she opens her perfumery, she is still not depicted as worthy. By the end of the film, when she is the only one capable of helping the protagonist Marta, Dolly turns her back on her and is thus depicted as calculating and arrogant. So, in this case, Dolly is respectable, but not worthy. This depiction contributes to enhance the theme of the film, which is to present the city as a harsh and unfeeling place. Dolly has become a modern woman and succeeded in regaining respectability, but at the price of losing valuable emotional capital that could eventually allow her to further increase her chances to gain romantic love.

In *Pennies from Heaven* the female protagonist Hanne (Signe Hasso) is a shop assistant at the beginning of the story; her life changes when she encounters the possibility to become a business owner. Hanne and her female

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46 See appendix for a more detailed description of the contrast between protagonist Marta and secondary character Dolly in the story.
colleagues dream about having their own businesses and being as sophisticated as Madame Angèle and the women who can buy the fancy dresses they sell. The shop is a workplace that allows women’s participation in paid work, visibility in the public sphere, and possibilities for a successful career. Moreover, it functions as a place that promotes dreaming about consumption.

In this film, romantic love leads to an improved social and economic status and thus an increase in consumption possibilities. When Hanne meets Hans Promm (Olof Widgren), they start dating and fall in love quickly. Hans turns out to be a successful man, but Hanne’s attempt to become a businesswoman fails. She is cheated by a supplier and ends up indebted and penniless. Hans helps her out and solves her financial problems.

Hanne is not enthusiastic about her job as a shop assistant, but she is about the possibility of opening her own business. Hanne values work, but also being an independent woman, capable of living on her own and being self-sufficient. For Hanne, being a businesswoman comes together with a sense of respectability. Apart from her enthusiasm for work, she also possesses emotional capital in the form of charm and pleasantness, which is valued by her romantic partner Hans. So even though Hanne never gets to become a businesswoman, she is rewarded for her worthiness. At the end of the story, Hanne’s uncle rewards everyone with work: Hanne’s brothers get a job in his company, and Hans gets a promotion and becomes the company’s manager. While Hanne expects to get something similar, she is in turn reminded that she will get to be Hans’ wife. Hanne is contented with the outcome. Due to the fact that Hanne marries up, she will have the possibility to have the life of consumption that she dreamt of.

The Mexican film Top Women (Arriba las Mujeres) (1943) depicts a family in which gender roles have been reverted. Don Próspero (Manuel Noriega) and Doña Felicidad (Consuelo Guerrero de Luna) are married and have two daughters: doctor Amalia (Virginia Zuri) and painter Luz (Amparo Morillo). Doña Felicidad is the president of the feminist association: La Liga de las
Camisas Pintas (The League of the Mottled Shirts). The story’s comic nuances are created by the ludicrousness of the work situation of the women and their overly feminist approach to love and work. This comedy shows professional work performed by women as anti-natural and undesirable and also as a hindrance for romantic love. Nevertheless, at the end, love turns out to be the priority and main source of happiness for all the female characters in the film.

Paid work is clearly depicted as a masculine enterprise; when women are depicted at work in this film, they adopt masculine manners. Felicidad not only behaves and dresses like a man, but she also fights a political battle against men through her activities in the radical feminist association she leads. Doña Felicidad was already married when she decided to become a feminist and focus on her professional work. This decision was in fact a result of her catching her husband cheating on her. In this case, disillusionment with love led her to change her relationship to work and instil this relationship to work and love in her daughters. By the end of the film, when Don Próspero threatens his wife with divorce and when Amalia and Luz realise they too might lose the men they love, they decide to change their attitude towards men and work and take on a more traditional feminine role.

The women in this film work for pay, but their main motivation for doing so is to present themselves as emancipated, self-sufficient women. When love

Figure 43. Doña Felicidad standing next to her daughter’s Luz’ painting. From Top Women, (1943), Producciones Rodriguez Hermanos. Cineteca Nacional Collection.
makes its appearance in the lives of the youngest girls, they start questioning the values their mother had inculcated in them. When even Doña Felicidad sees the risk of losing her husband, she also starts questioning her own beliefs. At the end of the story, women keep love, renounce work and become happier.

Women in this film find a sense of respectability in work. They all are proud of what they do and the fact that work makes them independent and self-sufficient. However, the people around them do not share this view. Moreover, their male partners and potential partners see their prioritisation of work, in contrast, as anti-natural and reprehensible. Men in this film hold the view that the women’s loss of femininity makes them non-respectable. It turns out that the female characters in this film realise, after a while, that their attitude towards work does not satisfy them fully nor bring them happiness.

The emotional capital that is depicted in most films pertaining to women normally involves a caring and loving attitude towards their partners and potential partners. The characteristics of being supportive, tender and devoted to others is, however, completely absent in Doña Felicidad and her daughters. Doña Felicidad in particular is depicted as unsupportive and harsh towards her husband and men in general. Thus, even though their work provides these women with economic resources and personal pride, they lack the type of capital that women tend to have and are rewarded for in films.

After the change these women go through, they also acquire emotional capital as they soften their attitude and let their loving and tender sides come out. Subsequently, they gain respectability and with it happiness and satisfaction with their lives. The female characters in this film are depicted as worthy only when they change their views and practices in relation to work and romantic love.

Another Mexican film presents a working woman whose work constitutes her main source of respectability. Who Are Our Daughters With? (Con quién andan nuestras hijas?) from 1955 is about the lives of several young women who are regarded as part of the modern urban youth. One of them, Beatriz (Magda Guzmán), is the only daughter of a conservative upper-class couple. Having grown up in a very restricted environment, Beatriz was never able to have a serious romantic relationship. In her thirties Beatriz is still not able to find the right husband that her parents would approve of, so she keeps living in her parental home and runs the flower shop that her parents bought her to keep her busy and stop her from thinking about undeserving men.

Beatriz tends to her shop and has an employee who can take care of the business while she is away. It turns out that Beatriz is often away because she has a secret relationship with her childhood sweetheart, Eduardo (Ernesto Alonso), the man her parents prohibited her from dating because he was not good enough. With her work, Beatriz has gained a greater independence. Eduardo is married to a friend of Beatriz, so their meetings must be discreet. The fact that both Eduardo and Beatriz have managerial jobs allows them to leave their workplaces during the day and meet without raising suspicion.
The situation changes when Beatriz becomes pregnant and decides to tell her parents that she is seeing a married man. In such circumstances, Beatriz does not consider the possibility of staying at home and continuing with her life as it is. Instead she decides to sell her shop and leave the city to start from scratch somewhere else, alone with her child.

Beatriz’s work constitutes her main source of respectability even though she feels guilty about her romantic relationship with Eduardo. Owning a flower shop is depicted as a legitimate and respectable type of work for an upper-class single woman. It is a type of job that does not entail liaisons with men belonging to a different class than she herself does, and it does not represent a burden for her body and mind. For Beatriz, her work functions as a screen of morality that allows her to live a free love life, even though it is an illicit one. Beatriz’s situation is portrayed as unsustainable in the long run. Moreover, her unexpected pregnancy reinforces the stigma of immorality.

Beatriz has no emotional capital that she can use in exchange for a way out of her problem. This is the case because the illegitimacy of her situation does not allow her partner or anybody else to offer anything in exchange for her emotional efforts.

Finally, when Beatriz decides to start a new business somewhere else, she can do it thanks to her work. In her new life, however, Beatriz will bear the stigma of motherhood out of wedlock, which is depicted in the film as an embarrassment – she leaves her family to keep them from the shame of her situation – but she justifies her actions as the best solution for her child. Beatriz’s renounces love and her main source of worthiness in her forthcoming life becomes motherhood.

In this film, love changes the relationship of the character with work. A romantic relationship that does not end in marriage and moreover results in an illegitimate child puts the single woman in a difficult family and social

Figure 44. Beatriz (left) at the flower shop. From Who Are our Daughters With? (1955), Corsa. Filmoteca UNAM Collection.
situation. The role of work in the life of Beatriz changes from being Beatriz’s source of respectability. It comes to represent the sacrifice she is expected to make in order to give her child an opportunity in life, despite its illegitimacy. At the end of the story, Beatriz is depicted as a non-respectable woman, but as worthy due to her upcoming motherhood and self-sacrifice.

**Love and Work Are Compatible**

There are a couple of Mexican films in my selection in which romantic love and entrepreneurial work are in fact compatible; however, there are conditions for this compatibility. In the films presented here, the female entrepreneurial workers have a sense of respectability from work that is recognised by everyone. They also possess emotional capital that makes them desirable romantic partners. In *The Cackling Hen* (*La gallina clueca*) from 1941, the sales work of the female protagonist Doña Teresa (Sara García) in a grocery shop is central to the plot.47

The shop is located in a middle-class neighbourhood. Doña Teresa is depicted as a very strong, goal-oriented and enterprising woman, whose main objective is to be economically independent in order to provide for her children and give them (particularly her son) a good education.

The shop is a venture that Doña Teresa and her business partner, Don Ángel (Domingo Soler), take up soon after they meet. They realise that, as a team, they have the required skills to succeed in the retail grocery business. When Doña Teresa and Don Ángel meet, the former is an unemployed widow with young children coming from the provinces and seeking to make a living in the city; the latter is a not very successful merchant.

At the shop, work is efficient, but it also allows a relationship between co-workers to bloom. María Teresa’s and Don Ángel’s feelings for each other begin to develop and grow. Even though they never become an official romantic couple – due to their age – they do enter a marriage-like relationship when, after many years of friendship, they move in together and enjoy María Teresa’s family as though they were a married couple aging together.

In this film, Doña Teresa displays a sense of respectability based on work and motherhood. Doña Teresa’s success at work is appreciated and acknowledged by her children and her acquaintances because it makes her a good mother. She has been able to pay for her son’s medical studies and educate her daughters as ‘good housewives’ – as opposed to her neighbour’s daughter who becomes a vamp and thus an embarrassment for her family. Moreover, Doña Teresa’s work is depicted as respectable and appropriate for her social and emotional skills. She knows how to treat customers, is very accurate with the accounts, and is a good work manager. Her partner, on the other hand, is

47 Even though Doña Teresa is the protagonist of the film, the role of romantic love is more emphasised in the lives of her children when they reach a marriageable age, as can be observed in the appendix.
Figure 45. Doña Teresa and Don Ángel at their shop, only eight months after having opened it. From *The Cackling Hen*, (1941), Mundiales. Cineteca Nacional Collection.

Figure 46. Don Ángel flirting with a customer in the shop. We can observe a more modern shop this time. From *The Cackling Hen*, (1941), Mundiales. Filmoteca UNAM Collection.

Figure 47. Shot of the final scene in the film. Doña Teresa and Don Ángel will have one of Doña Teresa’s daughters and her children living with them in the house. From *The Cackling Hen*, (1941), Mundiales. Filmoteca UNAM Collection.
only good at negotiating with wholesalers and needs a bit of persuasion to work effectively.

Doña Teresa possesses a good deal of emotional capital; her motherly love was her primary motivation that allowed her to develop her work skills. Doña Teresa’s caring traits and her managerial drive attract Don Ángel not only as a business partner, but also as a romantic one. By the end of the film, even though Doña Teresa does not accept marriage, feeling that they are at a too late stage in life for that, she does accept the companionship that Don Ángel offers. The worthiness Doña Teresa displays is derived from work inasmuch as it was the means for a righteous motherhood, and a major part of her worthiness is also derived from her family role as ‘wife’, mother and grandmother.

Another example in which an entrepreneurial woman finds love despite being a successful worker can be observed in Mexican film *When the Children Hate* (*Cuando los hijos odian*) (1950). Lolita (Amanda del Llano), the protagonist of the story, is a bakery owner. Lolita is in charge of the management of the business that employs several male bakers. Lolita’s mother works as the bakery’s cashier, and there is also a female domestic worker in charge of cleaning the bakery, the attached house, as well as tending to other domestic tasks. Lolita is a strict boss; she instructs her workers regarding their tasks every morning and makes sure they do their work properly. Lolita’s employees treat her with respect, and one of them is even secretly in love with her. Lolita is the head of her household although her father lives with them; he is a violent alcoholic who does not work and who steals the bakery’s revenues and drinks them away.

One day, another bakery opens on the same street as Lolita’s. When she finds out, she goes to meet her competitor. The owner of the new bakery is José Luis (Eduardo Noriega), a young man who just moved into the neighbourhood with his mother. José Luis’ bakery starts to be a success, especially with the young female costumers whom he tries to win over by giving them mirrors or combs with their purchases. Lolita goes to see José Luis to try to come to an agreement when she realises that her sales have dwindled. But José Luis flirts with her and misses no opportunity to tell her how much he likes her. Upset, Lolita says, ‘Let’s talk like what we are, from businessman to businessman.’ José Luis boldly responds, ‘You are a beautiful woman’. Lolita then says, ‘I’m not a woman, here I am a man!’ José Luis keeps flirting until Lolita, upset, leaves the bakery and threatens him by saying that if he can use unfair competition tricks, she will start giving the bread away for free. The next day Lolita’s bakery sells more bread than ever, but we soon find out that it is because José Luis has secretly bought all her bread to make Lolita happy.

The competition between the two bakeries is resolved when Jose Luis decides to sell part of Lolita’s bread on a regular basis; since he is more adept than Lolita at selling, he can sell both his own and Lolita’s bread. While José Luis tries to help Lolita’s business, he also wants to win her heart and keeps on courting her. Even though Lolita also has feelings for him, she rejects him
due to a secret she carries. It turns out that Lolita is afraid of having children because her brother is physically and mentally handicapped and believes that she carries a ‘bad gene.’ She confesses to the domestic worker, Nicolasa: ‘I would rather die before having a child like my brother.’ The dilemma is resolved when Lolita finds out that she is healthy; only then are all the obstacles overcome, and Lolita and José Luis can get married.

The fact that Lolita is an entrepreneurial worker does not hinder for her love life because her occupation is her main source of respectability. Thanks to her work, Lolita can support her family and make up for the income her drunkard father is not contributing. Lolita’s suitor, Jose Luis, also recognises her respectability, causing him to fall in love with her and help her out with her work burden. Lolita’s emotional capital involves her morally righteous behaviour. She is depicted as different from all the other girls from the neighbourhood, who boldly flirt with Jose Luis. She is also prone to self-sacrifice, not only through her work, but also her through willingness to renounce love in order to avoid giving birth to an unhealthy child. The story does not suggest that Lolita will stop working after marriage; it is likely that she will work together with her husband and contribute to the proper operation of the business. Lolita is depicted as a worthy woman, and at the end of the film she gets love and the possibility to become a mother, which was her ultimate desire.

When romantic love arrives in the life of an entrepreneurial woman, there are a number of alternatives depicted in films. One of them, as I mentioned earlier, is that work and love are not compatible. Some films depict situations in which women who are successful workers are either uninterested in love or unattractive for men. We saw Swedish and Mexican examples with this situation.

Another alternative common pattern I observe is that when women encounter love, their relationship with work changes. For example, love can make women revise their previous ideas about work and abandon their attempts to find a sense of respectability in it to instead focus on love and family formation. This alternative was more common in the Mexican films in my selection. Failed romantic relationships can also have consequences for work. For example, unwanted pregnancies and single motherhood can entail that women then must begin to work, and this is seen as a sacrifice and can be a source of respectability and worthiness. In one Swedish example, we observed how the protagonist of the film (Hanne) gave up her attempt to become a businesswoman after initially having failed at it and finding a romantic partner that filled her life with love and contentment.

A third alternative was that love and work are presented as compatible. I exemplified this alternative with two Mexican films in which the working women found no obstacle in work to achieve love and thus a happy and fulfilling life. In both cases the working women were respectable, because their occupation was a means to provide for their families in the absence of a male breadwinner. Additionally, the male suitor approved of and appreciated the
women’s work, which was regarded as a proof of their emotional capital: in this case, their propensity to self-sacrifice and their ability to care for others. Modern society allows these women to engage in productive work and ensure the well-being of their family; modern men, however, can take over and fulfil their roles as breadwinners after marriage.

These films set entrepreneurial work and romantic love against each other. In fact, there were only two female entrepreneurs in my selection of Swedish films. This could be attributed to the fact that failed romances were not very common in the film production of this period and female entrepreneurs could hardly be considered the best candidates for romances. Still, we could say that the couple of examples presented here presuppose an incompatibility between success at work as an independent business manager and success in love. Women like Madame Angèle (Pennies from Heaven) and Dolly (King’s Street) are depicted as having little emotional capital in comparison to women who are successful in their love lives, as they do not show loving and caring features and instead are depicted as having chosen to focus on their own careers. Interestingly, however, Madame Angèle and Dolly were able to remain respectable as demonstrated by the way they inspire their employees or former colleagues to follow in their footsteps.

Mexican films show a different picture. Two of the films analysed here depict women who have a sense of respectability based on their work, but this respectability is not acknowledged socially. Isabel (Women Who Work) and Felicidad (Top Women) have, at the outset, a very specific outlook on work and love. They consider their work to be their main priority and see romantic love as a hindrance for self-sufficiency. They are considered by people around them to have a flawed attitude. These women lack emotional capital, and their work is therefore their main source of capital (economic, social).

These two women are faced with challenges derived from their gender roles, and finding themselves missing out on the completeness and satisfaction of romantic love, they decide to change their views. This change did not work as well for Isabel as it did for Felicidad; the former was punished for her lack of assertiveness in her actions and her lack of emotional capital, while the latter was rewarded. It should be noted, however, that we are dealing with two film genres, a tragedy and a romantic comedy respectively. Yet, these films show a similar view: the work of ‘undeserving women’ stands in conflict with romantic love and it alone cannot bring full satisfaction.

But women’s work in itself is not necessarily disallowed in all Mexican films. In films like Who Are Our Daughters With?, The Cackling Hen, and When the Children Hate, we see women whose work is regarded as respectable and also considered as a source of worthiness. Interestingly, this view of the worthiness of work is related to their family status. For Beatriz, working at a flower shop is appropriate, given that she is a young single woman living at home. Later on, the business she is going to run is appropriate, given her coming motherhood. For Doña Teresa, similarly, her work is fully legitimate.
and encouraged because she is a widowed mother seeking to provide for her children. For Lolita, her work is essential for the maintenance of her family. Work in these cases is the women’s source of worthiness because it is needed. Therefore, Beatriz’s, Doña Teresa’s, and Lolita’s work makes them worthy than Isabel and Felicidad, despite the fact that the latter two had a higher status and better-remunerated jobs.

The examples in this section were related to entrepreneurial work, so the women described here have some power over other female and male employees and have economic capital to sustain themselves and others. In these cases, the main difference in terms of respectability and worthiness is in Mexican films whether these women worked for themselves or for others. In the couple of Swedish films analysed here, women did not necessarily lose respectability through work, but there was a clearer incompatibility between work and romantic love.

The Modern Female Entrepreneurial Worker

The examples analysed here show that work was modern in different ways in Swedish and Mexican films. In Swedish films, work was depicted as a legitimate source of self-sufficiency and respectability. Modern women were those whose work allowed them to have a life of consumption. Mexican films, in turn, emphasised the opportunities that modern society could give women in difficult family situations. A mature woman could earn her livelihood and care for her family through her work in a grocery shop, for example. So even if work was not necessarily desirable for women, modern society offered possibilities for well-being. Yet, the message of the films was usually that love and family were at the core of society even in modern times.

We can observe in these examples that work could be a source of respectability for some women. When this was the case in Mexican films, women’s sense of respectability was based on self-sufficiency. For the most part, however, work was seen as providing a sense of respectability when it was performed for the sake of personal pride. However, whenever work was deemed necessary for the sake of family members, it then gave women a respectability recognised by others. The view of self-sufficiency and individualism as a characteristic of modern femininity is thus not present in Mexican film narratives as a positive trait. In Swedish films, on the contrary, work could provide a sense of respectability and be regarded as respectable also by society even when it was performed for the woman’s own sake, as long as it was a morally acceptable one.

The Female Employee

A larger number of women in films work for some kind of economic compensation, without being managers or business owners themselves. These workers
tend to have a different approach than entrepreneurial and professional workers to work and love, as we will see in the coming analysis.

In this section we observe three main configurations of the relationship between work and romantic love. The first two are the most common. Firstly, we observe the cases in which romantic love causes a change in work practices; secondly, we see when romantic love that leads to a change in women’s work motivations. Thirdly, we observe when romantic love entails a risk for the working woman. The outcomes of the stories vary, and these variations are connected to different views on respectability, the source of worthiness, uses of emotional capital, as well as cultural differences as well.

A common characteristic of female employees in films is that, unlike entrepreneurial women, they usually do not emphasize their role as workers as a main source of self-contentment. Rather, most of the workers – here mainly shop assistants and secretaries – regard their work as an indispensable source of income.

**Love Changes Work Practices**

In Swedish film *The Department Store Girl* (*Flickan från varuhuset*) from 1933, the protagonist, Ann-Marie (Brita Apelgren), works at the store’s gentlemen’s section. The type of work Ann-Marie performs, although it is one of the most attractive for women during this period, is not depicted as particularly desirable or satisfying. The film shows how the shop assistants share cramped spaces, over-time work, and feelings of unfairness in relation to other (male) employees. Shop assistants such as Ann-Marie and her female colleagues must be kind and accommodating with the customers even when they feel exposed and uncomfortable around some of them.

The love story in this film arises when Erik Lind (Nils Ohlin), the son of the store’s director, notices Ann-Marie the day he returns to Sweden from his studies abroad. That day, he goes to see his father after flirting with Ann-Marie and acting as a customer. Erik manages to convince his father to let him work as a shop assistant in the same department where Ann-Marie works, supposedly to get to know the work better. The love story develops between the two shop assistants who spend their time together in their cramped workspace sharing work tasks.

A sequence of *The Department Store Girl* when the protagonists finally admit their mutual love in the store, the climax of the story, constitutes an example of the film’s stance towards the intertwining between love and work practices. Ann-Marie and Erik find themselves alone in the store one night. For Erik, this is right moment to kiss Ann-Marie for the first time, after she had been resisting his advances. Subsequently a musical number begins. Ann-Marie and Erik move through the store singing, hiding between mannequins and furniture. The sequence continues as Ann Marie puts on an elegant dress
and Erik dons a tailcoat. They are then ready to have a fancy dinner in the dining room on display.

The evening continues with songs and embraces outside the store. They then go back in and dance, and finally end the night with each sleeping in a luxurious display bedroom. This sequence shows that a fashionable lifestyle is not something Ann-Marie is accustomed to. Nevertheless, she begins her romantic relationship with Erik with a taste of this existence.

This sequence is followed by the return to reality the following day. Ann-Marie and Erik are found in the store. When Ann-Marie realises she has been caught, she believes she will lose her job. However, it turns out that she instead receives a more interesting proposal – to become Erik’s wife. She accepts and soon after she realises that her fiancé is the director’s son, who is going to take over his father’s position. So, at the end, the fantasy of consumption she experienced can become a reality through love.

Ann-Marie does not express any particular pride or enthusiasm about her work. She is attractive as a potential romantic partner because of her looks, personality, and feminine traits. Ann-Marie is depicted as a respectable woman, but this respectability is connected to her femininity rather than her occupation. Ann-Marie is a working-class girl and her economic situation is depicted as rather precarious, as she is constantly worried about her ability to keep her job and her salary; however, her emotional capital, which consists of her femininity and charm, is a resource that allows her to find love and marry up.

Swedish film *Love and Cash Deficit* (*Kärlek och kassabrist*) (1932) tells a love story that develops in an office of the company *Importbolaget*. Two co-workers, a secretary, Margit (Tutta Rolf), and an accountant, Bengt (Ed-
vin Adolphson), are involved in a complicated relationship. Margit is secretly in love with Bengt, but he has a self-interested girlfriend, Svea (Ruth Stevens). The physical closeness of the two co-workers seems to lead to emotional attachments and romantic love, in addition to Margit’s ability to understand Bengt’s work concerns and anticipates his potential problems.

At the end of the film, the frauds of the company director are uncovered and he is arrested. Bengt takes over his position at the same time as he finally gets together with sweet and faithful Margit. Margit’s patience, support and loyalty pay off at the end of the story. She will marry a company director and likely become a housewife.

In this film, we can observe a contrast between sweet and caring Margit and frivolous and ambitious Svea. While Margit is genuinely in love with Bengt and does all she can to help him out, Svea only wants to take advantage of his position and is more interested in his money and the material benefits she can get from the relationship. It is clear in the message of the film that Margit is a respectable woman because she helps Bengt willingly; she possesses emotional capital expressed in the form of caring and supportive practices. She is rewarded by becoming Bengt’s romantic partner, who in turn improves his work position by getting a promotion.

In both *The Department Store Girl* and *Love and Cash Deficit*, we can observe clear examples of the housewife contract Hirdman argues was predominant during this period. Both female protagonists are depicted as potential housewives, willing to care for their future husbands and families and not particularly fond of their jobs. At the same time, their romantic partners are depicted as righteous breadwinners with work positions that can easily provide a family wage.

The Swedish film *He, She and the Money (Han, hon och pengarna)* (1936) depicts a female worker who is more involved in and content with her job than workers from previous examples, even though she explicitly says that her main motivation for working is her own subsistence. Rita Perkins (Kirsten Heiberg) seeks employment at a publishing house, where the newly appointed boss, Göran (Håkan Westergren), is conducting interviews for the position as his personal secretary.

The sequence depicting the interviews offers a view of the archetypal relationship between boss and secretary in the popular culture of the period. The first scene starts with the camera panning all the applicants waiting outside the boss’ office. There are women of different ages and appearances and one man.
A point-of-view shot of Göran’s gaze shows how he scrutinises the women and stops at the legs of one of them who is lifting her skirt in order to show her knees. Rita is just sitting there waiting. In a previous scene she had prepared an ugly-woman disguise, so in this scene her looks contrast with those of most of her competitors.

Göran selects the secretary he finds most attractive and inviting. He immediately offers her the job despite her having no résumé or letters of recommendation. But Göran’s fiancée Karin (Ruth Stevens) comes into the office in time to reject the decision. Karin then hires Rita; it turns out during the interview that Rita, in addition to being ugly and having poor taste in clothing – which were considered to be good traits from Karin’s perspective – is well trained in the editorial branch.

As soon as Rita leaves Göran’s office, an irritated Göran says to Karin, ‘Do you want me to look at that scarecrow every day?’

And Karin replies, ‘That’s how a secretary should look.’

‘This is just so that you won’t become jealous!’ Göran says.

‘Let’s not talk about more about the matter,’ Karin concludes.

Good looks are the first and only trait Göran was looking for when he decided to hire a secretary. For him, having a pleasant woman to be around seemed to be important for his work. Göran stresses that the proximity he is expected to have with his secretary entitles him to choose based on looks rather than skills.

The above-described sequence shows that secretarial work is imbued with erotic connotations. The attitude of at least some of the applicants shows an understanding that secretarial work is also about pleasing the boss.

Throughout the story, the relationship between Göran and Rita grows closer and closer as they work together. Rita encourages Göran to believe in himself, in his work, and the company.
A number of scenes illustrate the smooth working relationship that develops between Rita and Göran. In one scene, Rita convincingly promises Göran that all the publications will do better if they help each other. Göran, motivated, shakes Rita's hand. The subsequent scene depicts a graph showing the company’s income, expenses, and the print run of the publications right after this deal. Things get better and better for the publishing house for every month that passes. In the subsequent scene, Göran and Rita are working at their respective desks, and they communicate with each other effortlessly; they have become a successful team.

Rita takes on an emotional role in addition to her secretarial tasks. Rita and Göran’s proximity, their teamwork, then friendship and subsequent romantic relationship all developed alongside work tasks, work events and work parties. Sharing spaces allowed the couple to get to know each other, but the close involvement of Rita in all of the company’s tasks and problems made her a key person for the achievement of the company’s and Göran’s professional goals.

In this film, Rita’s work is put in focus because it is the basis of the love story. Rita herself is presented as a good worker, with good experience and references, and she is also enthusiastic about her job. At the beginning of the story, even if it is clear that she is seeking a job because she needs a source of income, she does not see work as an encumbrance. When she starts working at the publishing house, her work is valued due to her efficiency and skills, and she is considered a respectable worker. As time goes by, Rita uses her emotional capital when she adopts a protecting, caring, and loving attitude towards her boss. She then becomes desirable not only as a worker, but also as a romantic partner. At the end of the story, Rita’s source of respectability is not only her ability to work, but also her role as fiancée of a hard-working man with a promising future.
This film depicts a strong woman who plays a fundamental role in the work life of the male character. At the beginning of the story, she is not depicted as a potential romantic partner because Göran is not attracted to her. However, Rita is more experienced than him as a worker, has brilliant ideas to improve the company’s position and is hard-working and talented. Rita’s role as a worker is thus depicted as stronger than Göran’s, and it is she who teaches him the value of work and contributes to his success. For this reason, Rita’s respectability is very much linked to her role as a worker. However, Rita is more than a worker in the story, she performs tasks that are outside of her attributions as a secretary when she is Göran’s emotional support; she uncovers frauds that would ruin him and solves problems caused by other people. Rita is a respectable woman because her role encompasses both diligent work and emotional practices.

Rita’s reward at the end of the film is being able to marry up to a man who has a high status job and is rich, but who has also become righteous and diligent. Even though we do not know what will happen with Rita’s work situation after marriage, we can at least now assume that her future husband will be a righteous breadwinner regardless of whether or not she retains her gainful employment. So Rita could be an example of the subject of the discussion of women’s two roles I addressed in the introduction of this chapter, if she were to continue working. She would then find herself needing to balance domestic work and gainful employment.

The outcomes in these previous examples were all the same: working women encountered love. Whether or not they stopped working for pay, as the stories do not follow their lives after marriage, they find a source of worthiness and satisfaction from love and family.

**Love Changes Work Motivations**

Another set of films depict female employees whose main motivation to work is finding an upper-class man who can improve their socio-economic status. In these cases, the outcomes of the films varied; either women changed their views of work and love and were rewarded, or they were punished for having what was deemed a flawed outlook on life priorities.

Mexican film *I Need Money* (*Necesito dinero*) (1952) portrays work at a jeweller’s. The protagonist of the film, María Teresa (Sarita Montiel), is an employee at the shop. The jeweller’s is depicted as a fanciful place where upper-class customers consume. Wealthy men go to the shop to buy jewels for women: wives, friends, and mistresses.

The shop is a place that conveys a sense of classiness and wealth, while work practices are depicted as a burden for the employees. This film portrays the shop as an environment where romance is possible or desirable for the workers, but at the same time it is illegitimate because it can lead to class-transgression.
In a film sequence we can observe the shop as a potential site for romance, but one in which power relations are played out. María Teresa and her colleague Cristina are talking about the customers when they realise a regular is approaching the shop. At that moment, they stop talking and quickly fix their hair and dress. The customer is a young, handsome, and rich-looking man called José Antonio (Gustavo Rivero). He asks to see the emerald rings and requests that María Teresa put them on so he can see how they look on a woman’s hand. A close-up of María Teresa shows her slightly offended expression. She, however, politely does what José Antonio asks. He grabs María Teresa’s hand in order to look at the piece of jewellery more closely. José Antonio then says that he will – just like every Thursday – wait outside her house in case this time he gets lucky enough to get her to accept going on a date with him. Finally, José Antonio buys the ring and says he will save it for her, for the time she decides to be with him and wear all the jewels he has bought.

This scene shows that the jewellery shop functions as a space that allows the encounter between rich male prospects and working women. The interaction in the shop is legitimate because it occurs between a shop assistant and customer and is, for that reason, categorised as a business relation. Simultaneously, however, it is the type of place and the type of job that raised suspicions among the social commentators who assiduously wrote in the newspapers of the period. As I observed earlier, this is a type of workplace where lower-class women could have contact with upper-class men, and this was deemed undesirable and dangerous.

Class differences and María Teresa’s contradictory behaviour create a conflicted relationship of subordination: she wants to marry a rich man, while at the same time she seeks to keep her respectability intact in a place in which power differences are accentuated. María Teresa wants, throughout the story, to find the man who can offer her a modern and wealthy lifestyle. She tries the luxurious lifestyle for a night at a dinner party she agrees to attend with José
Antonio, and even though she finds the experience desirable at the beginning, she soon realises that such a world is profoundly hypocritical. At the end she finds love in a modest environment, but with a decent and upright man.\(^48\)

María Teresa did not become the sophisticated woman she expected to be, one who could dedicate her time to leisure and charity balls. Rather, by the end of the story, she is about to become a housewife who can stay at home because her future husband is hard-working and promises to be the sole breadwinner.

A contemporary reviewer characterises the film as a ‘modern comedy about the middle-class and its ambitions.’ She, moreover, describes María Teresa as ‘capricious and rich’\(^49\). Interestingly, María Teresa is capricious, but not rich; in terms of her working status and economic level, she could more accurately be described as a working-class woman. Nevertheless, María Teresa belongs to a family that once had a high socio-economic position in the past, but lost it when she was still a child.\(^50\) Also, it is suggested in the story that María Teresa’s mother tells her children often about the good times they lived, despite the fact that the youngest daughters could never experience them.

Thus, in the view of the film reviewer, María Teresa’s social and cultural backgrounds are closer to those of the middle and upper classes and she therefore lives up to those values. María Teresa’s ambitions are, similarly, not those of her working-class peers. For this reason, the selection of a jeweller’s as the workplace for María Teresa reinforces the message. Placing a working-class girl with upper-class ambitions in a place in which potentially harmful romance and consumption practices can occur allow the development of a story in which hard work, truthful love, modesty and honesty appear as the righteous choices. The discussion of women’s work in Mexico puts emphasis on the worker’s class of belonging. I mentioned in the introduction of this chapter that there were different expectations for women from different classes, and we can see that this film raised these types of arguments.

María Teresa is expected to accommodate to middle-class values regarding domesticity; the story indicates that María Teresa became worthy when she accepted becoming a housewife and rejected a more flagrant visibility in the public sphere. At the same time, however, María Teresa retained respectability throughout the story because she proved to be a deserving woman, as she was in charge of the maintenance of her family.

This film makes a strong point about the source of worthiness for a woman like María Teresa. The protagonist and the people in her surroundings consider her upright moral behaviour the main source of respectability. María Teresa is in a risky position. She can fall into the dangers of licentiousness and immoral behaviour as a result of her work practices because she works at a place where men of means might try to persuade her to act in a morally harmful way in ex-

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\(^{48}\) For a more thorough description of the evolution of María Teresa’s love relationship with the working-class protagonist, see appendix.

\(^{49}\) Pedro y Sarita necesitan dinero (1951).

\(^{50}\) For a broader description of María Teresa’s family situation, see appendix.
change for money and presents. Moreover, María Teresa is a beautiful woman with a scarce economic upbringing, but with higher economic ambitions. With this background, the protagonist’s main source of respectability is her moral behaviour and her ability to make right choices.

At the beginning of the story, María Teresa is depicted as a frivolous and calculating woman, whose ambition could undoubtedly make her arrive at decisions that could stain her reputation. But during the development of her relationship with the male protagonist, Manuel (Pedro Infante), she begins to show a warmer and kinder personality. It turns out that she was hiding a caring and loving side that begins to show thanks to Manuel’s efforts. This side makes up her emotional capital, which, by the end of the film, offered her the greatest reward – namely romantic love. María Teresa changed her sense of respectability during the course of the film. While at the beginning of the story she regarded money and status as the grounds of a respectable social position, by the end she realised that love and family life would instead grant her the coveted respectability and happiness.

*Bachelor’s Paradise* (*Ungkarlsparadiset*) from 1931 shows a typical office environment in Swedish films. The introductory musical number describes the relationship between an executive, Charlie (Ernst Larsson), and a secretary, Jeanette (Cissy May). It begins with a montage of office motifs; the music plays with a typing sound in the background, while juxtaposed images of type-writers, printers, and telephone switchboards alternate in a fast and dynamic fashion. This early sequence presents the context of the film, announcing that workers in a company and secretaries are involved in the plot.

Although the plot subsequently takes place in a summerhouse in Stockholm’s archipelago, the introductory sequences present the main characters as workers in a successful and modern company. In the film, we can observe a large, functionalist, and soberly decorated meeting room with an oval table around which all the company executives sit. The secretary too sits by the table next to the boss. The end of the meeting introduces the weekend adventure at the bachelor’s paradise the title refers to, belonging to the company manager, Ernst Brock (Gunnar Bohman).

The first sequence in the film shows a love story between the secretary and Charlie, the son of the company director, himself an executive of the company. However, after realising during the weekend that the secretary is only looking for someone who can offer her better work opportunities, he leaves her for a newly-acquainted dancer.

This film depicts the stereotype of the self-interested secretary who hangs out with the boss, expecting to reap the benefits of her compliance and flirtation. In this case, the work motivation of the secretary is depicted as improving her socio-economic status through romance. At the end, when Jeannette’s real motivations are uncovered, she is left with nothing.

Jeanette is, at the beginning of the story, depicted as a good worker and a loving girlfriend; these characteristics give her respectability and make her a
desirable romantic partner for Charlie. However, later on in the story when she reveals her true ambitions and starts flirting with other men who could eventually offer her a better economic position, her respectability dwindles.

Through Jeanette’s actions we observe that she values her romantic attachments more than her own work merits as a means of success. At the same time, however, these attachments are based more on economic calculations than truthful love. This shows that Jeanette does not possess the emotional capital that can be exchanged for other forms of capital, because only actions based only truthful feelings are considered valued capital. Jeanette is therefore not depicted as a worthy woman and is punished at the end of the story with a failed love life.

Another female secretary whose work practices have romantic motivations is presented in Swedish film *A Charming Young Lady* (*En förtjusande fröken*) from 1945. In this film, the secretary Annette (Annalisa Ericsson) is not a typical worker; she is in fact an upper-class woman with no gainful employment experience. Her motivation for taking the job is to seduce the protagonist Paul Norman (Max Hansen), who had previously rejected her. Annette’s job lasts only one day because she has no secretarial skills; moreover Paul still detests her and what she represents at that point. However, in contrast to Jeannette’s motivations, Annette’s are based on truthful feelings.

As soon as Annette starts working as Paul’s secretary, she approaches him physically, sits on his lap and even kisses him. None of these things work with Paul. On the contrary, he complains about Annette’s invasion of his space. They nonetheless become a couple at the end, when their relationship becomes closer outside of the workplace. However, Annette’s attempt to conquer Paul by changing her spoiled rich girl attitude to that of a working girl indicates the beginning of her transformation into a respectable woman for Paul.

In this film the logic is somewhat different from other films that follow the development: woman works → woman falls in love/enters into a love relationship → woman leaves paid work.
Instead, some steps need to be added: woman does not work → woman falls in love → woman works → woman enters a love relationship → woman leaves paid work.

At the beginning of the film, Annette derives her sense of respectability from her socio-economic position as the child of a wealthy businessman. But this respectability is not recognised by others, and this becomes a problem when Annette falls in love with a hard-working man who does not share her values. She therefore attempts to find respectability at work and this helps her approach Paul. At the end of the story, Paul understands that behind Annette’s spoiled-girl attitude there is a sweet and caring woman; she possesses the emotional capital that Paul can exchange for love. Only then does Paul become attracted to Annette and the latter finally becomes a worthy character. The character of Annette poses a challenge to the housewife contract because she, as an upper-class woman in a relationship with somebody from a lower social class, threatens the ability of the male partner to be the sole breadwinner. So only when Annette accepts a lifestyle in line with the economic possibilities of Paul she can attain love and contentment.

In Mexican film *Women Who Work* (*Mujeres que trabajan*){51} (1952), one of the characters, Gloria (Anabel Gutiérrez), is a secretary looking for a rich husband at the workplace. Gloria’s main motivation for working is the possibility of finding a man who can offer her an improved socio-economic status. Gloria accepts a job that pays little only because the boss appears to be a promising romantic partner: he is single, young, and handsome.

In a sequence that shows Gloria’s work in the office, we can observe her flirtation tactics. She enters her boss’s room when called in, fixes her dress and tights, and with an innocent and sweet face, she places herself opposite her boss with notepad and pen. The boss pretends not to be looking at her; he holds a document in his hand and seems to be looking down, but directs his gaze up to see Gloria when she is not looking. He then gives an order that seems only to have the purpose of impressing Gloria. ‘If the president calls, please tell him I’m not in,’ he says. Gloria stays there without moving until the boss says, ‘Well that’s it Miss.’ She then goes towards the door, and when she is about to open the door, the boss calls her again, ‘Oh, Miss…’, and with an air of happiness Gloria runs back to the desk and he jabbers something again about the ‘American Embassy, international congresses and other unimportant things he does not have time for’. Gloria listens while coquettishly playing with her hair. The boss then asks her to sit next to him to take dictation. He does not dictate any letter, but asks her personal questions while Gloria acts flirty, but naively. The scene shows a clear attraction between the two.

In this film we can observe the stereotype of the seductive secretary who manages to conquer her boss. In this case, however, it turns out that the lawyer

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51 This film tells the stories of different women living in a women’s pension. Gloria’s story is only one of the intertwined stories. See appendix for a description of all the stories comprising the film.
is poor and not as renowned as he has made Gloria believe. It is too late when Gloria finds out, because she has already fallen in love. They end up getting married, despite the initial disappointment.

In this case, the secretary worked, motivated by the desire to find a rich romantic partner, but she falls in love with a modest one with whom she finally gets married. Gloria’s work situation after marriage is not dealt with in the film. What we do know, however, is that the man is not rich and might not be able to offer a paid, work-free life.

In this film, the female worker aims at finding a wealthy husband who can offer her a better socio-economic position. Her sense of respectability is therefore derived from her ability to attract such a man. She considers herself a successful woman only if she manages to, through her femininity and charm, seduce a well-off potential husband. Gloria’s femininity constitutes her emotional capital. Gloria succeeds in attracting a man who loves her, but, contrary to her expectations, he is not wealthy. At the end of the film, Gloria’s sense of respectability comes from her romantic relationship, not because she married up, but because she found a loving and righteous, yet relatively speaking poor man.

Common in some of these films is the fact that female employees, at the beginning of the story, regard work as a means of socio-economic advancement through marriage with a man from a higher social class. In the Mexican films we observe that women change their minds about the importance of class and status when they fall in love, because the power of love makes them see that the only thing that can make them really happy is love itself. Mexican film characters satisfy themselves with modest hard-working men.

In one of the Swedish films, we observed that work, in fact, is the means through which the character proves her respectability. When the female character realises that her upper-class attitude is not a desirable trait and will not bring her any truthful romantic love relationship, she decides to become a worker and accommodate to the housewife contract. At the end of the film, her employment is no longer necessary because her romantic partner can become the main provider. A woman from a higher class than her potential partner has to put herself in a subordinated position before she can gain worthiness and be deserving of love and happiness. In another Swedish film, frivolous and interested love is punished. Using men as a means of social advancement is considered, in the narrative of the films, as leading to unworthiness. The inability of women to offer truthful and disinterested love is regarded as a lack of emotional capital.

**Work as a Dangerous Undertaking**

There is one more pattern in the configuration of work and romantic love that we observe in Mexican films, but that is absent in Swedish ones: this is when romantic relationships that arise thanks to work practices constitute a risk for working women. In the previously mentioned Mexican film *Who
Are our Daughters With?\textsuperscript{52}, we observe how secretarial work allows middle-class young women to acquire increased visibility in the public sphere. The secretaries depicted in this film are women living at their parental homes and contributing to the household income.

In the film, the actual work in the office is not in focus. The secretaries are depicted several times as busy and diligently attending to their tasks and looking out for their boss. Yet, the focus of secretarial work in this film is the freedom these young women have to be out and about after work with their male friends or boyfriends. The greatest danger according to the film is that parents are no longer able to control their daughters’ interactions with men or strangers and, even less, protect them from the dangers of the city and adult life. Thus, even though there is a clear power hierarchy within the office, the most important theme of this film is that the patriarchal hierarchy at home is broken and that secretaries are freer, but also more exposed.

In this film, there are two stories in which female secretarial workers fall in love. One of them is Isabel (Silvia Derbez), who lives with her parents, sister and little brother in a middle-class neighbourhood in Mexico City. Isabel has a rich, but idle boyfriend, Rodrigo (César del Campo), who usually picks Isabel up at work to go out in the evenings, sometimes with her friends and sometimes on their own. Rodrigo dislikes Isabel’s friends, and he tries to convince Isabel at every opportunity to go with him to his apartment so that they can have some privacy, but Isabel is reluctant to do so. Isabel’s relationship with Rodrigo does not affect her work directly, even though it does affect her relationship with her family because her father does not approve of him.

One day Isabel’s father finds in an old newspaper proof of a known rumour: a woman had committed suicide in Rodrigo’s apartment, seemingly due to the fact that she had been taken advantage of. After finding this out, Isabel leaves

\textsuperscript{52} This film tells several intertwined stories of workingwomen. In this section I am mentioning only a couple of them. For a description of all the stories that comprise this film, see appendix.
Rodrigo, and she understands that her lifestyle as a young workingwoman puts her in danger.

In the other story, the focus is on secretary Lucía (Yolanda Varela). Unlike Isabel’s father, Lucía’s is much more permissive. He is very grateful that his daughter works and supports him and her mother economically, and for this reason he believes that he has lost authority over her. Lucía’s mother is always worried and wondering where her child is, but her husband prevents her from asking anything or expressing her concerns. Lucía also has a boyfriend, Mario (Álvaro Ortiz), who has friends who are involved in some shady activities.

Lucía’s relationship with Mario affects her work in a more direct way. One day, Mario gets involved in a problem that requires a large amount of money, and he asks Lucía to lend him money from the office’s safe, which she has access to. The worst happens and Lucía’s boyfriend dies, leaving her in a difficult situation with the police. At the end, Lucía’s father helps her, and they both realise she had been exposed to a great danger due to the leeway that her working woman’s life allowed.

The film depicts a variety of spaces, ranging from the workplace itself, to the street and leisure places, and additionally to the car and the bachelor’s apartment. All of these non-domestic places are portrayed as dangerous because women’s actions there can lead to their loss of respectability.

Contemporary reviewers of this film write about the theme of the story and put emphasis on the worrisome risks that young women are exposed to as workers. Blaming the parents for the youth’s exposure, a reviewer says that ‘young people are victims of the environment and the bad habits of these times in which new conceptions of morality are being shaped….’

The film ultimately created awareness about the risks of the freedom that young women were exposed to as they became workers. Arising from the film, a questionnaire was published several times in a national newspaper for parents to fill in, encouraging them to reflect upon their own family situation. Several questions are related to the interactions that working women had outside of the domestic sphere, for example: ‘Do you allow your daughter to go out freely with friends you do not know and return home late?; If your daughter is delayed and blames this on overwork at the office, do you make sure, in any way, that she was actually working?; Do you warn your daughter about the dangers of becoming friends with boys from a higher social class than themselves?’ All these questions signal a general preoccupation with a phenomenon that seemed inevitable but risky: the increasing participation of young women from working and middle classes in the labour market.

Apart from the workspace, what seems to have worried contemporary commentators was the perilous public sphere and, more specifically, the danger women could be in when involved in relationships with deceitful or

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54 “Cuestionario a llenar por los padres que tengan hijas jóvenes” (1956).
dishonourable men. They believed that outside of the home, women were at risk of being taken advantage of, and it was precisely paid work that allowed the presence of women in non-domestic spaces. The most worrisome appears to have been the relationship of women with unfitting men who could fool them into immoral behaviour. The message commentators expressed was that righteous romantic love could not easily be found in these types of unprotected environments. The predominant idea was that romantic practices, when they occurred in public and unprotected spaces, could lead to a loss of respectability.

This film shows that young working women find a sense of respectability at work, because, due to it, they can have an independent life and contribute to their family income. However, the position of the working woman is not necessarily considered as worthy, even if it can be considered as necessary or inevitable. What is more generally praised in a young working woman is her moral decency and domesticity because that is what allows her to keep her worthiness. Even though marriage is presented in this film as a central institution in society, it is also emphasised that the freedom working women have can easily lead to poor choices in romantic partners. Their inability to deal with the freedom work allows and to judge love wisely shows a lack of emotional capital. The intuition and the family orientation that tend to characterise righteous femininity in films is not present in Lucía’s and Isabel’s behaviour, and they are consequently depicted as unworthy until the moment they reform their ways. This film does not reward the female characters with righteous love as in other films; in fact, by the end of the story, these women terminate their romantic relationship and go back to their role as daughters when they realise that only their own fathers can protect them and care for them properly. Romantic love is then left out of their lives for a while longer, until the time they can make sensible decisions in a more protected environment.

This film shows some of the central questions about women’s work that were predominant in the public debate during this period. On the one hand, they refer to the question of deserving versus undeserving women. Deserving women, as I mentioned earlier in the introduction, were those whose work was deemed necessary for the wellbeing of their families and were therefore encouraged to work in workplaces that were appropriate for their social background. In this case, middle-class secretarial work was acceptable as long as women retained their domestic orientation and as long as patriarchal privilege and family structures were kept intact. Thus, the secretaries depicted in the film are all ‘deserving’ inasmuch as their job is justified by their need to contribute to their family’s upkeep, however, when they are depicted as using their position as working women to attain personal goals such as their own amusement, then they are in danger of becoming ‘undeserving’ workers’. The film also exemplifies the dangers of challenging traditional family structures and calls for a greater supervision of fathers over their single daughters.
The theme of the patriarchal structure of the family and the role of parents in the lives of adult children is virtually absent in Swedish films; even though some families are sometimes visible, they are not expected to play a fundamental role in the choices of young women. In the film *King’s Street*, for example, we observe how Marta’s mother disapproves of her daughter’s life in the city by judging her lifestyle the day she and her father visit her in the city. In this sequence, however, Marta’s father asks his wife to accept and support their daughter who, after all, is helping them out financially. In *Pennies from Heaven*, even though Hanne’s parents are dead, her older brother at first and then her uncle have paternalist attitudes. They either give her advice or help her choose a proper life vocation. However, not even in these films does the role of the family appear as particularly determinant in the female characters’ decisions.

**The Modern Female Employee**

The analysis above showed different approaches to modernity in relation to the views of work and romantic love that films advance. In general, the Swedish films in my selection depicted work as a legitimate source of livelihood for single women. We observe work practices in places such as offices and shops, characterised by their modern functional appearance. Female workers, moreover, expressed in many cases an interest in consumption. Clothes and fashion were the most commonly mentioned consumer products in the different stories. Consumption was therefore an important aspect of modernity presented in films, which was made possible – even if to a limited extent – for single women, thanks to paid work. Hence, to be able to work, be educated in a trade, and be self-sufficient were depicted as traits of modern single women in Swedish films. Romantic love in modern times was, however, depicted as family oriented. Even though a modern woman was self-sufficient and able to work, family formation became the priority once she found a stable romantic relationship that led to marriage.

Mexican films in this selection had a similar approach to modernity. We also observe that Mexican films depicted paid work as a possibility and a necessity for women. Women worked in similar places; offices and shops were common in films, particularly films produced in the second half of the 1940s and onwards. The appearance of the workplaces here was also stylised and functional. In connection to work, women were also able to be in other public spaces such as the streets, leisure centres, etc. But the main difference between Swedish and Mexican films in this regard was that Mexican films tended to emphasise the dangers that modern society, and work in particular, posed for young women. Work was modern in the sense that it allowed greater visibility in the public sphere and more freedom of movement, but it was also dangerous because workplaces and other public spaces were unprotected and separated from the domestic sphere.
Consumption was also depicted as one of the attractions of modern life for young women, but in Mexican films it was depicted as a non-respectable practice. The desire for consumption, particularly of personal and luxury products, was, in fact, also regarded as a risk for young women. Gainful employment and consumption were depicted as opportunities that modern society offered women but they were, at the same time, opportunities that entailed dangers.

The message is clear when it comes to modern society in films from both Sweden and Mexico: love and family are the chief source of women’s respectability. In addition, love must necessarily be devoid of all economic motivations and completely disinterested if it is to lead to a worthy and happy family life. Hence, both in Swedish and Mexican films, modern love is family-oriented, with the man as the sole breadwinner in the ideal family arrangement.

Male Workers
This section is also divided into two main categories, male entrepreneurs or men in managerial positions and employees. I must note, however, that there is a tendency in films to depict men going from one type of work to the other, so the categorisation is based on the type of work characters have at the end of the story.

In this section, R.W. Connell’s concept of hegemonic masculinity is useful in order to assess the type of male behaviour that is endorsed by films and considered modern or non-modern. Hegemonic masculinity is a ‘particular variety of masculinity to which others are subordinated. It is particular groups of men, not men in general, who are oppressed within patriarchal sexual relations, and whose situations are related in different ways to the overall logic of the subordination of women to men.’55 So there is not a single masculinity, but a variety of them.56 Just as there are hegemonic masculinities, there are also subordinated ones that are oppressed under a normative ideal to which only a few can accommodate to.57

When it comes to the understanding of men in modernisation, we can once again, for the Swedish case, take Yvonne Hirdman’s theory as a point of departure. Her theory on the gender system is based on two logics: men and women are to remain separate and the man constitutes the standard of what is normal.58 This theory, however, appears as somewhat more limited when studying men because it tends to hide differences between them. In this section I attempt to disclose these differences between men even though part of the analysis will address differences between women and men.

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Modern masculinity in Sweden was related to, as I have mentioned earlier, the responsibility of providing for the family. At the turn of the century, ethnologist Ronny Ambjörnsson identifies an ideal type of masculinity characterised by being politically engaged in the workers’ movement, but also by being temperate and educated.\(^{59}\) Lena Eskilsson identifies different types of masculinity during the same period, based on class: a bourgeois masculinity that emphasised rationality and discipline, the industrious peasant who praised God and the nation, and the conscientious worker who fought for the future and modernity.\(^{60}\) Ethnologist Ella Johansson argues that the ideal of the conscientious worker ideal was strongest up through the 1930s\(^ {61}\), so this ideal of masculinity was deeply rooted in the time period when the films were produced. The 1930s saw discussions on social policies that would allow families to live better lives. The good life was, moreover, defined in terms of family formation and the right way to organise private and work lives. The conscientious worker and the conscientious family, which endorsed complementary roles for women and men, could now be accommodated within welfare policies.\(^ {62}\) Thus, the modern ideal of masculinity continued to be related to some extent to the conscientious worker though with the addition of further welfare ideals of the proper family life.

In Mexico the post-revolutionary period brought about ideals of femininity and masculinity that would do justice to the *New Mexican*. In the post-revolutionary period, a powerful hegemonic masculinity was embodied in the heterosexual man with political authority who could be regarded as the guardian of the national identity. Since the creation of the Mexican nation was a priority of the times, there was a consideration of which ethnic groups were to constitute the hegemonic masculinity. Before the Revolution, white masculinity was the norm; the revolutionary ideal changed it to a darker-skinned standard with the inclusion of the *mestizo* and indigenous groups in the national project. Still, Mexicans were to learn from Europeans by improving their diets, replacing corn with wheat, and disciplining and transforming their bodies – through diet and exercise – so as to resemble those of Europeans. National problems were a culprit: the working-class urban man was a ‘violent, touchy, suspicious, womanizing, loner who would not commit himself to marriage or a job.’\(^ {63}\) Urban working-class men were considered to embody the Mexican *macho* that intellectuals criticised. The film industry, however, also celebrated the stereotype – an improved one anyway. The stereotypical vision of masculinity in cinema was embodied in the heroic working-class men who were ‘bold, tough, competent, loyal, loving and resourceful’, and

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\(^{59}\) Ambjörnsson (1998).

\(^{60}\) Eskilsson (1996).


the Mexican macho masculinity ideal became, thanks to cinema, a source of national pride.64

The Male Entrepreneur

With regard to women’s work, the differences between the company owner and the employee were significant. In the case of men, there were also differences, but this categorisation, which I will keep for the sake of coherence, becomes somewhat problematic; there is a common storyline in films that depicts male characters passing from one type of occupation to the other. There is still an important point to make regarding this categorisation. When I discuss the male entrepreneur, manager, or business owner, I refer both to characters that, at the beginning of the film, have this position and those who go on to achieve it. These characters who at the beginning of the story hold managerial positions are usually older, near retirement, or already part of an established family. It is usually age and civil status that constitute the main difference, rather than their work situation. Overall, I keep this categorisation in order to make it more comparable to the female case.

The company manager, the boss, and the business owner are common film characters. I have identified a variety of patterns in the configuration of romantic love and work for these types. We can observe cases that depict work and romantic love as incompatible, cases where romantic love does not affect work motivations or practices in any relevant way, and the cases in which romantic love does stimulate a change in the work life of the characters.

Work and Romantic Love as Incompatible

Middle-aged or mature bosses depicted in films are seldom involved in romantic relationships, particularly in the Swedish films of selected here. They tend to represent the old ways during a generational change. These varieties of bosses in Mexican films are much less common. In fact, in Mexican films, men with this type of background are more commonly represented in their family environments rather than in their workplaces. They are usually depicted as successful executives without revealing what type of business they work at or which position they hold.

The main characteristic of these men in Swedish films is that they prioritise their work over all else, and spend long hours at their workplace. Since these characters are generally seen in their work environment, their family and love life is seldom mentioned in the story. In contrast, in Mexican films these characters are typified by their predominant patriarchal position within their families.

In the Swedish films of the selection here, we can often see the stereotype of the mature manager near retirement, such as company manager Axel

Bergström (Carl Barcklind) from Factory Girls (Flickor på fabrik) (1935), department store owner ‘Limpan’ Lindström (Eric Abrahamsson) from The Department Store Girl (Varuhuset) (1933), company manager Ernst Brock (Gunnar Bohman) from Bachelor’s Paradise (Ungkarlsparadiset) (1931), the owner of a motorcycle company Hans Breder (Mathias Taube) in Servants’ Entrance (Vi som går köksvägen) (1932), and company manager Leopold Paseman from Pennies from Heaven (Pengar från skyn) (1938), to name a few. In all these cases, the male businessmen have sons (or sons-in-law) to whom they will leave their position. Nevertheless there is absolutely no reference to a wife or romantic partner. The focus in all these films is on the work and love lives of the new generation. What is relevant in these cases is the fact that these men represent a generation on its way out, opening up for younger workers with a different, more modern management style.

In my selection of Mexican films, we cannot find mature business managers or company directors without visible romantic partners, so this pattern is more characteristic of Swedish films. However, there is one secondary character in the film We the Poor (Nosotros los pobres) (1948) – the first part of Pepe el Toro trilogy – that matches this pattern. Lawyer Montes (Rafael Alcayde) is a successful independent lawyer, and he is depicted in the film only in his work environment. Unlike Swedish characters, however, lawyer Montes is young and handsome, but he is single because, as he explains, he has never believed in love; he has always had to pay for it. He, therefore, tells the female protagonist that he admires the poor’s ability to love and sees it as the basis of their happiness. Love, he says, is a plain impossibility for him.

All these workers derive a sense of respectability from their work. They express pride in their work and highlight the importance of their occupation. They usually do not express feelings associated with their former or non-existent love life, except for lawyer Montes who appears unhappy about his situation, but accepts it as a fact.65

In these cases romantic love is not an integral part of the workers’ lives. In all the Swedish cases, the workers are respectable and worthy because they eventually step aside for a new generation, even though they can appear as too strict or too authoritarian at the outset. A romantic life is not expected nor desired, and they are depicted as satisfied with their life achievements. In the Mexican case, on the contrary, the character I introduced is not a worthy one; his inability to love is depicted as a failure. When compared with the poor and toil-worn male protagonist in that film, he loses because his counterpart has love, despite lacking everything else.

**Romantic Love is Present but Not Relevant for Work**

The films in which the business owner or manager has a visible family life usually focus on how these men balance work and family. These films do not

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65 For a description of Lawyer Montes’ role in the story, see appendix.
present any turning point, either in the work or love lives of the characters; love does not act as a driving force for work, nor is work a hindrance for love. What I am focusing on here is how love and work interact with each other and to what extent they constitute the male character’s source of respectability and worthiness.

A group of Swedish films depicts family men from the upper or upper-middle class: *Home Slaves (Hemslavinnor)* (1933), *We Home Slaves (Vi hemslavinnor)* (1942), *Mr. Home Assistant (Herr Husassistenten)* (1938) and *A Man in the Kitchen (En karl i köket)* (1954). In these films, we see married middle-aged men with some years left before retirement, fulfilling the role of heads of households.

In these examples, the workers are all good providers, but are not depicted as worthy for that reason necessarily. In *Home Slaves*, Palle Rosenqvist (Valdemar Dalquist) had a daughter out of wedlock before he got married and, throughout the film, he tries to ensure that she gets a good position as a domestic worker and then that she gets married. When at the end of the film, his wife finds out about these efforts, he acknowledges the truth and appears, in fact, proud of his recognition of fatherhood. He is able to make up for his missed parental responsibilities, and his daughter, former partner, and wife end up accepting the situation and praising his attempts to rectify matters. He is then depicted as a worthy man.

In *We Home Slaves*, the head of the household Teodor Larsson (Ernst Eklund) is depicted throughout the story as a good provider and a sensible man. In contrast to his wife, he is a reasonable employer and treats the domestic workers with respect. He is depicted as a respectable man, not only because he is a breadwinner, but also because he is a caring father and husband.

In both *Mr. Home Assistant* and *A Man in the Kitchen* – two versions of the same Danish theatre play *Den mandlige husassistent* – the head of the household is depicted as a breadwinner, capable of offering his family a high standard of living. At the beginning of the story he, moreover, is a respectable lawyer, with a seemingly happy family life. The viewer starts to get hints of wrongdoings as the story proceeds. Both Alfred Runge (Gösta Cederlund) from *Mr. Home Assistant* and Arvid Stenmark (Holger Löwenadler) from *A Man in the Kitchen* have a mistress and defraud a hard-working man they have associated with to open businesses. They thus lose their respectability as family men and workers due to their dishonesty. Despite their apparent success and high socio-economic status, these men are depicted as unworthy.

In another film, *The Andersson Family (Familjen Andersson)* (1937), there is a similar set-up: there is a middle-aged man who owns his own business. He is not wealthy, however, nor aspires to be, and he is not the sole breadwinner; his wife and daughter work too in the family business. In this film, the male worker Kalle Andersson (Sigurd Wallén) is, despite his modest socio-economic position, depicted as an entrepreneurial, hard-working man and as a good father and husband. Kalle’s wife, Maja (Elsa Carlsson) looks down on
him because of his, in her opinion, lack of ambition. He, however, manages
to save her from bankruptcy and embarrassment when she attempts to climb
the socio-economic ladder on her own and continues to be a caring and loving
husband even after the incident. Kalle remains his modest social position, but
remains worthy and capable of regaining his wife’s worthiness too.

Mexican films more commonly depict middle-aged family men than they
do single ones. In Mexican film The Call of the Blood (La sangre manda)
(1933), Don Pedro Bolívar (Godofredo de Velasco) is a strict head of the
household who values work highly, but also the respectability of his family.
He leads the foundry that he owns, but he also, together with his wife, seeks
to educate their son to be a righteous man. Don Pedro’s wife acts as a loving
mother, while he desires to raise his son with an ‘iron hand’ as he puts it
himself.

Don Pedro is proud of his work because, as he repeatedly says, he started
from scratch and, through hard work, made his way up to the top. Don Pedro’s
experiences and his success at work have granted him respectability among
his class peers, but not among his employees, who consider him an unfair
manager.

The story takes a turn when his son and wife find out that he had an ille-
gitimate relationship with a woman of poor origin in his youth. Don Pedro
Bolívar had a son out of wedlock with a woman he later abandoned. Don
Pedro’s respectability is touched, but it does not crumble because his family
forgive him and they understand that he was young and inexperienced when
it happened. At the end of the film, Don Pedro’s unwillingness to listen to the
labour union leaders and his failure to make up for his failed parenthood con-
tribute to the tragic ending when, during a violent confrontation between his
employees and the police, his son’s beloved one dies. Don Pedro appears then
as an unworthy man because the tragic events were, to some extent, related to
his past and current wrongdoings.

In Mexican film You are Missing the Point (Ahí está el detalle) (1940), we
can observe a married man in a clearly set work role. What he does at work
exactly is never explained and his workplace is never visible, however. What
the viewer does learn throughout the story is that he has a high-status job and
works in an office. Central in the film story, in turn, is his role as husband
within the family. Don Cayetano (Joaquín Pardavé) is the head of a patriarchal
household. The film makes a point about traditional gender roles, and how
they appear as a mismatch vis-à-vis modern times.

In Mexican films of my selection, it is more common to observe mature
men entering new relationships, usually with much younger women. In these
cases, it could be assumed that love might bring significant changes in the lives
of men and perhaps to their work motivations and performance. However, the
films do not depict significant changes.

In the film Owner and Mistress (Dueña y señora) (1948), there is a mature
businessman, Fernando (Domingo Soler), a widower who is about to marry
a young woman. He has no plans to change his work activities, but the future wife will become a housewife. Fernando is a renowned businessman, and he has a high sense of respectability derived from his profession. He has a large network of acquaintances, all belonging to the high society with whom he proudly shares the news about his upcoming marriage.

At the end of the film, Fernando realises that his fiancée does not love him; she instead is in love with his oldest son Luis (Rubén Rojo). After suffering the pain of losing a woman he loved, he accepts that it is time to give way to the younger generation and allow their happiness. Fernando appears as a worthy man because he steps back and accepts a hurtful outcome in favour of his son’s happiness.

In the film *Rosenda* (1948), the protagonist Don Ponciano (Fernando Soler) is a mature single man and a successful business owner. He meets a young and innocent peasant girl, Rosenda (Rita Macedo), and becomes her patron and then lover. Only after a long deliberation, does he decide to marry her. Don Ponciano’s work life does not change as a result of his romantic relationship. By the time he meets Rosenda, his life is settled and he has a position as the patriarch of the village. It is Rosenda’s life, instead, that becomes significantly touched by the relationship.

In all of the previously mentioned stories from both Swedish and Mexican films, there are no significant changes in the work lives of male workers, neither when they are depicted in stable marriages nor initiating new relationships. This is not strange, because most of these characters are not protagonists of the stories so changes are not necessarily expected. What examining these characters allows us to see, however, is how work roles are set within the household. All of these men are breadwinners, and they are married or getting married to women who are, or will become, housewives.

In Mexican films the husband’s role as a moral pillar of the family and the patriarchal configuration of the household are emphasised. Men are depicted as worthy when they fulfil their breadwinner role, but also when they are good fathers and husbands. Men can, in turn, lose worthiness when their over-authoritarian and patriarchal attitudes do not allow newer generations to take over or achieve happiness.

In Swedish films, family men have a less predominant role in their family lives. They are in all cases breadwinners, but their fatherly role is seldom emphasised. However, when their wives take on what is considered a non-respectable role, they can intervene and reform them. When these characters are depicted as worthy, they usually help make things right for other family members; when they are depicted as unworthy, there is a new generation of men that show the ideal role of the head of the household.

In general, when established marriages are depicted in films, there are no changes in work practices or motivations, and the film stories do not imply changes in the love status of these men, except for, in some cases, temporary ones.
The Power of Love
In some films romantic love has a weightier influence on the lives of male workers. Younger men at the beginning of their careers tend to experience a greater effect on their work practices and motivations as a result of romantic love.

When Swedish films depict young men of marriageable age, they are very seldom business managers from the beginning of the story. In fact, the young hard-working man who encounters love and is also rewarded with a managerial position is a common storyline in Swedish films.

In *Factory Girls (Flickor på fabrik)* (1935) and *The Department Store Girl (Flickan från varuhuset)* (1933), the male protagonists are the sons of the managers. In both cases, they work incognito as regular workers, either to get to know the workplace and the employees better or to flirt with one of the girls. Both protagonists fall in love with a working girl, and their love is returned. In both cases, the story ends with the engagement of the couples. In connection with the engagement, the young man takes over the position as a business manager.

In *He, She and the Money (Han, hon och pengarna)* (1936), the protagonist, Göran (Håkan Westergren), starts off as an idle gambler, used to an upper-class lifestyle, but not to working. The situation changes when, in order to gain an inheritance, he is required to work as a manager and increase the company’s revenues within a year. Göran learns how to become a good worker thanks to his secretary Rita (Kirsten Heiberg), who is a talented and dedicated worker herself. They fall in love and at the end of the film Göran gets the inheritance and the company, and becomes engaged to Rita.

In *Pennies from Heaven (Pengar från skyn)* (1938), the male protagonist Hans (Olof Widgren) is an employee at Leopold Paseman’s factory. He meets Leopold’s niece, Hanne, and, by order of his boss, checks on the work activities she undertakes with the money she has received from her uncle. Hans and Hanne fall in love with each other and at the end of the story, Leopold gives everyone (Hans, Hanne and Hanne’s siblings) a promotion in their work situations. For Hans, a promotion entails becoming the company’s manager by taking over after Leopold, who is retiring, and Hanne becomes Hans’ housewife.

In the film *Love and Cash Deficit (Kärlek och kassabrist)* (1932), the protagonist of the story is accountant Bengt Berger. At the beginning of the story he seems to be in trouble, as he is suspected of having defrauded the company. At the same time, he is dating an ambitious girl who tries to convince him to embezzle money to get her expensive gifts. Nonetheless, he ends up proving that he has been an honest worker all along, and he realises that the girl he should be with is the secretary of the company where he works, Margit (Tutta Rolf), who supported him even when everyone thought he was an embezzler.
At the end, it turns out that the actual defrauder was the company manager. Bengt subsequently takes over his position.

In the film *Mr: Home Assistant (Herr Husassistenten)* (1938), the protagonist Viktor (Elof Ahrle) loses all the investments he had made in his automobile repair shop because a lawyer and company director defrauded him. He does not lose heart, however, and starts from scratch by working as a domestic worker. He meets a young woman, Karin (Aino Taube), in the house where he works. She turns out to be the niece of the defrauder. Ultimately, she helps him uncover the fraud and get his investment back. By the end of the story, they are engaged and Viktor is building his new garage. He could not have done it without Karin’s help.

In the film *A Girl Comes to the City (En flicka kommer till sta’n)* (1937), we meet Pålle (Åke Ohberg), a young painter who wishes to become a recognised artist. However, art critics crush all his attempts. Pålle thus works for commercial advertising firms in order to earn a living. When Ulla (Isa Quensel) meets Pålle and falls in love with him, she helps him in his artistic career by playing some tricks so that a renowned art critic praises Pålle’s work. After this, Pålle becomes an independent artist, with a bourgeoning successful career. This was only possible thanks to Ulla, to whom he, by the end of the story, declares his love.

In all these stories, which are only a few examples of a common storyline in Swedish films from this period, we can observe that romantic love is a premise for the men’s career success. In these examples, romantic love changes either the motivations to work – such as when Erik decides to work as a shop assistant instead of a manager just to be near Ann-Marie in *The Department Store Girl* – or work performance – such as when Göran learns his trade and starts appreciating the meaning of work thanks to Rita in *He, She and the Money*. Most men get promoted to managerial positions. In all of these cases, the women who at some point in the story become their romantic partners help them in one way or another to improve their work situation. The outcome in these stories is an increased worthiness in the life of the male protagonists derived from their work, but also a greater life satisfaction thanks to their romantic relationships.

In Mexican films, the typical storyline that we observe in Swedish films is almost absent. We can see that most businessmen or successful professionals have, in fact, a complicated relationship with romantic love.

In the film *The Cackling Hen (La gallina clueca)* (1941), we observe a mature man whose work life changes when he meets a woman he later on sees as a romantic partner. Don Ángel (Domingo Soler) meets Doña Teresa and it is not until they become business partners that he becomes successful at his job. The daily coexistence makes Don Ángel fall in love with Doña Teresa and he even proposes to her, but she believes that they are too old for marriage and romance. Despite this, they move in together and lead a traditional family life. Don Ángel seems to have problems relating with people: he is too rude
with customers and an unconvincing salesperson with retailers. Thus, when he meets Doña Teresa and sees her phenomenal selling skills, he has no doubts they should become partners. Don Ángel is a respectable man at the beginning of the story, but his lack of tact and his bachelorhood make him appear as an incomplete man. Doña Teresa is a key person in changing his sour mood and even making him consider settling down, even though in this case it is she who will not get married. At the end of the story, however, when Don Ángel and Doña Teresa move in together and become an family with the latter’s children, Don Ángel finds himself as a complete man. He is then portrayed as worthy.

In the film The Call of the Blood (La sangre manda), the protagonist is the son of a wealthy foundry owner; he is an idle, party-loving young man called José Bolívar (José Bohr). He is engaged to a woman of his same social class called Lya (Beatriz Ramos). José is a non-respectable man at this point. Obliged by his concerned father, however, José starts working in the foundry as a common worker where he meets other workers and Lupe (Elisa Robles), the sister of one of his workmates. José and Lupe fall in love and get engaged. José then decides to support the workers’ cause against his father. José’s family are against his relationship with Lupe and his involvement with the workers. It turns out that Lupe’s brother (Lupe is adopted) is the illegitimate son of José’s father, Pedro Bolívar. In a confrontation between the workers and Don Pedro, backed by the police, Lupe is shot. She dies in José’s arms.

Romantic love was the most important driving force for José’s change in his attitude towards work. It was not only the fact that he wanted the best for Lupe that made him realise that the workers should have better conditions, but that through Lupe he could see how families, neighbours, and friends constituted important networks for the survival of the poor. Thanks to these insights, he realised that the workers needed a fairer wage. At the end of the film, despite the fact that he temporarily returned to his family, he remained a worthy man. This is because, thanks to Lupe, he learned the value of work and understood the needs of the workers; he was ready to become a good manager.

In the Pepe el Toro trilogy, the protagonist Pepe (Pedro Infante) has his own business, even though it is not a successful one. He runs a carpentry workshop on his own at the beginning of the story, but by the third film he forms a cooperative with his friends. The carpentry workshop is Pepe’s main source of subsistence during his bachelor life, a time when he needs to support his handicapped mother and his niece, whom he is raising as his own child. When Pepe starts dating Celia (Blanca Estela Pavón) he encounters a series of problems that put him in great debt. For this reason, he has to work harder and get help from his friends and girlfriend.

In the second film of the trilogy, You the Rich (Ustedes los ricos) (1948), Pepe and Celia are married. They once again encounter economic problems so Pepe has to work hard and try to find extra sources of income wherever he can. Pepe has a high sense of respectability; he says proudly that he is responsible for the support of his wife and children. However, the fact that he
is poor makes him non-respectable in the view of the society around him. This is demonstrated by the fact that he is regarded as an untrustworthy borrower, as a lazy worker, and an unfaithful man by different people simply judging him from his appearance; this is despite the fact that he in fact is an honest and hard-working man. The film makes the point that the poor are regarded as non-respectable just because they are poor.

Pepe’s work performance does not change directly out of love because his work is part of his identity even before love arrives into his life. His wife, however, trusts him blindly, and she is his main motivation and support to overcome economic problems and to work harder. In all of the trilogy’s films, Pepe demonstrates his worthiness through his honesty in his work and love lives.

The Modern Male Entrepreneurial Worker

The type of man that fits this category in the Swedish films of my selection is, most generally, the bourgeois man. Upper middle- or upper-class men are highly represented when the focus is on business owners and managers. There are also working-class men who, through promotions and after having demonstrated their respectability, reach an upper echelon socioeconomically (with one exception in Swedish films and one in Mexican films). The assessment of modern masculinity in films, however, is based on class. In most cases of this category, we observe a bourgeois masculinity in place.

In the introduction to this chapter, I mentioned Yvonne Hirdman’s gender system theory and the pre-eminence of the housewife contract in the period that concerns this study. According to this theory, men are expected to be breadwinners. A man from a privileged social class would certainly be expected to earn a family salary, and this could be regarded as a characteristic of modernity throughout the period 1930–1955, which, according to Hirdman, is part of the housewife contract period.

Historian David Tjeder argues that the bourgeois masculinity that was predominant in the nineteenth century was based on self-control, control over others (both women and other men), and rationality. Failing to master one’s own passions entailed public shame.66 Bourgeois masculinity, however, had different premises in the twentieth century. In fact, the emotionally restricted, power-exercising man who was modern in the nineteenth century appeared as non-modern in films. The mature bosses with an almost inexistent love life, strict and authoritarian at their work, were depicted in Swedish films as non-modern and ready to give way to younger men who expressed their love to and conquered women and had a more benevolent and democratic managerial approach at work.

Modernity in the analysed Swedish films was also connected to success at work. Young men climbed the social ladder through work thanks to the

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support of their romantic partners and their hard work. In Swedish films, the young modern man could belong to the bourgeoisie if he managed to reach a class position through respectable work and generosity. Part of the message of modernity was also constituted by the presence of non-modern men: the older generation of bosses who were not involved in romantic relationships and who were on the way out with their out-of-date ideas and work practices.

Modern masculinity in Mexican films was also related to class. I mentioned earlier that middle-class masculinity had been the hegemonic one before the Revolution, while the new masculinity was in fact characterised by its ambivalence and its unsettledness. At a time when modernity was touching upon established gender roles, cinema started to play with different stereotypes of masculinity.67 The macho Mexican cowboy, characterised by his upright behaviour, but also his aggressiveness when defending his own and his family’s respectability, stood side to side with the urban working-class man who, despite his modesty, was more worthy than loveless bourgeois men. Contrary to Swedish masculinity, the Mexican ideal type was not necessarily upper-class. For this reason, we see few examples of worthy modern Mexican men taking the role of businessmen or managers, and when they do they are either poor or taking the side of the poor.

Modern men in the Mexican films of selected here were those who worked hard and were able to provide for their families. They were also good fathers and role models for future generations, regardless of their workplace or occupation. So, the worthiness of Mexican men in film stories came from work and from their ability to secure their family’s respectability, not from having a high-status position necessarily. Also in Mexican films, we encounter non-modern men – those holding overly strict patriarchal ideas that constrained women’s manoeuvrability more than necessary. These men belonged to older generations and were always contrasted to young protagonists with modern ideas.

In all cases, the role of romantic love was depicted as essential in the life of modern men. In Swedish films, romantic partners helped men build their careers, while in Mexican films they usually functioned as driving forces and motivations to work and to act as an appropriate breadwinner.

The Male Employee

In this section, I present examples in which the male characters are waged employees and do not hold any managerial position at their workplace. In this section we observe two main variations in the relationship between work and romantic love: either romantic love does not have any effect on work motivations and practices, or it does.

Romantic Love Changes Nothing

There are cases in the films I analyse in this section in which love arrives in the life of the male characters, but there is no significant change in their work lives. In the films Lady Turns Maid (Fröken blir piga) (1936) and Hanna in High Society (Hanna i societén) (1940), we observe two male characters whose work activities do not change as a result of finding a romantic partner.

In the first film we meet driver Arthur (Sten Lindgren), who falls in love with Alva (Marianne Löfgren). Arthur proposes to Alva, who in fact, is a well-off domestic science teacher, working incognito on the farm where he also works. Alva rejects him and makes him see that her colleague, a genuine farm girl named Hildegard (Carin Swensson), would make a better wife for him. Arthur and Hildegard become a couple and their work activities remain the same. Arthur seems to be contented with his work as it is and he has a sense of respectability derived from his ability as well, thanks to his stable job, so he proposes marriage to a woman.

Similarly, in Hanna in High Society, there is an employee at an electric company called Johansson (Bengt Djurberg). He is a good friend of the protagonist Hanna (Rut Holm) before they become a couple at the end of the story. In this story, Johansson is proud of his position as a worker, so when Hanna becomes rich thanks to an inheritance, he distances himself from her and does not attempt to raise himself to a higher social status in order to be able to keep her. By the end of the story, one of the preconditions for the decision of Hanna and Johansson to get married is the existence of an electric company where the latter could have the same type of job in the new location where Hanna had been offered a job. Both Arthur and Johansson are depicted as worthy men because they are hard-working and able to love, and be loved.

In these two films there is no suggestion of improvement or change in the work situation of the male worker as a result of love. These films take place in the countryside, an environment in which being upwardly mobile appears uncommon and where the female partners do not necessarily expect to change their socio-economic position as a result of marriage.

In A Charming Young Lady (En förtjusande fröken) (1945), there is an insurance salesman called Paul (Max Hansen) employed at a company. He does not have a particularly high position in the company, and for this reason the his girlfriend’s father, who is a higher level executive at the same workplace, does not approve of him. Therefore, in order for Paul to be more likeable and get the consent to marry his girlfriend, he seeks to obtain larger accounts.

At the end, this strategy does not work for his purposes because he ends up falling in love with the daughter of the chocolate factory owner he originally hoped to have as a client. What is interesting here, however, is the fact that for, Louise’s father, being an employee is not deemed good enough for a husband-to-be; he expects a potential son in law to improve his position through a promotion. Hence, for Paul, romantic love is a motivation for an improved
work performance. Paul is, however, content with his work status and sees himself as a good worker and a respectable man, deserving of the love of his girlfriend. His change in work performance is motivated by somebody else’s views of respectability. By the end of the story, he does not need to prove himself to anyone as he gets together with a woman who values him just as he is. At the end, Paul does not change his work status and is still depicted as a worthy man.

In Mexican films, we can also observe male characters whose work life does not change at all after romantic love arrives. In films like *When the Children Hate* (Cuando los hijos odian) (1950) and *Illusion Travels Streetcar* (La ilusión viaja en tranvía) (1954), the stories present male employees with low wages and a low social status. In neither of these cases do the male workers see their situation improved throughout the story. El Estoperol (Fernando Soto) (*When the Children Hate*) is a baker who is in love with his boss, bakery owner Lolita (Amanda del Llano) but, thanks to a trick played by the master baker, he ends up marrying Lolita’s domestic employee Nicolasa (Delia Magaña). When El Estoperol and Nicolasa get married, they remain in the exact same work situation they were in before the marriage. In *The Illusion Travels Streetcar*, the protagonist of the film, El Caireles (Carlos Navarro), is a streetcar driver who enjoys working as a mechanic. He is in love with Lupe (Lilia Prado), the sister of his best friend El Tarrajas (Fernando Soto). The film tells the story of how El Caireles and El Tarrajas get in trouble for driving a streetcar around the city without permission. Had the managers of the company found out what they did, they would have certainly lost their jobs and been arrested. But, with the help of Lupe, the adventure is never discovered and their jobs remain safe. After spending an eventful and hectic day together, Lupe finally accepts El Caireles’ declaration of love and they become a couple. In this film there is no suggestion of an improvement in the work situation of the male employee. On the contrary, he was able to keep his job thanks to the support of the woman he loved.

El Estoperol (*When the Children Hate*) is depicted as a non-respectable man for awhile in the story because he married Nicolasa out of spite when he could not get Lolita. He thus treated Nicolasa unkindly and hurt her feelings with his harsh words. Later on in the story, however, when Nicolasa tells him that she is pregnant, he changes his attitude completely and becomes a loving husband. The end of the film depicts El Estoperol as a worthy man despite the fact that he did not improve his socio-economic position through work.

The male employees in the previous films never consider changing their job situation, even though El Caireles knows for certain that this would improve his chances with Lupe. At the same time, however, they are both proud of their work and have a high sense of respectability because they consider themselves honest and hard-working. When these men finally attain love and, as in the case of El Estoperol also fatherhood, their satisfaction increases even though their work situation remains the same.
The film *A Family Like Many Others* (*Una familia de tantas*) (1949) depicts employees with a higher social standing than the previously mentioned characters. Don Rodrigo Cataño (Fernando Soler) is a senior company executive although he does not have the highest managerial position. The film does not depict him in his work environment. At home, Don Rodrigo is the highest authority and makes many decisions, including those concerning his children’s upbringing. He is the main breadwinner at his home, and his wife does domestic housework and organises mainly the cooking and grocery shopping. Héctor (Felipe de Alba), Don Rodrigo’s oldest son, also works for pay outside of the house – seemingly in the same workplace as his father or one within the same branch – as an accountant. Héctor’s love life is, at the beginning, kept secret from his family, but when his girlfriend becomes pregnant, his father forces him to marry her and brings her and the child to live with them in the house. After this, Héctor feels more and more dissatisfied with his life and does not gain any further authority in his father’s house.

Here, we can observe that in the Cataño household there is room for only one patriarch. Besides providing for the family, a main task for him is also to take respectability for all of its members. So for these two male employees, romantic love does not entail a motivation to become better workers. Work, in turn, seems motivated by the search for respectability for themselves and their families. They work because it is what respectable men do, and they provide for their families because that is what moral and social custom dictates. Even though Don Rodrigo and Héctor are respectable because they are good providers, and Héctor recognised his child and married his girlfriend, they are not depicted as worthy men in the film. Don Rodrigo is an overly strict patriarch who restricts the activities of his wife and children and makes them unhappy, and Héctor is not a loving husband and father.

In the same film, we also meet Roberto del Hierro (David Silva) who stands out as modern, as opposed to Don Rodrigo, who attempts to maintain traditional gender roles at all costs. Roberto is a vacuum cleaner salesman, and he comes in contact with the Cataño family the day he knocks on their door and Maru (Martha Roth), one of Don Rodrigo’s daughters, opens it. Roberto and Maru fall in love with each other. Roberto is a respectable man, proud of his job. His sense of respectability is high due to his quality sales record and the fact that he considers himself to be spreading modernity in all the houses he visits. Moreover, he is a good son as he supports his mother economically and treats her with love. When Roberto proposes to Maru, he offers her a modern wifely role, one that entails a greater involvement in his life and his decisions. For Roberto, having Maru as a romantic partner implies that he will have somebody he can share his problems and work concerns with; she is somebody whose advice he would value greatly. Roberto does not change his work situation through finding love; he is content with his job as it is. But he regards his marriage with Maru as a way to increase his happiness and respectability. Roberto is in this film depicted as a worthy man because, even
though he broke a family tradition by marrying Maru without her father’s consent, he is proud to offer her a modern gender role and a comfortable life thanks to his job and a loving relationship.

In the Mexican examples, we observe that when love has no effect on the work life of male employees, it is usually because these men have a high sense of respectability derived from their jobs and they are satisfied with their socio-economic position regardless of whether they belong to the working or the middle class.

In the Swedish examples, we observe a similar set-up. However, it is worth mentioning that male characters that do not observe a change in their work practices are from the countryside, a spatial environment usually characterised in films by its immovability even during a period of intense social transformation. In the third example I presented, the male character marries up (Paul from *A Charming Young Lady*), which is a rare occurrence in Swedish films and could cause the audience to wonder whether he will have an improved work position through marriage. In any case, the film makes a point about the respectability of the middle class in contrast to the upper class. Even though it could be interpreted that Paul married up, it was the fact that his girlfriend descended to Paul’s socio-economic level that allowed the relationship to occur. The difference between the analysed Swedish and Mexican films in this category is not the extent to which male characters are satisfied with their work situation. In both cases there is a clear sense of respectability from all the characters who seek to maintain their work situation. It is, rather, the specific type of character who gets to become worthy. In Swedish films, it is the hard-working man from the countryside or from the middle-class, whereas in Mexico it is the man who is working-class, hard-working, modern-minded and a good father figure.

**The Power of Love**

Another category of films depicts male employees whose work motivations and practices are affected by their experiences with romantic love.

In Swedish film *Factory Girls (Flickor på fabrik)* (1935), we can observe a side story about the vice director of the factory, Sixten (Olle Törnquist). He obtained his position because he was the boyfriend of the director’s daughter. The plot involves him changing from his managerial job in a successful company, to employment as a car mechanic.

This happens when Sixten meets one of the factory girls, Majken (Naemi Briese), and they fall in love with each other. When Sixten’s girlfriend Karin finds out, they break up, and he loses his job. Sixten is not unhappy about losing his job because he actually disliked it very much. He is, however, worried about his future. Majken, nonetheless, encourages Sixten to find what he is passionate about, which turns out to be fixing cars. Through Majken, Sixten becomes a happy man, fulfilled with both his work and love life. In addition
to being happier, Sixten sees himself as a more respectable man as a mechanic than as a company vice director because he is a more efficient worker. The film depicts Sixten as worthy because he is an enthusiastic worker and due to the fact that he finally can be honest about his feelings.

In *King’s Street*, the male protagonist, Adrian (Sture Lagerwall), starts off as a country boy from a rural landowning family. He was supposed to inherit land and work independently on his farm. However, motivated by his love for Marta (Barbro Kollberg), he goes to the city to find a job. For Adrian, the job he needs in order to feel he has succeeded as a worker in the city is as a bureaucrat. From this perspective, Adrian does not have any aspiration to start his own business or have a managerial position; he rather desires to be a state employee because he considers that type of job to be a highly respectable one. Adrian’s main motivation is love. At the end, however, Adrian and Marta split up, and the former finds a job in the construction branch that he finally feels proud of doing. This film makes a point about the worthiness of the worker. Even though this film is a drama and it ends very badly for the female protagonist, Adrian, in turn, learns a life lesson when he accepts that there is pride and respectability in manual labour. So even though he did not find manual work respectable at the beginning of the story, he becomes worthy once he realises the value of it. His failure in love, in fact, leads him to find contentment with work.

In Mexican films, the male employee is a common character. Nevertheless, there is a larger range of work types, from the low-income streetcar driver to the upper-middle class administrative clerk. The effects of romantic love vary differently, mainly according to class.

In the two versions of *Santa*, there is a character, Hipólito (Carlos Orellana, 1932 and José Cibrián, 1943) who represents a type of subordinated masculinity; he lacks power, money, and the right appearance. Moreover, he is handicapped and has no social capital; he has no social networks or influential social relationships. Hipólito is the pianist at a brothel and he keeps a very low profile at the workplace. He meets Santa the day she arrives in the brothel and even though he is blind – or rather because of it – he is able to get to know her inner feelings and falls in love with her. Santa is the most popular girl in the brothel and is courted by many rich and good-looking men, one of whom even has good intentions and wants to marry her.

Hipólito loves Santa in secret because he knows there is no chance for him to marry her. At the end of the story, Santa has lost her looks and the attention of all men; she is sick and unable to work. At that moment, Hipólito offers his help and his love. Santa, finding herself with no one else to resort to and after having realised how truthful Hipólito’s love is, accepts to go live with him and let him take care of her. Hipólito changes his work activities. He uses all of his savings to pay for Santa’s medical care and stops going to work to look after her personally. Hipólito’s happiness lasts only a short time because Santa dies soon after she moves in with him. In this film, the male character
changes his work performance completely because of love. Hipólito’s inclination to self-sacrifice and kindness constitutes the emotional capital that helps him gain romantic love. However, the respectability of this character and his emotional capital are more in line with those expected from women. For this reason, the character is not depicted as an obvious romantic partner and only gets a chance when the capital he has to offer is badly needed. Hipólito is a worthy man because he is a respectable worker and a respectful partner, but he is not depicted as an appropriate romantic partner because he does not fulfil the characteristics of a hegemonic masculinity. He is not a strong character willing to fight for his own or his partner’s respectability and neither is he depicted as a solid moral pillar.

There are cases, however, of men who exhibit a masculinity that is closer to the hegemonic one who can also see their work changed as a consequence of romantic love. In *I Need Money* (*Necesito dinero*) (1952), Manuel (Pedro Infante) is an employee in a mechanical workshop. Even though he is the most skilful employee at his workplace and has as a long-term plan to get the patent for an engine invention and open his own workshop, he sees this as a distant dream, because he is far from having the necessary capital for such an endeavour.

However, when he finally meets the girl of his dreams, María Teresa (Sara Montiel), he speeds up his search for startup capital. In this case, we can observe that romantic love is Manuel’s driving force and his motivation to act and improve his socioeconomic position. The path towards an improved socioeconomic position is not easy for Manuel, and at the end, even though he finally is able to start his own workshop, he is still far from being a successful businessman. Moreover, he succeeds in getting the woman he loves only when the latter realises that love is more important than money. The final outcome is possible for two reasons: first because Manuel improves himself through work, but also because María Teresa learns to appreciate that Manuel is more respectable than any other upper-class man because he is hard-working, loving and honest. Manuel is depicted as a worthy man.

In the film *Salón México* (1949), Lupe (Miguel Inclán), a modest policeman, falls in love with Mercedes (Marga López), who works as a prostitute in a nightclub called Salón México. Also here, the requirement for Lupe to be able to marry Mercedes is attaining a better socio-economic position. Mercedes pays large amounts of money for her younger sister’s tuition fees at a boarding school.

But Lupe cannot acquire that kind of money with his work, even though he promises Mercedes he will take an extra job and he will get a promotion. So they decide to get married after Mercedes’ sister has gotten married herself. Still, for Lupe, it is important that he has a good income in order to offer Mercedes a comfortable life and for her to leave her job. The dangers of Mercedes’ job cause her death before Lupe’s promises are fulfilled, just before the marriage of Mercedes’ sister. We can observe, however, that once again,
romantic love was a driving force for an improved socioeconomic situation, which entailed a better work position and increased income.

Lupe seemed to be content with his job before he sees Mercedes as a potential romantic partner, and it was not until he expressed his feelings for her that he decided to take steps towards improving his work situation. In order to get Mercedes to consent to marry him, he tried to present himself as a respectable man before her, mentioning all his merits and promising to work harder and get higher up at his job structure. Although not the most attractive and wealthy man Mercedes could get, Lupe was definitely the worthiest of all.

What we can observe in these examples is that there seems to be a clear storyline in Swedish films and an established moral in the stories. In a simplified way, we could say that, when it comes to successful businessmen and professionals, there are two types in the Swedish films of this selection: the older and the younger generation. The older generation tends to be on its way out, giving place to the newcomers. They are often portrayed as cold and calculating, conservative and often with no place in their lives for romance. Then we have the young generation that often starts off as building their career up to the businessman position. In these cases success at work comes hand in hand with romantic love, and in most cases the romantic partner functions as a crucial support for their careers. There is also a generation of married middle-aged businessmen in the middle who show how the gender division of work looks in the home; they are also often depicted as living a somewhat conservative lifestyle that a younger generation is to transform.

In Mexican films, the successful businessman is much more infrequent. When they appear, there is also some sort of generational difference that is noted in the stories. I mentioned earlier that in all Mexican films in my selection, the family life of these characters is always present.

Older businessmen are married and also have an important role in their families as the patriarchal authority, breadwinner, and moral pillar of the family. It is not uncommon that older men have relationships with younger women, and in these cases their authority in the household is even more emphasised. Younger men of marriageable age are, on the contrary, seldom depicted as following a path towards becoming rich businessmen. Alternatively, young men are in such positions from the beginning; they understand that success and wealth stand in the way of love and happiness.

The relationship between romantic love and work in the case of male entrepreneurs and businessmen is much less stressed in films and initially could appear to be non-existent. However, a closer examination allows us to pinpoint several interesting aspects. We have observed, for instance, that in Swedish films, the stereotype of the mature businessman is recurrent. In these cases, however, romantic love is almost absent from their life stories, and on the few occasions when love appears in the form of a wife – there are no examples of men starting new, truthful romantic love relationships – the story does not convey any sense of change in the work life of the character. So what
these examples show are examples of the life ‘after’ marriage, but usually not a very happy one. In Mexican films, romantic love relationships are more visible in the life of mature businessmen. Their family life, at least, tends to take on a more relevant role in the film stories. Swedish film characters are often depicted as possessing no emotional capital of the kind that is used in a romantic relationship. In Mexican films, however, the necessary capital that men frequently possess exists in their ability to be upright fathers and husbands.

Men exemplifying a lack of emotional capital are José Antonio (Gustavo Rivero) (*I Need Money*) and Don Pedro Bolívar (*The Call of the Blood*); the former attempted to lure María Teresa (Sara Montiel), faking romantic interest in her for his economic interests, the latter abandoned a pregnant woman because she did not belong to the upper class, which led to suffering and death. In these cases a lack of emotional capital leads to a loss of worthiness. In contrast, characters such as Pepe (*Pepe el Toro* trilogy) and Don Ponciano (*Rosenda*) possess emotional capital expressed in their ability and willingness to be good providers, their attempt to become better workers and to improve their partners’ wellbeing; this makes them not only righteous romantic partners, but also increases their worthiness.

The outline of the films involving male employees shows relevant differences between Swedish and Mexican patterns regarding the relationship between work and romantic love.

I have suggested earlier that in Swedish films the cases of male employees who do not become business executives or self-employed professional workers are patently fewer than in Mexican films. In the few examples of male employees in my film selection of Swedish films, most of the socially immobile (or downwardly mobile in one case) were secondary characters. In these few cases of lack of socio-economic mobility, there was still, however, a notion of work as a means for improvement. We can observe that men’s emotional capital is constituted by their willingness to offer their beloved an improved living standard. This is the case for Adrian (*King’s Street*), who moved to Stockholm out of love and sought a particular kind of job that would make him worthy of his girlfriend; the same goes for Paul (*A Charming Young Lady*), who made a great effort to get an important account, in order to get a promotion at work and be able to marry his girlfriend.

Being truthful regarding feelings and life expectations is also a way in which workingmen use their emotional capital. Sixten (*Factory Girls*), for instance, is a more engaged and loving boyfriend with the woman who encouraged him to find his dream job than with the woman who got him an executive position at her father’s company. With Majken, Sixten was completely honest about his feelings for her and his engagement with work. In the other couple of examples I offered from the films *Lady Turns Maid* and *Hanna in Society*, we can observe that the workers’ emotional capital is not emphasised in the stories, since they do not seem to put greater efforts into getting the love of the
women they want to marry nor do they change work practices for their sakes. In turn, these characters have the expectation that the women they court will respond to their proposals because they are respectable workers and potential husbands. In all these cases work gives workers a sense of respectability, regardless of the type of work they have. In contrast, in Mexican films, the stories tend to offer a more explicit comment on how emotional capital can be transformed into different forms of capital.

Just like in Swedish films, the notion that men must be breadwinners and support their wives is present in Mexican films. In films like *I Need Money* and *Salón México*, we can see examples of men who consider an improved work situation a prerequisite for being able to court the women they love. In these cases, the men in question do not offer a life of wealth, because they are aware of their limitations, but they do offer to work as hard as they can, taking extra jobs and working extra hours if necessary, plus the promise that they will be loving and caring husbands.

Another form of emotional capital in Mexican films is represented by the men’s willingness to be good heads of family, not only by providing economic support, but also by caring for other family members. In *When the Children Hate*, for example, the male worker El Estoperol is depicted as a lousy husband because he does not express affection for his wife. However, when he finds out that he will become a father, he redeems himself, showing that he can become a loving husband and father. Thus, El Estoperol’s affectionate attitude constitutes the emotional capital that makes him worthy in the eyes of the spectator. He does not change his work practices, but being a righteous husband and father turns him into a worthier man.

In *The Illusion Travels Streetcar*, we also observe an example of a worker who does not change his work position, because the system does not reward creativity or exemplary work performance. He, thus, can only aim at keeping his job. What he can offer the woman of his dreams, Lupe, is respect and a serious relationship leading to marriage, which is what he promises to Lupe’s brother. This film ends with a voice-over saying that the characters will go back to their everyday life and to their uncertain future in the big city, where the lives of many intertwine day by day. This final remark reminds the viewer about the conditions of working people in Mexico City, where work and struggle, but also love, is part of their everyday life.

In Mexican films we recognise the hard-working and honest male character who, despite his good traits, cannot exchange the emotional capital he might possess into other forms of capital. Hipólito (*Santa*) is one example of a man who cares deeply about his beloved one, has a job – though not a very profitable one – and is sensitive and supportive. He does not, however, have a very appealing appearance. His body is not like those of the most successful men;

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68 For a more detailed description on how the protagonist of the story attempted to prove to himself and the company that he was an exemplary worker, but still could not obtain the approval of his superiors, see appendix.
his appearance shows disability and weaknesses, such as restricted mobility, blindness, emaciation, and an unsightly appearance. This man embodies a subordinate masculinity, despite the fact that he is respectable. These films show that emotional capital, which entails being a potential loving and caring husband and father, needs to be accompanied by ambition and a strong and healthy body. Even though Hipólito is worthy because of his honesty, truthfulness, and even self-sacrifice – a trait more commonly attached to women – his inferiority complex places him far from the hegemonic masculinity, which decreases his worthiness as worker and romantic partner.

Nevertheless, what constitutes the hegemonic masculinity in Mexican films seems to have been in transformation. This can be observed in the film A Family Like Many Others, in which the contrast between a conservative worker and a modern one is the main focus of the film. The film shows that the household patriarch, Don Rodrigo, lacks emotional capital. His actions are dictated by social custom, and his concern about his family is expressed through discipline. He shows no affection for his wife and children, but is ready to instruct them and correct their conduct when he considers it inappropriate. The new generation, represented by salesman Roberto, is, on the contrary, willing to express his love and affection and seeks to have, through marriage, a more equal relationship with his wife at home. This example shows that with modernity come new expectations of emotional capital. Male workers’ emotional capital is constituted by the active inclusion of their wives in the decisions that concern the couple and the man’s work. This type of man, who is more egalitarian and affectionate, does gain worthiness through work, but also through his efforts to set in motion a modern approach to love and family life.

The Modern Male Employee

In this analysis, the characters who represented the category of the employer were more commonly working- or middle-class men. In a couple of Swedish films, we also observed rural workers. Judging from the types and the frequency of the occurrence of this type of character in films, we can say that Swedish and Mexican films diverge. More Mexican films depict employees who remain in the same work position throughout the story than do the Swedish films in my selection. I emphasised in the previous section that in Swedish films it is common to observe upward class mobility in men through work and very often thanks to romantic love. Therefore, it is not surprising that there are fewer Swedish cases in this category. On the other hand, upper class mobility was less common in Mexican films and for the same reason we can observe more Mexican characters fitting this category of worker.

But how can we read modernity in these stories?

In Swedish films we observe examples of wage workers who did not change their work status as a consequence of love; this was the case for workers from
the countryside whose occupation gave them a high sense of respectability. Even though these characters might not at first sight be regarded as drivers of modernity, if we observe these characters in the light of the concepts of *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*\(^\text{69}\), it is easier to see that they represent the newest form of society. These characters are neither subordinated nor part of a patriarchal structure; on the contrary, they are depicted as respectable individuals who care for their work, but also for their partners. In this sense, even though these workers are not depicted in a modern spatial environment, they are presented as worthy because they subscribe to the values that were cherished on the brink of the modern society.

The urban common worker is also valued and depicted as respectable, particularly when contrasted to the frivolous young woman interested in status and consumption possibilities. In these cases, the modest male worker was modern because he represented the worthy Swedish citizen who worked hard to build a modern society.

In Mexican films modernity is not related to the type of work the male character performs, but, rather, his ability to become a good provider. A modern man is one that can be a good breadwinner and head of the household, retaining his patriarchal authority, but without being so strict as to contrain his partner’s wellbeing and her role as mother and wife. The modern man is thus family oriented and a respectable worker.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I set out to investigate gender differences in the relationship between work and romantic love. I also focused on how films assessed modernity from a gender perspective. In other words: what are the gender roles that films regard as modern in Swedish and Mexican cinema?

The film settings I used in this analysis included workplaces where two categories of workers could be observed. The first category was entrepreneurial or professional workers, which included business owners, company managers, but also workers with high status professional occupations. The second category included employees without managerial or supervising functions; these were usually lower rank job positions. I analysed female and male characters separately.

\(^{69}\) *Gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* characterise the old and the new society respectively. *Gemeinschaft* is characterised by vertical relations and *gesellschaft* by horizontal ones. The former concept describes a patriarchal and paternalist society, whereas the latter characterizes a society based on voluntary relationships between individuals. Ambjörnsson (1998), pp. 238–239; Tönnies (2001), pp. 17–21.
Entrepreneurial Workers

In the Swedish films of my selection, entrepreneurial female workers were few, but they were characterised by being respectable workers and a source of inspiration for others. However, work and romantic love were put in conflict, so even if these female workers could earn respectability through work, they were not depicted as totally worthy women, because they lacked the emotional capital that was required to achieve love and form a family. In Mexican films, we observed a different picture. Women in entrepreneurial and professional positions were not considered respectable when their work was performed for their own sakes, to attain self-sufficiency and acknowledgement. In fact, in these cases, female workers were depicted as non-respectable and unable to find love unless they changed their occupation. But women could, in turn, be respectable workers when their occupation was motivated by a family-oriented goal, or when the occupation was performed by a single woman before she found her final vocation in a family formation.

The main difference between Swedish and Mexican narratives in this case is that Mexican films take up the question of ‘deserving’ versus ‘undeserving’ women. As I mentioned earlier, this question was discussed by policy makers and social reformers in Mexico, who attempted to formulate the role of working women in the post-revolutionary state. Deserving women, meaning those whose work was to be allowed and supported, were those who did not have a male breadwinner who could support them and who were themselves heads of household. Films follow a similar logic. Women who need to earn an income in order to support other family members are seen as respectable workers and can be desirable romantic partners; whereas women whose work was motivated by a desire to be self-sufficient or independent are not desirable as romantic partners.

Modernity is also depicted differently in Swedish and Mexican films. Whereas Swedish films emphasise consumption possibilities as a central characteristic of the modern lifestyle, Mexican films make a point about the opening up of work opportunities of women as a result of modernity. I will come back to this point later on, because the view of modernity is shared by the different categories of workers.

When it comes to male entrepreneurial or professional workers, the differences are very marked both between Swedish and Mexican representations, but also between female and male roles. I showed that Swedish films tend to depict mature men in managerial positions who are reaching the age of retirement. Most of these men are depicted as workaholics with strict and authoritarian management styles. The lifestyle of these men is depicted as being in definite contradiction to romantic love and family life. These men can be portrayed as respectable workers or as dishonest or too conservative managers. So they can be depicted as either worthy or unworthy workers, but in either case romantic love is completely out of the picture. These men
gain worthiness when they vacate their places, allowing a new generation to replace them. Some Mexican films also portray the mature business manager or professional. These men, however, are to a more limited extent depicted in their workplaces in Mexican films so their exact work performance and work position are usually ambiguous.

There are two main differences in the depiction of these characters in Swedish and Mexican films. On the one hand, Mexican entrepreneurs are more commonly depicted as either family men or initiating a new relationship with a younger woman. Men who are successful at work and single are a rare occurrence in Mexican films. As this category of workers is generally depicted within a family structure, we can also observe the role they play within their household. The second difference is that the question of patriarchy appears more emphasised in Mexican films. The male breadwinner is also depicted as the family’s moral pillar and the main decision maker when it comes to family and household issues. However, it is in this point where we find the main difference between respectable and non-respectable heads of households. Even though the sole male breadwinner model is depicted as desirable in the households of the middle- and upper-middle class families, a too strict patriarchal organisation is not. The head of the household is expected to care for his family, be a good father, and protect his wife without restricting his wife and children’s freedom to express their opinions and reach happiness.

This fine line between a good and a bad patriarch constituted the theme in many Mexican films. Mexican films usually made a point about class differences and righteous masculinity. Upper- and middle-upper class men had a larger propensity to fail at attaining truthful love because they were less able to feel and express love themselves. In contrast, working-class men had better abilities to love and express their emotions, but they might be also prone to alcoholism, violence, and crime due to the precariousness of their situation. Thus, in Mexican films, the entrepreneurial man had to accommodate to a changing gender structure and deal with the hardships that modernity brought about for some social sectors.

Swedish films also depicted family men in this category of worker. These men were portrayed as respectable when they fulfilled the breadwinner role, were honest workers and good fathers. In Swedish films, we can observe a fairly different gender structure dictating the organisation of family life. Whereas in Mexican films male breadwinners decide over household and family matters, in Swedish films we observe male workers more clearly dedicated to their work tasks and having a much lesser involvement in family questions. The role of men appears to be more of a provider than an emotional carer or a guardian of his family’s respectability.

There is, however, one type of worker common in Swedish films and almost absent in Mexican ones. This is the young entrepreneur, who could be a son or son-in-law of a retiring manager or an ambitious righteous worker. These workers are able to obtain an improved work position thanks to their partners,
either because these women motivate them to work harder and increase their productivity or because they help them more practically to improve their work or their life outside work. These characters are usually film protagonists, and at the end of the story they are rewarded with an improved work position and romantic love.

In Mexican films, hard-working men and loving romantic partners are not always rewarded in the story by an improved work position. In fact, becoming a manager does not seem to be the desired outcome for men either. Rather, righteous men were rewarded with love by finding a good partner that would support them emotionally, stand by their side in times of scarcity and give them children. Wealthy men in Mexican films were usually depicted as unworthy because they were dishonest and unable to love and be loved. But in this category there are modest or even poor entrepreneurs and business owners with unstable incomes, but strong relationships that could compensate for their low income.

The storylines in Swedish and Mexican films that depict female and male entrepreneurial workers, professionals, and managers reflect, to some extent, the predominant gender roles described in previous research, but not fully. The housewife contract that Hirdman observes in the period this thesis deals with is not evident in the case of the entrepreneurial women we observe in Swedish films; we can observe that these women in fact have a hard time combining the ‘two roles’ that were discussed at the time and find themselves forced to choose one over the other. Men in films, on the contrary, fulfil their breadwinner role whenever they are involved in relationships. However, we also observe men who are not heads of household. The gender contract that previous research identifies in Mexico is also one that endorses women’s role as homemakers and carers, but to a larger extent recognises the need for working class women and ‘deserving women’ to engage in paid occupations. Mexican films tend to make the difference between deserving and undeserving women clear for the audiences. Undeserving women who work must stop doing so if they want to be worthy.

Swedish films make a distinction between two types of masculinity, the non-modern bourgeois masculinity embodied in the loveless mature men and the modern working-class masculinity. I mentioned earlier the ‘conscientious worker’ model characterised by being engaged in the labour movement and being temperate, orderly and honest. This model of worker was formulated in relation to industrialisation already from the last decades of the nineteenth century, and even though scholars like Ella Johansson affirm that this type of masculinity was still valid after the 1930s, we can surely see some changes. The model worker in Swedish films is the young hard-working man, who can be a manual worker and support the worker’s movement and the workers’ demands, but must not necessarily belong to the working class himself. Films show that ideal men can belong to the bourgeois class, but must have a working-class mind-set. Just like the entrepreneurial female worker who
cannot have a family life, the non-modern bourgeois worker who emphasises discipline and rationality over, for example, family life, ends up in a loveless and incomplete life.

Mexican masculinity is also to some extent related to the ‘conscientious worker’ notion in the sense that the hegemonic masculinity presented in films promotes a working-class lifestyle over a bourgeois one; being diligent and poor is better than being rich and spending the money on gambling or shady activities. So just like undeserving women who might have economic and professional success, wealthy men can also be non-worthy if they do not have a family to support through their work efforts.

Moreover, Mexican men had to be able to keep a gender structure intact and have authority as head of households while they were loving and benevolent towards their families. They also had to allow their wives and children room to manoeuvre, which included making decisions about household matters, working when necessary and attaining their own happiness within the limits of respectability.

Employees

In the analysis of wage earners, we can observe gender patterns different from those of higher-status workers. In both Swedish and Mexican films, it was common to see female protagonists at some point in the stories engaged in paid work. Young single women in Swedish films are commonly portrayed either working or looking for employment. These women can be considered working-class or belonging to the petit bourgeoisie, as some of them appear to have a privileged background, judging from their education; in any case, paid work appears to be their natural source of livelihood. Mexican films, in contrast, depict female workers belonging to the working-class or from a higher social-class, but whose lifestyle deviates from the expected norm; in these cases, women’s work is portrayed as an undesired, but necessary burden.

The main difference in the view of women’s work in Swedish and Mexican films is that, in the former, work can be regarded as a respectable occupation – when following socially acceptable moral standards – for women, whereas, in the latter, women must be ‘deserving’ in order to be considered respectable as workers. Women’s work in Mexican films must be performed for the sake of the family or as the only alternative for their own upkeep for it to be judged respectable; work is in many cases depicted as a form of self-sacrifice.

Both Swedish and Mexican films depicted non-respectable working women. Non-respectable women in Swedish films – those without emotional capital that could be converted into other forms of capital – were self-interested and arrogant. Non-respectable female workers in Mexican films were those whose main motivation for work was to attain upper-class mobility through marriage and those who failed at keeping a domestic orientation due to their interest in being out in the public sphere. Upper-class attitudes and upper-class ambitions
are depicted as non-respectable traits in women in both Swedish and Mexican films. In Swedish films, however, upper-class mobility is accepted and is in fact a common occurrence.

The portrayal of male employees varied significantly in Swedish and Mexican films. While male employees who do not become managers or business owners are few in Swedish films, in Mexican films most male workers are employees and remain so throughout the story; those who are or become business owners usually, as I mentioned in the previous section, make only a modest living. Hence, male workers in Mexican films are not expected to improve their work position during the story. However, in both Swedish and Mexican films we can observe that romantic love tends to bring positive outcomes for men.

In most cases, female partners help male workers improve their work position in Swedish films, most commonly through motivation. Male employees who remain so in Swedish films tend to have a female partner who considers that their work position is the most desirable one. In this case workers from the countryside and manual workers are depicted as ideal ‘conscientious workers’, proud of their occupation and social standing; they are worthy workers. Swedish films, however, show that women can also be ‘conscientious workers’; they can be efficient, moderate and proud of their work, and in this way they can also be a motivation for their partners to adopt working-class values. Men and women can thus gain respectability from their work. However, when romantic love comes into their lives, women adopt the role of a housewife, regardless of whether or not they leave their paid occupation, and men complement their worker’s pride with an additional element of self-contentment.

Mexican films portray non-respectable men as those who fail to earn a living for their families and those who do not fulfill the expectations of an appropriate fatherly role. Respectable workers are thus those who are honest workers and responsible and caring heads of family.

Respectable male and female family roles are depicted as complementary. While women are expected to observe a family-oriented domesticity and work when family needs so require it, men are expected to be providers and loving fathers and husbands. Strict patriarchy is expected to change towards a benevolent one in which both husband and wife are involved in family-related decisions.

There is, however, a thin line for what is considered an appropriate expression of emotions for men. While men in films are considered respectable when they are more family-oriented and benevolent patriarchs, they are also expected to be bold, daring, even aggressive when it comes to defending their own and their family’s respectability, and it is not deemed as proper that they show an overly emotional or caring inclination towards others, because then they are no longer considered appropriate romantic partners. Emotional capital, it has been argued, is an ‘emotional resource that women have in greater
abundance than men; however in this analysis I have noted that men also tend to possess knowledge, contacts, relations, emotional skills and assets that help them attain romantic love and work benefits. Films show that a man can be poor and still be ‘more of a man’ than a rich and successful businessman. Ramón Gutiérrez argues that ‘machismo or hypervirility, was Mexico’s defensive response to global inferiority and its history of colonialism. However, I would say that, in the context of the films, since Mexican men are not set against foreign models of masculinity, but rather compete with each other to be winners in the changing context of modernity, we can observe that ‘hypervirility’ is a way to stand out, and in this case, it becomes a form of emotional capital that women value. Hence, in addition to the emotional traits I have mentioned, the hegemonic masculinity is constituted by being physically strong, somewhat attractive and healthy, as well as courageous and enterprising.

The analysis of employees in films shows that there is an important difference in the ways in which class was regarded in Swedish and Mexican cinema as a part of the process of modernisation. While modern Sweden is depicted as a land of possibilities in which the working classes can have a good life and climb socially as long as they keep their working-class values and remain ‘conscientious workers’, in Mexican films, it is more common to observe how the working classes have a harder time climbing the class ladder.

Swedish films portray Yvonne Hirdman’s housewife contract for the most part, but they also take part in the discussion of women’s dual roles when they show working women who are proud of their occupations and good at them; these women can be portrayed as either struggling to fulfil both roles or choosing one over the other or as being capable of doing so. However, most film stories stop when the romantic relationship leads to marriage, and thus, female protagonists in the films are usually not depicted as giving any thought to their work situation after marriage. In any case, romantic love is virtually always a driving force for men’s improvement of their work position and the main source of women’s respectability.

In Mexican films, the modern society is characterised by the contrast in the living conditions between the different social classes. This is observable in conditions such as access to justice and social services; in other words, the poor are to fend themselves in a society that treats them unfairly. In such contexts, men and women are expected to maintain a household structure that gives them security and stability. In this sense, a patriarchal structure is the most desirable, even if this needs to be renewed. Class mobility is neither a common nor desirable occurrence in Mexican films; rather, both men and women are expected to be content with their class of origin. However, due

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71 Features of emotional capital according to Nowotny (1981), quoted in Reay (2000).
to the general lack of respectability that the poor as a group seem to have in society, they need to maintain the dictated moral behaviour of differentiated gender roles. Also, women from the middle classes need to carefully observe socially accepted gender roles in order to face their newly acquired freedom and remain worthy. The films show that there is a moral panic related to premarital sex, and this is something that can take place in unsupervised locations, such as the places working women go to after work. For this reason gender structures appear as somewhat stable behavioural guidelines for both women and men in the modern Mexican society depicted in films.
Questions concerning the connection between economic systems and subordination and the basis of economic and social differences are longstanding. Differences between people based on material, cultural and social resources have occurred throughout history and across geographical spaces. Trying to understand the basis of these differences and how they have occurred has been a concern of many researchers. The term class was coined – one of many – in an attempt to investigate these differences.

In the previous chapters, I have used the concept of class and referred frequently to a number of class-related questions because the socioeconomic categorisation of the people who inhabit the film stories appeared inevitable. Class had an important role in how space was represented in films and who occupied those spaces, as well as which gender roles were expected from different people. In this chapter, I deal with class in a more focused fashion, in order to better grasp its intersections with other dimensions such as gender and spatiality.

Class is, in this study, a discursive and historically specific construction, and in films we can observe different forms of positioning within the discursive constructions that film narratives offer. Women and men in film stories are depicted within social, economic and cultural categories. By observing the ways in which film characters relate to these class-based categories, it is possible to assess which features films attributed to people belonging to the social groups that were visible in the societies I study.

The aim of this chapter is to investigate the role of class in the relationship between work and romantic love, and also how the role of class in this relationship reflects views of modernity as advanced by cinema. In order to determine how this relationship occurs and the role class plays, I seek to answer the following questions: what are the possible class interactions that can occur in the intertwinement between work and romantic love? How are these interactions judged? What are the outcomes of these interactions and how are they valued? Which class-related features are considered modern and non-modern in film narratives? The concepts of respectability, worthiness and emotional capital are again useful here when approaching these questions. These concepts are particularly useful in this chapter because respectability and worthiness are markers of class. Skeggs argues that working-class

\[\text{For Skeggs’s conceptualisation of class, see Skeggs (1997), p. 5.}\]
women used their respectability in order to generate movement and distance themselves from what was considered to be the pathological and polluted characteristics of the working class, or to become worthy.² The focus of this chapter is on how the respectability and worthiness of individuals belonging to particular social classes was achieved or lost through the ways in which they related to work and romantic love.

Films, thanks to their unique ability to tell stories, are also able to show the intertwine ment of intimate and economic actions both in private and public arenas. Film stories portray characters from different economic and social environments and create stories that relate to their particular circumstances in order to emphasise comic, dramatic or overly romantic overtones.

How am I going to assess class belonging in the film analysis? If we were to offer a class division from a Marxist perspective, this would include three main groups: bourgeoisie and proletariat, meaning those who own the means of production and those who sell their labour respectively, plus a petty bourgeoisie composed by those workers without employees, who produce goods or services for sale in market competition for the purpose of their own consumption and the preservation of their own independence rather than the accumulation of capital.³ In this case, class belonging would be attributed in relation to the individual’s relation to the means of production.

However, films are not always very clear on the relationship between the individual and the means of production. This relationship, moreover, does not always give an accurate indication of the individual’s access to other forms of capital. But films, in turn, allow a closer look at people’s access to social and cultural resources. Categorising a particular individual in a particular class group is difficult if we only make a material classification; however, films allow a more comprehensive definition of class, based not only on an individual’s stance vis-à-vis the means of production, but also on the interaction between economic power and other factors such as gender, age, appearance, cultural capital, emotional capital, etc.

Class Mobility as the Dynamics of Class

Class mobility is something that most people are acquainted with, if not through personal experience, then at least thanks to movies and popular culture. A characteristic of film narratives in general and of American films in particular is the normalisation of social mobility or class-passing, and this is an often celebrated storyline, not much questioned or stigmatised, argues film scholar Gwendolyn Foster.⁴

⁴ Foster (2005), pp. 4–5.
Studying the American case, Foster observes that across the cinematic landscape, looking from the beginning of the medium to the present, there are many narratives that centre on class mobility, and many of these reinforce the possibility of upward class mobility and the American dream.\(^5\)

The concept of the *American Dream* was coined in 1931. Then, American writer James Furlow Adams described it as ‘a vision of a better, deeper, richer life for every individual, regardless of the position in society which he or she may occupy by the accident of birth.’\(^6\) This is a discourse about class, but it is precisely in this area that the American Dream has raised more controversy. The soul of the American Dream, the prospect of betterment, has implied the notion of upward mobility or the idea that, through dedication, it is possible to climb the ladder of success and reach a higher social and economic position. Even though it has been proven in many studies to be a myth, the concept of class fluidity is so ingrained in the national ethos that it has become part of the life philosophy of many throughout the years.\(^7\) Therefore, a common narrative line in American films has mirrored this ideal, and the formula has, in turn, been adopted in other film and popular culture traditions.

Just as the American Dream has been a common phenomenon in cinematic narratives, so has the idea of the *work wife*, which refers to the role female employees, particularly secretaries, play in the workplace as a result of the insertion of traditional gender roles there. The work wife embodies the intertwining between class and gender. Family law scholar Laura Rosenbury analyses the role of work wives in popular culture and legislation in the United States in order to understand how gender is constructed at home, at work, and beyond.\(^8\) The study is clearly about class. The lower-ranking woman in earlier understandings of the work wife, Rosenbury argues, served a caregiving, sexualised role in support of her male boss.\(^9\) The stereotype of the secretary who performs administrative and caring functions for the boss and who eventually gets involved in a romantic relationship with him – with a variety of possible outcomes – is one of the common storylines that abound in popular culture. Rosenbury exemplifies this phenomenon with two cases: Faith Baldwin’s 1929 novel *The Office Wife* and the contemporary television show *Mad Men*, which portrays work at an advertising firm in the 1960s. This stereotype is about class because it deals with questions of power, class transgression, and expected class-related behaviour, but it is also about gender structures and gender-related expected behaviours. The representation of the female secretarial worker in films very clearly embodies the question that

\(^5\) Foster (2005), pp. 9, 11.


\(^7\) Samuel (2012), p. 7.

\(^8\) Rosenbury (2013).

this thesis deals with, the relationship between work and romantic love seen through the lenses of class, gender and spatiality.

But how are we to judge secretaries? Are they working class?

People who work in an office occupy different positions; male and female office clerks both belong, according to sociologist Göran Therborn, to the circulation sphere. He suggests also that office workers have a different class categorisation than productive workers. Nothing is produced in an office, but the work they do contributes to increasing capital output. However, not everyone in an office has the same status and work situation: some workers have subordinated employees whom they must supervise and delegate work to. Among those with special work positions in the labour market as a whole, Therborn names the secretaries who have a totally individual work situation as their bosses’ helpers, which turns them into subordinated wage-earners. The case of secretaries is relevant because it is so stereotypical, but also because it shows the difficulties in defining class from a purely material perspective. I will come back to the case of the secretaries later on in the analysis.

Is there an equivalent to the American Dream in Swedish and Mexican societies? Is the idea of a possible upward mobility part of the ethos of Swedes and Mexicans in the period with which this thesis deals? How is class understood, and how are class structures expected to function in the two countries?

The 1930s were a turning point in the organisation of social classes in Sweden. This decade saw a clear emergence of the working class. Göran Therborn defines the working class in the narrow sense to include wage earners in the productive sphere, employed by capital owners, without authority over others and whose work situation is not different from the mass of manual workers. Agricultural workers are not included in this group. In Sweden the definition of who belongs to the working class has been somewhat controversial. Around the 1930s the common view was that office workers, including secretaries, were not working-class whereas shop assistants were. Therborn argues that the working-class, broadly defined, should include all those workers whose power position and work situation as wage earners puts them in a situation similar to the members of the more strictly defined working class. This categorisation has to do with the way in which different workers have been organised in labour unions. These workers, who seem to be left out of the traditional categorisation of class, can be called the middle strata, referring to their position between the bourgeoisie and the working class. In the years that followed, there was an important change in the class structure characterised by a continuous decrease in the number of agricultural workers and a proletarisation of

workers in the 1950s; workers in the industrial sector reached a maximum in 1965. Another change that occurred after the 1930s according to Therborn is the situation of the working-class group: during the period this thesis covers, mass unemployment disappeared and real wages increased, thus changing the working conditions and living situation of the working class.\textsuperscript{15}

The Social Democrats, in power in Sweden from the 1930s, had ideals of how class structure could change. The idea of the People’s Home entailed that the view of the workers as society’s stepchildren should change, and in turn the good home should ensure a community feeling, where solidarity and helpfulness prevailed, and in which economic and social justice were realised.\textsuperscript{16}

One of the main elements of the idea of the People’s Home was equality, meaning ‘the demolition of all social and economic ranks, which [now] divide citizens into privileged and slighted, into rulers and dependents, into rich and poor, propertied and impoverished, exploiters and the exploited.’\textsuperscript{17}

Once again the model of the conscientious workers is relevant in this chapter. Certainly, the modernisation of the working class is not a phenomenon that started in the 1930s. In fact, as I mentioned earlier, already in the final decades of the 1800 there was an important movement in Sweden towards the creation of a ‘conscientious worker’ who, in order to adapt to the industrial society that Sweden was becoming, had to be disciplined, educated, sober and solidary.\textsuperscript{18} Thus, by the 1930s, the worthiness of the worker was more of an established notion, as we see in the films from this period. The recognition of the worker as a respectable and responsible person is expressed in films as part of the Swedish utopia so present in the discourse of the People’s Home from the 1930s’ and onwards.

Studies of the Swedish working class and class mobility, however, identify a further scenario. Sociologist Lena Sohl mentions in her study of class mobility in Sweden that leaving one’s class behind to move upwards was synonymous with betrayal in the early twentieth century. The upwardly mobile woman was negatively appraised and was identified with words like arriviste and parvenu.\textsuperscript{19} Sohl argues that the concept of the class journey (klassresa) started being widely used only later on when the possibilities of class mobility became more frequent. Moreover, as class mobility was emphasised, the possibility to leave the working class appeared to be more desirable than improving the situation of the working classes as a way to counter inequality.\textsuperscript{20} Nevertheless, Sohl’s study addresses the later decades of the twentieth century, and it is thus

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{} Hirdman (1989), pp. 88–89.
\bibitem{} Per Albin Hansson during the Riksdag’s 1928 budget debate, quoted in Carlson (1990), p. 25.
\bibitem{} See Ambjörnsson (1998).
\bibitem{} Sohl (2014), p. 15.
\end{thebibliography}
reasonable that her findings differ from what we can observe in films from an earlier time period.

Sociologist Ulla-Britt Wennerström, who studied class journeys of Swedish women born between 1920 and 1960, observes that upward class journeys through marriage happened to a few of the women she interviewed. One of them says that her sources of inspiration were girls’ books and the romanticised picture films offered of the conditions of other classes regarding love relationships, marriage and family life.\textsuperscript{21} For this woman, marriage meant, as in most films, that women left their career or paid job for a representational role as a housewife.

In Ludwig Schnabl’s 1946 study about the attitudes and mentalities of young working girls in Stockholm, he presents a group of office girls and shop assistants who answer questions on their dreams about the future. Schnabl concludes that

\begin{quote}
even though the number of single women is larger among office girls and even their willingness to answer is bigger in this group, it seems that the number of people with dreams regarding their own home, marriage and children is smaller than among shop assistants. The actual situation seems to be, however, that yearning for a husband, their own home and children was so evident in most women that even those who do not have other types of future dreams write about these.\textsuperscript{22}
\end{quote}

Thus we observe in films a narrative line based on a higher appraisal of the working class as one of the social changes that Sweden is going through in the process of modernisation. The welfare state, a fundamental part of the Swedish modernity project, was based on the idea of diminishing class struggle through the elimination of class differences.\textsuperscript{23}

The existence of a classlessness discourse did not necessarily mean that there was a classless society in Sweden during this period, far from it, especially in the earlier decades of the twentieth century. However, a representation of this type of utopian society in which upward mobility is possible for everyone, and a cult of the worker, could be expected in cinematic representations.

In Mexico, the state also sought to create a modern society in which the least privileged could have better opportunities. This attempt included measures such as privatising the public life of the poor: absorbing many functions of the family and seeking to restructure it, subordinating it to capital and to the state. Nevertheless this attempt failed as the material conditions of this sector of the population did not change. The members of the working class in the cities ‘were forced to interact with one another in crowded neighbourhoods and tenements where the interaction was an important human mechanism of

\textsuperscript{21} Wennerström (2003), p. 211.
\textsuperscript{22} Schnabl (1946), p. 106.
\textsuperscript{23} Sohl (2014), p. 22.
survival and resistance. The Mexican state prioritised the transformation of the peasantry as they were considered to be holding back the goals of modernisation. One of the state’s strategies was education campaigns, implemented by the Education Ministry, where federal teachers were sent out to educate workers to claim their class rights and assist in the formation of national peasant and trade union confederations. The objective of this enterprise was to break the peasantry’s dependence upon regional landlords, merchants and religious mentors. One of the consequences of this strategy was the forging of a class identity and solidarity, while at the same time the civil society submitted to the peaceful coexistence of different social classes.

In the period from 1930 to 1960 the process of class differentiation was intensified in Mexican society. However the class question was subordinated to the national question; economic policies were derived from a search of a national project. So for most of the period, the class struggle scheme that characterised other Latin American countries was, in Mexico, subordinated to the search for a national identity. The process of modernisation in Mexico and the economic growth commonly denominated as ‘the Mexican miracle’ that occurred in the period from 1930 to the middle of the 1960s was characterised by the consolidation of a social structure in which the middle classes and the popular classes occupied a central place in the economy. New groups that experienced social mobility were engineers, economists, doctors, industrial workers, public servants, etc. However, the process of modernisation also created inequalities and polarised the society as the line between those who were part of the modern society and those who were excluded became more pronounced.

The question of social mobility was thus something familiar for some, but a significant sector of the population felt excluded from the benefits that economic growth and the national project were to bring about.

Social mobility was, however, part of the discourse of modernisation. Historian Anne Rubenstein argues that the culture of mass media created two opposing discourses: on the one hand there was a set of ideas, attitudes and metaphors related to modernity, progress, industrialisation and urbanity, and on the other hand there was a discourse of tradition, conservatism, rural life and Catholicism. Oscar Lewis, Rubenstein argues, studying the culture of poverty in the 1940s, saw two Mexicos, one without cars, movies, radios or television in the countryside, and one characterised by post-revolutionary values, individualism and social mobility. Lewis saw these modern values as damaging for the youth and leading to poverty. Scholars and journalists

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27 Zapata (2012).
saw the urbanisation and industrialisation derived from modernity, during the period this thesis deals with, as inevitable, but they also highlighted the increasing visibility of poverty in the cities. So social mobility was not an unheard-of phenomenon: it took place to some extent. The post-revolutionary economic boom allowed economic mobility for Mexican women, argues historian Jeanne Hershfield, but it did not imply any change in the essentially patriarchal structure of Mexican society.

Patriarchy and class are closely related, Hershfield explains, due to the fact that since the Revolution did not succeed in disrupting material differences and challenging the material basis of power, the ideology of machismo was reinforced to fill the expectation of increased power from the (male) lower classes.

Historian Susie Porter’s study about women and class identification shows that the honour of Mexican working women at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century was intertwined with their identity as workers. This identity, she argues,

was forged over time, through labour struggle, and by women of a diversity of occupations and work tenures. In part, women’s sense of themselves was shaped by their position in the workforce. Women who worked in female-dominated industries of preindustrial origin referred to themselves by their occupation as cigarette makers and seamstresses, for example.

A proletarian newspaper from the turn of the century wrote much about women’s respectability, asserting that ‘women could be redeemed by education; working women could be redeemed by technical education; the poorest of women could be redeemed by work. “Respectable women” would be redeemed by the expansion of so-called middle-class occupations.’ The working-class women as well as the press commentators in Porter’s study addressed women’s respectability through work. Nevertheless, there were differences in the types of work that allowed women from different social classes to retain their respectability.

While women saw in their work a source of respectability in itself, male commentators – worried about working women’s potential loss of respectability – suggested that they, as much as possible, attempted to emulate middle-class femininity, even though work was a must in their circumstances. According to this study, women from a low social status derived their sense of respectability from work, and this leads us to believe that some films depicting unprivileged women might show this.

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The working classes in Mexico expected, however, the promises of the Mexican Revolution to be fulfilled. With the Labour Code of 1931 and the first social security law in 1943, the state fulfilled the commitment to provide the worker with a safety net. The modern working-class family was expected to be hard-working, stable and prolifically reproductive, but these laws left informal workers in an ambiguous position; the laws contributed to marginalising those subsisting outside of the formal economy.\textsuperscript{34} This means that despite the state’s attempt to generate homogenous growth and a coherent national unit, in reality class differences became larger, while at the same time some groups acquired a sentiment of class belonging. Class mobility was an expectation and a reality for some, but an impossibility for many others.

In order to study the class interactions that were likely in films, I focus on the extent to which class mobility was possible as a result of the interactions between work and romantic love. Was class mobility possible? Did it facilitate respectability and worthiness? Was it a reflection of modernity?

**Upward Mobility**

One of the most common storylines in film and popular culture in general is the occurrence of upward mobility. Men who through hard work and women who through marriage climb the social ladder are recognisable film characters even in contemporary cinema. This is a storyline that can be found in the films I study in this thesis. But what are the necessary conditions for upward mobility in Swedish and Mexicans films in this study?

Upward mobility takes different forms, and in this section I will show a few common narratives, such as marrying the boss, when love trumps work and the upward mobility of men.

**Marrying the Boss**

One of the narratives of upward mobility, which I call marrying the boss, occurs in office environments and involves, generally speaking, a male boss and a female secretary. This narrative is characterised by depicting a secretary who behaves in a morally upright way and is thus respectable, who does not expect upward mobility, but is rewarded with it through romantic love (marriage) as a reward for her sensible use of emotional capital.

The case of the secretary who marries the boss is a story that has been noted also in sociological research. In a study of office romances (off-screen), business scholars Anderson and Fisher affirm that ‘relationships are virtually unavoidable as men and women spend long hours in the job together.’\textsuperscript{35} The authors show that previous research on office romances widely sees the phenomenon as gender differentiated. Whereas men see an office affair as a

\textsuperscript{34} Blum (2009), pp. 251–252.

status badge, women see it as a way to gain organisational rewards. It is also common to regard women as victims of a power structure. So according to these scholars, office romances occur due partly to sharing space and time, but also as a way to gain certain benefits, an elevated sense of masculinity for men and an increased socioeconomic position for women.

Office romances occur in both Swedish and Mexican films; however their conditions diverge greatly. Interestingly, upward mobility as an outcome is common only in Swedish films.

In Swedish films such as The Department Store Girl (Flickan från varuhuset) (1933) and Factory Girls (Flickor på fabrik) (1935), the female protagonists of the stories, Ann-Marie (Brita Appelgren) and Karin (Birgit Rosengren), respectively, are not at all interested in having a relationship with their suitors, who are both, in fact, sons of managers, but who are working incognito as low-status employees. Ann-Marie seems to find Erik (Nils Ohlin) too daring and she does not take him seriously, while Karin has strong principles against marriage and deliberately chooses the workers’ cause over romantic love at the beginning of the story.

The actions that the girls’ suitors take in order to win love have repercussions for their motivations and performance of work. Erik, for instance, decides to take a position as an employee instead of as a manager for the purpose of conquering Ann-Marie. This decision implies lower status, lower salary and longer working hours. This job, however, allows Erik to spend more time with Ann-Marie and finally create the occasion for the emergence of romance. At the end of the story, Ann-Marie loses her job, but Erik offers her a ‘position’ as his wife, which Ann-Marie happily accepts. This all occurs without Ann-Marie’s knowing that Erik is the manager’s son.

Karin’s suitor Harry (Fritiof Billquist) gets involved in the workers’ movement and creates a plan to implement all of the workers’ demands as soon as he takes over the position of manager. Harry had an interest in workers’ issues even before he met Karin, and that is the reason he decides to work and live like a regular worker before taking over his father’s managerial position. However, his love for Karin makes him even more deeply involved in the cause. At the end of the story, Karin gives up all of her principles and ideals for love.

Right before the last kiss and the final credits, Karin still believes that Harry is a traitor. She does not wait for Harry’s explanation of his actions, so after having distanced herself from him believing he is a cheater, she finally accepts her own feelings and takes him back despite her initial disappointment. The happy ending that we cannot see but can guess is that she is going to be rewarded with a higher social position, and her fellow-workers will have a democratic and benevolent manager.


For a broader account of the story, see appendix.
These films show a different story from the one advanced by previous research that sees women as victims or as exploiters of their sexuality for gain. In these two cases, films depict women having passive roles in workplace romance. Male characters who originally belong to the upper class take a lower work position temporarily and are the active love seekers. True love emerges in this environment in which neither of the female characters show expectations of upward mobility. At the end of the stories, the women accept love, which gains priority over paid work. Two young working-class girls end up marrying the sons of the bosses who will inherit their fathers’ position, which entails a reward for their disinterested and honest love. Both Harry and Erik are depicted in the film as respectable workers, especially Harry who is able to show his involvement and deep interest in the worker’s cause, not only to Karin, but also to the rest of his colleagues, including the leader of the workers’ union. Erik too shows that he can work just as hard as his female colleagues at the department store, even though he does not seem to be under the same demands from the bosses; he volunteers to work more and does so diligently. Both Karin and Ann-Marie are depicted as respectable women, not because they are committed workers, but because they are able to demonstrate a loving and caring attitude and end up prioritising love over work. These characters are depicted as worthy woman, for which they are rewarded with upward mobility.

Film reviewer Jerome commented in Dagens Nyheter on Factory Girls that the film in fact showed three examples of ‘how fluid the so-called classes are today and how easy it is to climb upwards or downwards the social ladder.’ The writer criticised the filmmaker for attempting to make the point a little too strongly, probably out of the latter’s insecurity about the audience getting the message. Still, he praised the director for taking up themes that ‘exist around us’. Another commentator argued that the social theme was in fact not worthy

38 Svensk Svensk Filmdatabas, Flickor på fabrik (1935).
of the group he attempted to portray. A class-conscious worker, he said, would not enjoy seeing himself or herself in the way this film portrayed them. The misguided social portrayal aside, the critic said, this film should be taken as simple entertainment.\textsuperscript{39} The reviewers were, in fact, acknowledging the plausibility of the story, and even though there was a certain suspiciousness about how the social question was treated in the film, \textit{Factory Girls} was still celebrated and considered to deal with current issues.

Comments on \textit{The Department Store Girl} did not focus on the content of the film, rather mainly on the form, and they were of diverse nature. One commentator said that romance and suspense were two things the film promised, and delivered, though the ending was judged to be somewhat slack. Still, in an unsigned article, the commentator from the newspaper \textit{Ny Dag} said that the film received applause when the credits appeared at the end.\textsuperscript{40} This showed that the audience liked the story, and whether or not they considered it plausible, at least it satisfied the people’s expectations of a happy ending.

In the film \textit{Love and Cash Deficit} (\textit{Kärlek och kassabrist}) (1932), the story is similar to those from the previously mentioned films in that the female protagonist also moves up along the class hierarchy through love. However, in this case, it is the secretary Margit (Tutta Rolf) who is in love with her co-worker Bengt (Edvin Adolfson). She does not do anything to actively court Bengt, but she secretly and disinterestedly gives away her savings to help him. By the end of the film, Margit’s sacrifice is rewarded with Bengt’s love and recognition. When the film ends and Margit and Bengt have become a couple, the latter is about to take a new position as a manager due to his honesty and hard work, which entails that together they will climb the social ladder.

According to reviewer Hara Kiri, there was nothing unexpected in this film, no surprises or imaginative tricks.\textsuperscript{41} Perhaps romantic love as a reward was nothing more than the most natural outcome films had for the honest industriousness and the sensible femininity we observe in the protagonists.

In \textit{Love and Cash Deficit} Margit’s emotional capital in the form of sacrifice and generosity contributed to making her worthier of love, since Bengt began noticing her when he realised what she had done for him. She, again, in contrast to what studies of office romance have asserted, did not use her sexual role to gain any career or economic benefits and neither did her co-worker use her. Rather, Margit’s passive position allowed her to maintain her respectability and be deserving of love and socioeconomic climbing.

The film reviews show that the films were not unique in terms of theme or the ways in which the story developed, but rather, they are a sample of the many Swedish films that, through stories of upward mobility as a reward for truthful love, satisfied the audience’s taste.

\textsuperscript{39}Svensk Filmdatabas, Flickor på fabrik (1935).
\textsuperscript{40}Svensk Filmdatabas, Flickan från varuhuset (1933).
\textsuperscript{41}Svensk Filmdatabas, Kärlek och kassabrist (1932).
In the Swedish film *He, She and the Money* (*Han, hon och pengarna*) (1936), we observe another office romance, but one in which the male protagonist Göran (Håkan Westergren) starts off as a non-respectable idle upper-class man. He is engaged to a woman, Karin (Ruth Stevens), who does not love him and cheats on him with a company director. But Göran’s life changes when he, in order to receive an inheritance, finds himself needing to work as the manager of a publishing house; he is required to increase the company’s profits within a year and he must also marry his fiancée Karin.

Göran hires a secretary, Rita (Kirsten Heiberg), who is depicted as a respectable worker, efficient, experienced and creative. During the development of the story, Göran and Rita come closer and closer to each other, despite the former’s initial dislike of her. Throughout the story they get to know each other and fall in love. Göran learns how to work and to appreciate his job thanks to Rita.

By the end of the story, when Göran has achieved success at work and has found the right romantic partner, a crisis is introduced into the narrative. Göran is unable to get the longed-for inheritance due to fraud. The climax of the film is reached when Göran, untroubled by his lack of success, decides to propose to Rita and start their life together from scratch; he considers that he, after all, does not need the inheritance, because he has learned to work and has learned to believe in himself.

A scene in which Göran talks to the lawyer who manages the inheritance reveals Göran’s transformed view on love and work. Göran, beaming with joy, tells the lawyer that he will marry Rita. The lawyer, doubtful, reminds him that neither of them has a penny, to which Göran replies, ‘So you are one of those who think that money means everything.’ The lawyer responds, ‘Well, you cannot live on love.’ ‘Of course I can! Both on love to a woman and on a love to work. That is something I have learned thanks to my uncle’s will,’ Göran concludes.
The film has an epilogue, and the righteousness of Göran, as well as Rita’s truthful and disinterested love, lead the young couple to actually finally receive the inheritance. The film shows that the Göran and Rita’s reward comes from the former’s altered appreciation of work, which occurred thanks to Rita’s love, loyalty and her own competent work as a secretary.

The film, structured as a goal-oriented story, shows throughout the narrative that the achievement of the goal (money, status) was only possible through hard work, and good work results were possible only through emotional capital. The secretary was, at the beginning of the story, bereft of her sexual role as she was neither the object of the boss’ erotic fantasies nor was for her romance a means of professional advancement. However, as Anderson and Fisher argue in their study, ‘the tension and excitement of working toward a goal often generate mutual affinity.’42 This affinity was portrayed in *He, She and the Money*, and it was firstly expressed in Rita’s actions as she, out of her emotional attachment to Göran, acted as a detective and succeeded in unveiling the fraud committed against him, which ultimately led to Göran receiving the inheritance after all.

The reward at the end of the film was for Rita to get engaged with a rich and successful company manager and for Göran to gain respectability through work. For Göran, learning to value work increased his worthiness because it turned him into a better human being compared to his old self, introduced at the beginning of the film. Despite the fact that the film’s message was that money was not the most important goal a person should strive for, both money and a high social status were, together with love, the couple’s reward.

In all these films, women with a working-class living standard found love in the workplace, and their emotional capital, expressed in their loving, caring, generous and helpful attitude towards their prospects, led them to succeed in love. But not only that, all these women were also rewarded with upward mobility, despite the fact that none of them were expecting or striving for it. Thus, women through their work and through their emotional capital, which they were able to use at the workplace, gained happiness, embodied in love.

Love Trumps Work

There are cases of upward mobility other than the boss-secretary narrative. In the following case the female protagonist wishes to move up the social ladder, though not necessarily through love. This is an example of giving up work for love, a type of narrative in which the protagonist abandons her ambitions for social climbing through work success and choses love instead, but is still ultimately rewarded with upward mobility.

In the Swedish film *Pennies from Heaven (Pengar från skyn)* (1938), Hanne (Signe Hasso) works as a shop assistant in a fashion boutique. She does not

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earn enough money to have the kind of life she aspires to, but attempts to emulate that lifestyle with the little money she earns, by, for example, buying fashion garments in instalments. Hanne attempts to distance herself from a working-class identification through consumption and role-playing.

Two events are key in the story: first, that Hanne receives money from her uncle to invest in a business and second, her acquaintance with Hans (Olof Widgren), an employee at her uncle’s company. Hanne and Hans meet first by chance, but Hanne’s uncle then asks his employee to spy on Hanne to find out how she is dealing with the money he gave her. Hanne and Hans start dating, then they fall out and finally reconcile when Hanne realises that Hans’s love is honest. Hanne’s attempt to become a businesswoman fails because she does not have the experience required and is cheated by a crook, which gets her in trouble with the police. Hanne is saved by Hans and avoids losing her respectability. The story reaches its climax when Hanne’s uncle Leopold Paseman (Carl Barcklind) finally meets his niece and nephews and gives everyone all they need to be happy and successful. Hans gets a promotion to manager of the company, Hanne’s brothers get good jobs in their area of interest; in Hanne’s case Leopold does not consider there is anything else she needs, considering that she will become the wife of a successful manager.

After uncle Leopold offers each of the three male characters an improved work position, Hanne says, excited, ‘And me, then? What am I going to do?’

‘Oh you little one’, says Leopold, ‘You will become a sweet and cute little wife. And If God wants…well…. (Giggles)’

In this film, just as in the previous secretary-boss films, the happy ending involves an improved socioeconomic position for the newly formed couple. Hanne will leave her job as a shop assistant or as a shop owner to become Hans’ wife, and she becomes contented with the idea.

Although the female protagonist seemed at the beginning of the story to be highly interested in money and status, her compliance to a traditional female role was rewarded at the end of the film when she happily accepted her house-
wifely role over the role of a working woman. Failing in her attempt to enter the business world did not in fact affect her respectability, because her partner saved her from the consequences of her faulty choices.

Hanne’s attempt to distance herself from a working-class identification illustrates Beverly Skeggs’s assessment that working-class women seek respectability through their attempt to not appear working class. Sociologist Ulla-Britt Wennergström argues that personal clothing style and outer behaviour express plenty of a woman’s life such as her dreams, creativity and vitality, despite her limited economic and material resources. In this film, we can observe that Hanne behaved in such a way that despite her economic limitations, she sought to reflect a higher type of lifestyle than the one she could afford before marriage. This behaviour did not produce a change in her socioeconomic status. Hanne was not able to attain upward mobility through her own work, and her failure to make wise decisions almost led her to lose her respectability. However, she had other traits such as her charm, femininity, attractive appearance and kindness which constitute the emotional capital that she could use to acquire romantic love which in turn led her to upward mobility.

In the previous examples I have focused on couples formed by girls who belong to a socioeconomic group that has similar working and living conditions, regardless of whether they can in fact be categorised as belonging to the petty bourgeoisie or the working class in terms of their actual work positions or their family or educational backgrounds. In all cases the protagonists work to support themselves economically and have limited access to consumption, even if for some (Hanne) that is a desirable goal. Common to all of these stories is that they form couples with men who by the end of the story attain an improved socioeconomic position. So these are cases of upward mobility through marriage.

The stories in films that show that women’s attainment of romantic love leads to happiness seem to be highly related to the actual views of life of working girls. The study mentioned previously by Ludvig Schnabl shows that even the more imaginative and unrealistic film plots reflect young women’s actual dreams, such as those of interviewees who stated that their dreams could come true by marrying a diplomat or their boss at work.

Whether girls in Schnabl’s study express dreams instigated by film stories or films take their stories from girls’ actual dreams can be problematic to ascertain. What I can interpret from this study is that dreams and expectations of class mobility were present, if not as a real possibility, at least as a legitimate and desirable hope.

Men’s Upward Mobility

Films also show cases of men achieving upward mobility, but in these examples we see a new set of factors. Men’s achievement of upward mobility necessarily requires possessing a set of work skills: being intelligent, entrepreneurial and hard-working. Romantic love in these cases is a reward, but love can also play a more determinant role in the man’s ability to attain work-related success and thus upward mobility.

In Swedish film Servants’ Entrance (Vi som går köksvägen) (1932), the female protagonist, Helga (Tutta Rolf), is a spoiled rich girl, daughter of motorcycle company owner Hans Breder (Mathias Taube). A bet with a friend makes Helga take a position as a domestic worker on a farm, where she meets driver Bertil Frigård (Bengt Djurberg). Helga is attracted to Bertil since the day they meet at the train station when the latter picks her up on her first day at work. Bertil seems surprised to see how the new domestic worker at the farm looks because she is so young and attractive, but also because she is not like the other village girls; her clothes, her style, her behaviour and the fact that she smokes make her stand out. Throughout the story, both Helga and Astrid (Renée Björling), the daughter of the farm proprietor, try to get Bertil to notice them, but only Helga succeeds, even though she has to struggle to get his attention because Bertil views her with suspicion. And the reason why Bertil plays hard to get with Helga is because he suspects that she might be lying about her background and come from a higher social class than she claims. Even though Bertil is only a modest driver on a farm, his ambition is to become an engineer and to be able to work in the motorcycle industry developing engines. Bertil’s boss, farm proprietor Adolf Beck (Carl Barckling), believes in him, and for this reason he allows Bertil to work on his engine invention in a garage on the farm. Moreover, Bertil educates himself by reading about mechanical engineering in English in his spare time. He, in fact, tries early in the story to get a job in Hans Breder’s factory by showing him the plan of an engine experiment that he claims could increase the speed of their current motorcycle model. The factory owner, however, rejects his idea, saying that without Bertil having an engineering degree, there is no guarantee that the project will work. Bertil responds to this rejection by implying that he will carry out the experiment anyway on his own. Bertil is thus a hard-working and intelligent man, but his class background does not allow him to fully make use of his potential.

The relationship between Bertil and Helga develops, but it falls into a crisis when Bertil overhears a conversation from which he realises that Helga is not the person he thought she was and immediately believes that she has intentionally fooled him. Near the end of the story Bertil enters a speed competition with the motorcycle he has built on his own at the farm. The favourite to win is a competitor driving a motorcycle from Hans Breder’s company, but Bertil
wins, and at the end Hans offers Bertil a job in his company. Only then Bertil does find out who Helga is and they get back together.

In this film we also see a story of upward mobility, but in this case it is only the male partner who experiences it. Bertil appears in the last sequence of the film signing what Hans describes as a very lucrative deal. Throughout the story Helga learns how to do domestic work and loses her spoiled upper-class girl attitude, thus acquiring respectability for which she is rewarded with love. Bertil’s hard work and ambition are also rewarded with a better work position and romantic love. Romantic love is a reward for both, but it is also a means for Helga’s change. Bertil is depicted in the story as a worthy worker because he is entrepreneurial and hard-working and his efforts are rewarded with a better work position and romantic love.

In the films Mr. Home Assistant (Herr Husassistenten) (1938) and A Man in the Kitchen (En karl i köket) (1954), we observe a similar storyline in which the male protagonists experience upward mobility. Viktor (Elof Ahrle) from Mr. Home Assistant is a mechanic employed at a car garage. He is very good at his job and is particularly interested in offering the customers good service. Viktor has plans to open a car garage of his own, and the possibility to do so arises thanks to a loan from a loyal customer and friend. Unexpectedly, this friend dies and Viktor finds himself in trouble when lawyer Alfred Runge (Gösta Cederlund) and company manager Erik Ramgård (Stig Järrel) play a trick on him that causes him to lose all his money and also his project, which they plan to take over. Viktor does not lose heart and starts working as a domestic worker in an upper-class home, which turns out to be with Alfred Runge’s family, where he meets the lawyer’s niece Karin (Aino Taube). Viktor and Karin fall in love, and Karin helps Viktor recover his project and make it a reality with the help of uncle Ludde (Carl Barcklind).

In A Man in the Kitchen, the male protagonist is head waiter Olle Larsson (Herman Ahlsell), who dreams of opening his own hotel. The opportunity to do so presents itself thanks to a loan. The lender dies and lawyer Arvid Stenmark (Holger Löwenadler) buys the debt certificate and divests Olle of his money and project, leaving him penniless. Olle then starts working as a domestic worker, and here again, the housewife who hires him turns out to be lawyer Stenmark’s wife, Bertha (Hjördis Petterson). In this home Olle meets Arvid and Bertha’s daughter, Karin (Ittla Frodi), and they fall in love with each other. Karin convinces her friend Axel Möller (Hugo Bjöme) to become a business partner in Olle’s project and help him recover it and take it away from her father. At the end of the story, the entire Stenmark family is working at the hotel preparing for the big opening and Karin is happy that she will soon become the wife of the hotel manager.

In both these films the male protagonists fulfil their dreams of becoming business owners in a branch they love and are very good at. They work hard

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46 These films are two versions of the same Danish theatre play; see appendix.
to gain the skills needed and work hard even when faced with adversity. However, it takes the help of a romantic partner to finally succeed and make their projects a reality. These films are different from Servant’s Entrance in that the role of the female partner turns out to be key for the male protagonists to attain success. On the other hand, hard work and skilfulness, but also modesty and humility, make Viktor and Olle respectable men. Hence, at the end of the stories the protagonists are worthy characters who are rewarded with love and an improved work position which entails for them upward mobility, while the upper-class men who tricked them are in turn depicted as unworthy.

The conditions for upward mobility are different for men and women in Swedish films: while for women, being a good worker is not a precondition – even though it can in a few cases help when work is combined with care and emotional support – for men efficiency, intelligence and hard work are necessary to attain upward mobility.

Upward Mobility in Mexican films: A Rare Occurrence

So far I have only presented examples of upward mobility in Swedish films. This is because in Mexican films from the period 1930–1955, successful upward mobility is not a common narrative line. In my selection of Mexican films, there are several examples in which upward mobility occurs at some point in the story, but only a few in which it remains as the final outcome.

One of these films is the rural drama Rosenda (1948). In this film, social classes are connected also to views on the rural-urban divide. In chapter three we learned that the Mexican countryside tends to be depicted in films as a non-modern place which moreover is highly socially divided. I also argued that certain male characters, who function as village or household patriarchs, are the drivers of modern thinking and modern practices. The film Rosenda is an example of the representation of class that focuses on rural social divisions.

The protagonist of the film, Rosenda (Rita Macedo), a poor and uneducated girl who has lived all her life in an isolated hut in the countryside is forced to go to live in the nearest village when her father refuses to give her hand in marriage, but also refuses to let her keep living in his house once he finds out she has been seeing a man without his consent.

As soon as Rosenda’s boyfriend Salustio (Rodolfo Acosta) finds out that she has been expelled from her house, he abandons her. Don Ponciano (Fernando Soler), the village’s patriarch and the wealthiest and most educated man in the community, takes care of Rosenda. Many years her senior, Don Ponciano becomes Rosenda’s mentor and then her lover. After much hesitation, Don Ponciano decides to marry Rosenda, which would signify for her an enormous step upwards socially and economically.

The disturbances in the aftermath of Mexican Revolution cause them to part ways, and Don Ponciano is presumed dead after being kidnapped by rebels. The couple never get to have a normal family life together until the end
of the story when they reunite by mere chance. Rosenda had the opportunity earlier on to claim her legitimate husband’s inheritance, but she never wanted to do so. She preferred to work and put into use the new skills she learned after meeting Don Ponciano and to go ahead on her own, rather than living a wealthy life alone.

Rosenda’s life changes as a result of meeting Don Ponciano. He looks after her and makes sure all her material needs are satisfied, but then also helps her learn the tailor trade by taking her to live with the village’s seamstress and teaches her how to read and write. Then, after starting a romantic affair, Don Ponciano marries Rosenda, thus legitimising their relationship.

During the time when Rosenda is Don Ponciano’s protégée and then his wife, she has no need to find paid work because he satisfies all her needs. However, when the story’s crisis is presented, Rosenda decides to work and start from scratch on her own with her new-born child, without claiming her husband’s property. For Rosenda, money or a good position without love are not worth having. Rosenda’s sense of respectability comes from her ability to work and support herself and her child.

The climax of the film is reached when Don Ponciano and Rosenda reunite and they can be a family for the first time. Thus, Rosenda is rewarded with both love and a socioeconomic advancement that she finally can enjoy.

The film presents a clear contrast between different groups in Mexican society. We observe the isolated country people living a deprived existence, the peasants living in small villages, not much better off, without access to education or basic services, and the better off in the villages and the cities.

Moreover, the film shows a country in transformation, connected by trains and with political upheavals starting to come under control. The modern Mexico depicted in the film is thus a myriad of contrasts, but heading towards stability and progress.

Even though Rosenda can be seen as an exception, as it presents upward mobility as plausible in a Mexican film, we also observe that the upwardly mobile woman first needed to demonstrate her respectability by attempting to remain in a social class lower than that she could have attained. Rosenda shows that the basis for female worthiness is the emotional capital that the woman owns, represented by her propensity for self-sacrifice, modesty, humility and family-orientation.

Mexican film *Adventuress (Aventurera)* from 1949 is very different from Rosenda, but here also the protagonist by the end of the story attains upward mobility through love. Elena (Ninón Sevilla) is a young girl, who, after losing her parents, is left to her own devices and enters a dubious business within the entertainment sector. Elena’s work tasks are varied and prostitution is insinuated to be one of them. Elena’s original intention was not to climb the social ladder – in fact she lived a comfortable life with her upper middle-class family – but after the death of her father and the abandonment of her mother she has to make a living of her own. Elena suddenly finds herself without
money and nobody to turn to, facing all the difficulties of women born in a deprived environment.

Before Elena’s life conditions change, she studies at a dance academy so she has no work experience or qualifications for other types of jobs when she finds herself in need of employment. Moreover, she is young, beautiful and unprotected, which puts her in a vulnerable situation at all the workplaces she works, as she is constantly sexually harassed.

Elena becomes successful as a cabaret dancer even though she is manipulated and exploited by the cabaret owner Rosaura (Andrea Palma) and a male friend, Lucio (Tito Junco), who schemed to get her the job. Elena passes from prostitution to being the accomplice in Lucio’s criminalities and then back to the cabaret life when Lucio gets caught.

In the cabaret Elena meets Rosaura’s son, Mario (Rubén Rojo), who falls deeply in love with her and asks her to marry him. When Elena finds out that he is Rosaura’s son, she decides to marry him to take revenge on Rosaura.

The film advances a strong justification for the female characters’ fate and their participation in the prostitution business. Rosaura, the procurer, is the pillar of one of the ‘oldest families of Guadalajara’, as her son describes it. When her husband dies, she realises that he has left no money and his businesses has gone bankrupt, so in order to maintain her family’s living standards and give her two sons a professional education, she starts a brothel in the north of the country, far away from her family home so that her family and friends will not find out.

Both Rosaura and Elena, at some point in their lives, find themselves alone in the world, without the protection of a man or a family. For Rosaura, it is her desire to keep her social and economic position and give her children all she is capable of that makes her begin her illegal but profitable activities; whereas for Elena it is her helplessness and the influence of the only man who is kind to her that causes her fall.
This film comments persistently on class. In one scene depicting a fight between Rosaura and Elena, once the latter has already become Mario’s wife, Rosaura utters her view on the sources of all women’s happiness: ‘You have everything with my son, all that any woman could ever wish: love, money, a good economic and social position, youth.’

In a later scene, when Mario finds out that his wife has deserted him to continue with her former occupation, he says, ‘What happened here, Elena? You said you were coming to Ciudad Juárez to see your dying mother and I find you dancing again and using my name in the posters’. Elena replies whimsically, ‘Oh, what a dishonour for the family, uh? Your distinguished name… It surely hurts you and your mother... that’s why I do it! This is over, Mario.’ Mario then proudly says, ‘You never loved me, I suspected it. I was a fool thinking I could get you out of this environment, that I could turn you into a decent woman, a respectable person, I even put you on the same level as my mother!’

Respectability and decency seem to go together with high economic and social position, at least in the rhetoric of the upper classes depicted in films. Elena is able to climb to an upper-class position, not because of her merits as a dancer, or because she earns large amounts of money in prostitution and show business. She becomes a rich and decent woman when she marries Mario. At the end of the story, Elena is saved by Mario because his love is truthful and disinterested, and he also understands ‘his mother’s sacrifice’ and forgives her. Thus, upward mobility occurs in this film mainly thanks to the righteous loving man, who understands how Elena has been a victim of his mother and other scoundrels, and how his own mother has been a victim of circumstances herself. Elena, who is depicted as an unworthy woman for most of the film when she acts deceitfully and vindictively, redeems herself at the end of the story when she gives up her former occupation for good, forgives Rosaura and realises that she actually loves Mario and wants to have a proper family life with him.

Most of the films I have discussed so far have shown working-class and lower middle-class girls in different working environments. Those who are rewarded with a respectable status and happiness valued love over everything else. For male characters, work becomes or continues to be essential for their sense of respectability. Most of these women, particularly in the Mexican examples, must demonstrate their respectability by showing their disinterestedness in bettering their social class in order to attain upward mobility.

All of these films, even the Mexican ones, subscribe to the middle-class ideal of breadwinner manliness (försörjarmanligheten), a model that had become dominant in the Swedish popular and political debate by the end of the 1930s.47 Just as debates in the Swedish parliament had revolved around married women’s right to work, the rhetoric in support of men’s role as

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breadwinners had support within many political groups, while films tended to depict the male sole breadwinner model as given.\textsuperscript{48} Opposition to bread-winner manliness was, however, significant, and in 1939 a change in legislation forbade the dismissal of women from state positions based on engagement, pregnancy or marriage.

Thus, although, as historian Renée Frangeur argues, there were at least three different models during the period 1925–1939 that to a lesser or larger extent supported women’s role as workers and to different extents legitimised women from different classes engaging in paid work,\textsuperscript{49} films tend to subscribe to the middle-class ideal of breadwinner manliness, which is strengthened by rewarding women with love and domesticity and depicting these as their main source of worthiness.

Class Permanence

Upward mobility is not the only narrative line we can find in films. As I hinted in the previous section, upward mobility is actually not so common in Mexican films. Class permanence can in fact be the desired or worthy outcome the films offer.

Class transgression is usually treated in Mexican films as a dangerous or immoral deviance. Swedish films can also present this pattern, although most commonly in secondary characters.

In a study about sexuality and gender in Mexico during the twentieth century, sociologist Ivonne Szasz claims that women from the least deprived socioeconomic environments most commonly find access to resources and upward mobility through marriage. In these types of environments, Szasz argues, the conjugal link can bring, apart from higher social and economic status, affection, social belonging and female support; in other words access to economic, social and cultural capital. Moreover, access to these relationships can only be attained through the preservation of virginity, fidelity and restrictions on female eroticism.\textsuperscript{50} Only then can women have the required respectability that leads to the acquisition of symbolic capital. It should be noted that, according to Szasz, the likelihood of this type of socioeconomic advancement is mainly possible for women who already have some amount of tradable economic, social and cultural capital. In the previous section I showed that films in my selection do not generally show upward mobility and when they do, it is not necessarily those of a well-off socioeconomic position who enjoy such an outcome. But to which class do those women who do not achieve upward mobility in Mexican films belong?

\textsuperscript{49} Frangeur (1998), pp. 359–364.
\textsuperscript{50} Szasz (1998), p. 80.
Love Trumps Ambition

One of the narrative lines that we find in this section involves characters who seek upward mobility, but end up settling for love and giving up their ambitions. This narrative line is more common in Mexican films.

In the 1953 film *Women Who Work (Mujeres que trabajan)*, we become acquainted with a group of working girls who live together in a pension for single women. They all go to Laura’s (Andrea Palma) employment agency, when they need to; Laura always helps them find suitable jobs.51

One of the girls, Perla (Eva Martino), is a young girl in search of a rich husband. The first time we see her, she enters Laura’s office abruptly, interrupting a meeting, complaining sourly about her new job. It turns out that her new boss is old, and his three children are all ugly and married. She demands that Laura find her something better. Laura says that the job she just got her offers a very good salary. Still, Perla says she does not want it. Laura mentions another secretarial job with a young and single boss, although she warns her that the salary is extremely low. Perla does not mind; she eagerly takes the business card from Laura’s hand and goes immediately to the office to apply for the job. The new boss is what Perla is looking for: young, handsome and rich. Perla does her utmost to seduce him, and when he finally asks her out, Perla asks Claudia (Rosita Quintana), a friend from the pension who owns an elegant women’s clothes boutique, for help. Claudia sells Perla a fancy, but defective dress, which is the only one she can afford. But to Perla’s disappointment, her boss does not take her to an elegant restaurant, but to a standard taco stall (*taquería*). There, the boss confesses that he does not have a car and that he is actually poor, but that he loves her. At this point Perla has already fallen in love with him, and, ashamed, she also confesses that she was first looking for money and a better position, but she now cares deeply for him and it does not matter to her if he is poor. They get engaged.

*Women Who Work* tells the stories of different women, with different personalities, ambitions and class of belonging and with only one thing in common: they all work in order to earn their own upkeep. The film included many popular actresses of the period and was considered to be a blockbuster. The story, a critic says, thrills and inspires the audiences and is likely to satisfy all kinds of public.52 The story is a drama, and it ends when one of the working girls has fallen into the hands of justice. Hence, we could interpret the positive response of the public as an interest in the modern phenomenon of the self-sufficient working woman in the country’s capital.

At the beginning of the story, Perla is depicted as an ambitious woman, ready to use her feminine charm and tricks to charm a handsome and wealthy man. But she is also depicted as caring and loving, judging from the way she relates to her sister and female friends. Being a respectable woman, deep

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51 For an account of the stories of the different girls who live in the pension, see appendix.
inside, despite her flawed behaviour, Perla is able to attain love by truthfully falling for a man and abandoning her ambitions. Her main reward in the story is not only finding love, but also being contented with it. At the end of the story, Perla is a worthy woman because she is able to find love, despite the means.

In Mexican film *I Need Money* (*Necesito dinero*) (1952), the plot has some similarities to Perla’s story. In this film, the female protagonist María Teresa (Sara Montiel) works at a jeweller’s in order to find a rich and righteous husband. She realises after dating one of her suitors that there is no chance she can find an honest man in that environment. She finally finds truthful love and happiness with a modest, but hard-working mechanic.

In these two films, the combination of searching for money and a better position at the same time as looking for love is depicted as a faulty one. Both Perla and María Teresa were women with limited economic capital, and they took their specific jobs due to the marriage possibilities they entailed for them. They both attempted to climb the social ladder through love, but in the end they found the greatest love and the greatest happiness within their own social class. Their reward for abandoning their pretentions was thus happiness and a loving partner, despite material scarcity.

For these two women, being deserving of love meant giving up their ambitions and keeping their respectability. Both are finally depicted as worthy at the end of the story when they are content with their role as wives of righteous, but humble men.

This narrative line is not common in Swedish films, but there is one example in my selection in which this pattern appears. In the film *The Andersson Family* (*Familjen Andersson*) (1937), the Anderssons work at their family-owned laundry. The antagonism between husband Kalle (Sigurd Wallén) and wife Maja (Elsa Carlsson) is a constant source of tension throughout the story. The plot is constructed around the opposition between Kalle’s class compliance
and his approval of hard work and working-class values and Maja’s desire for class advancement.

The very first sequence of the film introduces the characters in their work environment. Kalle is working while he, contented, sings a love song. Maja is annoyed to hear him while she does her chores. She asks him to stop and instead hurry up so that the consul can have his laundry ready. Then, smiling, Maja says ‘Oh… that is a fine man.’ Kalle says to his wife, ‘Oh sure, on the outside, but actually he looks like this (he shows a holey rag to Maja).’

Later on in that sequence, Kalle spanks Maja playfully while she is concentrating on the accounting. Maja, upset, says that it bothers her that he cannot behave decently. ‘Decently?’ Kalle says, patently offended, ‘I have never had to be ashamed in the simple circles we belong to.’ Maja answers, ‘Simple, yes…that’s the point. That’s what you are, still at square one your whole life, never trying to move up.’

The whole film follows the line that is presented in these couple of scenes. The two partners have opposing class aspirations. Maja wishes to belong to the upper class, while Kalle is proud of his modest socioeconomic position. At one point in the story Maja finally gets to live her dream as she convinces her husband to use all of their savings to go into business with her brother-in-law banker Gunnar (Ragnar Widestedt) and Consul Bruhn (Arthur Fischer), who in fact only want to trick them and get hold of their money.

The opposing views of Kalle and Maja lead them to split up. Through the business affair, Maja gets a modern laundry and a mansion, and Kalle keeps the old-fashioned laundry and lives with his mother in their two-room apartment. It turns out that the modern laundry has been so badly managed that it becomes indebted and then bankrupt soon after Maja takes over. Moreover Maja is never really accepted in high-society circles.

In turn, Kalle’s business increases its profits significantly. At the end of the film, Kalle helps Maja pay her debts with the money he had luckily won at the football pools. Maja then realises that the finer circles were no better than the simpler circles she had belonged to. At the end she gets back together with Kalle with an altered insight into what class betterment actually means.

There is a secondary love story in the film. The Andersson’s daughter, Elsa (Inga-Bodil Vetterlund), gets together with a young engineer, Erik (Allan Bohlin), the son of swindler Consul Bruhn.

The deal that allows Maja and Kalle’s reconciliation at the end of the story is that Maja accepts returning to their two-room-apartment and their former job at the old-fashioned laundry, while Elsa and Erik keep the mansion and Erik takes over the management of the modern laundry – as an engineer, he should be able to make it run with profits.

Thus, at the end of the story, even though ambitious Maja learns her lesson and becomes satisfied with a simple life, the young couple is rewarded with upward mobility. However, it is doubtful that they would be frequenting the ‘finer’ circles that constitute the upper-class society, because after all, they are
a different kind of people. The social and cultural capital of modern elites thus seems to have changed.

Maja and Kalle are, at the end of the story, depicted as worthy people. Kalle is a hard-working and modest man all along, and his working-class values are depicted as respectable compared to those of the dishonest and ambitious upper-class people his wife looks up to. Maja is too depicted as a worthy woman when she, at the end of the story, revises her attitude and becomes not only satisfied with her class of belonging but also becomes a loving wife.

As in most Swedish films, however, upward mobility is actually a reward. In this case this is not achieved by Maja and Kalle, but by the younger generation who can have a high living standard without the pretentiousness and snobbishness of non-modern élites. Maja’s attainment of worthiness occurs thanks to Kalle’s use of his emotional capital; he is depicted as a loving, lenient and generous husband.

Worthiness through Redemption

Other female characters who seek upward mobility are depicted as non-respectable throughout the film, but end up being worthy thanks to their ability to repent. Worthiness through redemption is common in Mexican films in this selection.

In the 1950 film *The Devil is a Woman (Doña Diabla)*, the protagonist, Ángela (María Félix), is a young woman of modest origin from the countryside who marries a rich man, Esteban (Crox Alvarado). Ángela marries Esteban out of love, and soon after their marriage they move to Mexico City where Esteban has a luxurious house for his new wife. Ángela has no idea of the life that was waiting for her. Ángela says to Esteban that she thought they would live more modestly and have a ‘proper home’, meaning a family life with children and not a life of luxury and elegant parties. In turn, Esteban takes her to parties to meet the important men he believes will further his career.
One of these men is Lawyer Octavio Sotelo (José María Linares). When the lawyer meets Ángela, he becomes enchanted by her and offers Esteban a position as the manager of a mine he owns, making clear that he is doing this because of his liking for Esteban’s wife. During a weekend at Octavio’s beach house in Acapulco, he tries to take advantage of Ángela, but she slaps him; she talks to Esteban and from that conversation she realises that her husband has been using her to further his own career, that he does not really love her. After this, Ángela changes her attitude towards men and love. With the help of Octavio, Ángela gets Esteban, a foreigner, expelled from the country after being accused of fraud and then leaves the city for a year, during which time she has a daughter, Angélica (Perla Aguilar), whom she puts in a religious boarding school. Afterwards, she goes back to the city and starts a new life of revenge against men. A conversation with lawyer Sotelo after her return demonstrates the nature of Ángela’s new life:

‘Are you surprised to see me?’ says Ángela, finding Octavio on his own in a casino. ‘Nothing coming from you surprises me,’ Octavio responds. ‘You look good, there are men who never age, and you are one of them,’ Ángela remarks. ‘Have you finally found happiness?’ asks Octavio. ‘I’m about to believe I have,’ says Angélica. ‘And what is it based upon?’ asks Octavio. ‘On my enormous self-confidence,’ Ángela replies. ‘So you have lost all confidence in others,’ says Octavio. ‘Who should I trust? You? I thought that when you went bankrupt, you would have the talent to make your fortune back again. From you I have a good memory and a wonderful mansion,’ Ángela responds. To which Octavio says, ‘I see you have a wonderful commercial sense of your beauty. The years haven’t passed in vain, you are rich… Mrs. Devil.’

Ángela has become a *femme fatale* who uses her beauty to get rich men and take their money. She has, moreover, started a successful exclusive boutique for women’s clothes. After many men and having built a fortune, Ángela meets Adrián (Víctor Junco), a man she becomes attracted to. It turns out that he is engaged in criminal activities, and he becomes interested in Ángela both erotically and economically. Ángela and Adrián have a love affair and also become business partners; he transforms Ángela’s legitimate business into a trafficking agency.

Ángela’s daughter Angélica has become a young adult, and she leaves the boarding school to be with her mother. Ángela does not want her daughter to know anything about her business and her love affairs, so she pushes her relationship with Adrián aside. Adrián is afraid he will lose his business opportunities, so he seduces Angélica and she falls in love with him. In order to prevent Adrián from hurting her daughter, Ángela kills him and then hands herself over to the police.

In this film there is a story of upward mobility. Even though this was not Ángela’s main purpose when she married Esteban, disappointment in her

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3 For a more detailed description of Octavio’s fate after helping Ángela, see appendix.
love life led her to seek revenge. Since love and family life were no longer something Ángela strove for, her ambition was directed towards money and power. But everything she did had the purpose of giving her daughter the best education and access to all the comforts of life, hoping that when Angélica left the boarding school, she could finally leave all her businesses and relationship with men and just have a happy life with her daughter. But Adrián’s crookedness ruined everything for her as he shattered the respectable position Ángela had in her daughter’s eyes.

Ángela ends up losing her respectability. With nowhere to go and nobody to count on, she turns herself over to the police. In the last scene Angélica forgives her mother after having heard her mother’s entire story from the maid Carmela (Beatriz Ramos). This ending scene restores Angéla’s worthiness when her daughter forgives her, as she then appears to be a good mother.

So despite the non-respectable position of Ángela and her punishment for having opted for class transgression, her worthiness remains thanks to her motherly feelings.

In the first film of the Pepe el Toro trilogy, We the Poor (Nosotros los pobres) (1948), Yolanda, la Tísica (tuberculosis sufferer) (Carmen Montejo), a secondary character in the story, shares some characteristics with Ángela. She is poor, but falls in love with a rich man, and despite the warnings of her family she runs away with him. When she decides to do so, her family rejects her. She has a daughter with this man, but when the man abandons her, she gives her daughter away to her brother, Pepe (Pedro Infante), who raises her as his own, but does not allow Yolanda back. Pepe makes the child, Chachita (Evita Muñoz), believe her mother has died. One day, however, when the child is older, Yolanda comes back. She is inebriated and insinuates to Pepe that she will commit suicide; she says that she has nothing to live for and wants to say goodbye and have Pepe’s forgiveness. There is no detailed information about the life of Yolanda in the story; we learn from Pepe, however, that she caused the paralytic condition of their mother and that she was captivated by a man who never ‘gave her his name’. By the end of the story, Yolanda is on her deathbed confessing to a priest what she regrets in life. She says that, when she had the child, she considered her to be a curse because she was the child of the man who hurt her. Yolanda confesses that she fell into shamelessness and vice after being abandoned by the man, but before that she put her child in Pepe’s hands, who took care of her as a real father. When she knows that she soon will die, Yolanda regrets having denied motherly love to her daughter. Right before Yolanda dies, Pepe confesses to Chachita who Yolanda is; the child calls Yolanda ‘mother’ and hugs her; this way Yolanda can die with the forgiveness of her daughter.

Yolanda is depicted as a non-respectable woman because she fell in love with an upper-class man who ruined her life. The blame for the outcome of the decision is put on Yolanda; she was rejected by her family and community because she chose to be with a man from a higher social class than her own.
Once again in this story, despite rejection and death, Yolanda escapes being depicted as unworthy thanks to the motherly feelings she felt at the very end of her life and the fact that her daughter forgave her.

A film that also deals with the theme of worthiness through redemption is *Salón Mexico* from 1948. This film is about the life of Mercedes (Marga López), a young working-class woman who works at the Salón México cabaret to support the studies of her younger sister Beatriz (Silvia Derbez) at a ladies boarding school. Mercedes, just as Rosaura in *Adventuress* and Angéla in *The Devil is a Woman*, lives a double life: one during the nights at the night clubs and on the streets and another one every Sunday when she visits her sister at the Catholic boarding school she attends. The policeman, Lupe (Miguel Inclán), who guards the street where Salón Mexico is located, finds out about Mercedes’s double life, and from this moment he regards her with sympathy and admiration and falls in love with her. Even though Lupe seems attracted to Mercedes before he finds out her truth, it is not until he realises her sacrifice that Mercedes becomes a respectable woman for him and he starts to see her as a potential wife.

Mercedes is depicted as a tormented woman for the kind of life she leads. For Mercedes, her job is a sacrifice she must endure to see her sister ‘well-married’ one day. The awareness of class differences in the characters is evident.

Class plays a role in how romantic love is looked upon and played out in the film. When Lupe proposes to Mercedes, he says that he does not mind her past or her work because he knows about her sacrifice, and he tries to present himself not only as a man who loves her, but also as someone who could make her proud and support her economically. Lupe, trying to convince Mercedes to give him a chance, says, ‘I love you and I ask you humbly to be my wife. I know that I don’t deserve you because, after all, I am nobody. But I offer you all my love and all my work. I am the healthiest in my company, I have three honourable mentions in my service record and this year, if God

*Figure 68. Lupe declaring his love to Mercedes. From Salón México, (1948), CLASA Films Mundiales. Cineteca Nacional Collection.*
allows, I’ll be promoted to sergeant and I will have a braid in my uniform.’ Moved, Mercedes cannot believe that, knowing what she is, Lupe still wants to ‘lift her from the mud’. Lupe adds, ‘I swear for the Virgin whose name I bear that I’m speaking the truth. We will go live somewhere else, wherever you chose and your little sister will never find out what you did. I have some savings and I’m putting efforts into finding another daytime job.’ Mercedes says she cannot accept because she needs a lot of money to keep her sister in the boarding school; it is for this reason she, desperately seeking money, is working at the cabaret, because she would not be able to earn the amount she needs anywhere else. Finally Lupe says that he will wait for her until her sister gets married. After that she will not need to do that job anymore.

Mercedes’s sister Beatriz soon finds a suitor, Roberto (Roberto Cañedo), the son of the boarding school’s director. Roberto is an army pilot who fought (and was injured) for the Escuadrón 201, the only Mexican mission that participated in the Second World War on the Allies’ side.

While Mercedes experiences mistreatment, threats, and blackmail at work, her sister continues her studies and is being courted by Roberto, who is many years her senior. In the scene when Roberto and Mercedes meet and the former asks for permission to be Beatriz’s boyfriend, he presents himself, despite his uniform and all his medals, humbly, and he also talks about the economic capital he has to offer. Roberto says to Mercedes, ‘Please, allow me to formalise our relationship. I assure you that this will not affect Beatriz’s studies at all. I love her and I know we will be happy. I would love to offer her a great position, but unfortunately I have nothing more than my career and a house I am finishing up. It has been officially communicated that I will get a promotion.’ As Mercedes begins to cry discreetly, Roberto changes his enthusiastic tone and says, ‘Forgive me if I offended you in any way. I am so little to aspire to something so big, but when you are in love, Miss Mercedes, you lose your sense of reality.’

Once again respectability is depicted through work and humbleness. Roberto presents himself as someone who has a renowned career without boasting about it and someone who can work – he is building a house himself despite the fact that he is physically injured, though his injury is also a sign of heroism. Although Beatriz belongs to a lower class, Roberto still puts himself below her, as someone who does not deserve her because her innocence and virtue are for him very highly valued.

Thus, Mercedes does not transgress class boundaries herself. In fact, her job pulls her down to the bottom of society. Nevertheless, Mercedes’ sacrifice allows her sister to live an upper-class life and then marry up to a man of flawless repute.

Mercedes is depicted as a worthy woman in this film despite her occupation, and even though she is punished by an early death, her sister is rewarded because she can have a respectable life, attain love and a domestic life thanks to the sacrifices of her sister.
In two Mexican films based on Federico Gamboa’s novel *Santa*, the story is also about class transgression with an outcome of redemption. The storyline of the two versions analysed here is similar, though there are some differences that will be addressed later on. The version from 1932 from now on will be referred to as *Santa (1932)* and the version from 1943 as *Santa (1943)* – when I write *Santa* it can be read as a generalisation of the two versions.

*Santa (1932)* and *Santa (1943)* tell the story of a countryside girl (Lupita Tovar, Esther Fernández) living with her mother and brothers in the small village of Chimalistac near Mexico City during the last years of the Mexican Revolution. *Santa* shows the contrast between rural and urban lifestyles and at the same time the dichotomy between good and evil; purity and vice; innocence and sinfulness. Santa never dreamed of having a more exciting life in the city. Rather, she was forced by circumstances to leave her home and her family for an unwanted life in a city brothel. For Santa, prostitution was the only option after her banishment.

The linear development of the narrative in *Santa (1932)* follows the protagonist’s life from the moment she meets Marcelino (Donald Reed), a soldier who one day arrives in the village with his troop, to her death. In the space of several weeks, Santa and Marcelino become acquainted with each other; Marcelino seduces beautiful and innocent Santa and, after a sexual encounter and increased gossiping by the people of the village, Santa starts worrying and feeling guilty. In order to ease Santa’s anxiousness, Marcelino promises he will never abandon her. Nonetheless, Marcelino lets Santa down and leaves when the troop leave the village. From this moment on, Santa’s harsh life path commences.

*Santa (1943)* retains many of the elements of the plot of *Santa (1932)*. The structure of the film is slightly modified, as it begins with Santa’s arrival in Mexico City at Elvira’s (the female procurer) (Mimi Derba, Fanny Schiller) house. The initial scene shows a rather dramatic contrast between Santa’s peasant appearance and the novel urban surroundings. Santa’s long, black hair braids and the shawl she is wearing are key symbols of her rural origin.

Santa becomes a prostitute because she does not have any other option. Having lost the protection of her family and being rejected from her community, her only option is to embrace Elvira’s protection. Santa’s life ends dramatically when she is still young, unable to enjoy happiness despite the fact that she, several times, though shortly, is made a ‘legitimate woman’ by men of means.

Santa is able to transgress class structures. She achieves an economic situation that allows her to experience luxury and an exciting life. However, she is denied respectability. Santa could have had a chance to become respectable through marriage. In *Santa (1932)*, Santa accepts marriage to bullfighter El Jaraméno (Juan José Martínez Casado), even though she does not love him (she confesses to her best friend, the blind pianist at the brothel, Hipólito (Carlos Orellana)). When they have lived just a short time as a married couple,
Marcelino, Santa’s great love and the originator of her misfortune, shows up at her house and seduces her once again with lies. El Jarameño arrives just in time to see his wife embracing another man. Santa has to return to the life she wanted to escape. But Santa has one last chance to live the life she wants thanks to her loyal suitor Hipólito, who takes care of her when she gets cancer. Only at the end of her life and only for two people, has Santa earned respectability, for Hipólito and his young guide, who love Santa and know her better than anybody else. In Santa (1943) the plot is slightly different, but the idea is essentially the same. Also in this film, El Jarameño (Ricardo Montalbán) is the man who could save Santa from her undesired life; but their life together ends when Marcelino (Víctor Manuel Mendoza) shows up. At the very end, Santa accepts marriage to Hipólito (José Cibrián), but the happiness lasts only the time of the operation she undergoes, which she does not survive. Santa is in these films depicted as a non-respectable woman as long as she works as a prostitute, but the fact that she was obliged to do so by the circumstances as well as her inner purity, which remains intact, make her a worthy woman.

Santa’s worthiness is emphasised at the end of both films when she accepts the protection of an honest man, which entails quitting prostitution and becoming a legitimate wife. So even though Santa is punished in the story by death at a young age, she actually dies as a worthy woman thanks to her emotional capital based on inner purity and repentance.

Even within this environment, respectability is striven for in many cases. Santa (Santa) seeks in marriage a way out of prostitution; Elena (Adventuress) finds in marriage the end of her sufferings and her faulty life; Mercedes (Salón México) finds in her sister’s marriage upwards a reason to justify her lifestyle. Thus, to some extent, all these women experience some sort of redemption that, in the eyes of the viewer, make them worthy of admiration or compassion. In most cases, the safest way to achieve respectability was romantic love and in particular marriage.

Mexican cinema is full of women who occupy a place in the public sphere as illegitimate workers, either as dancers, ficheras (bar girls), or prostitutes. In Julia Tuñón’s historical study of women in Mexican cinema, she argues that prostitution on the screen is something beyond work; the exercise of prostitution is rather depicted as a non-job. It is, she continues, a means to survive that penetrates the intimate sphere of women who have no other alternatives. I would argue, however, that the fact that prostitutes and entertainment workers in films are depicted as performing a toilsome and dangerous occupation is all the more reason for this to be interpreted as a job, despite its illegitimate and informal nature. In any case, I mentioned in the introductory chapter of this thesis that work here is broadly defined as an exertion performed in exchange for remuneration (monetary or otherwise).

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All these films exemplify the search for respectability or the lack of it that Beverly Skeggs discusses. Although all of these stories depict women victimised by society, economic structures, men, arbitrary life circumstances or strict moral values, the women who end up taking illegitimate jobs are condemned by their neighbours and family and suffer a great deal of misery.

Nevertheless, there is a possibility of change for most women, and this chance can only be realised with an effective use of emotional capital. Emotional capital in the form of motherly love, repentance, self-denial, mercy and truthful romantic love is capable of providing these fallen women with worthiness. So, in these cases, the illegitimate jobs these women have decrease their worthiness, but the men whom they are able to attract through their emotional capital may allow them to attain love which can increase their worthiness through marriage. Motherhood is also, as I have mentioned, an undeniable source of worthiness. In dramas, the genre of most of these films, however, the chances of these women living worthy lives might never be realised, due to premature death or their lack of emotional capital.

The final message of most of these films is that women who for any reason fall into the illegitimacy of morally faulty behaviour are not easily forgiven by their societies and must endure great suffering. Prostitutes and show-business women also have limited possibilities to find true love or to love truly. In films like Santa and Adventuress, unsuccessful romantic liaisons with dishonest men were the chief causes of women’s downfall. In Adventuress, marriage took the offender away from her lifestyle. Romantic love, whether truthful or unsuccessful, plays a role in women’s motivations and practices of work. In terms of class, however, higher earnings never lead to upward mobility. An improved position is only reached through a better economic position plus a respectable reputation. In Mexican films, it is moreover emphasised that being a ‘señora’ (respectable woman) entails knowing how to behave, dress and speak like one; that is, to have the required and cultural capital that only upbringing and education provides.

Historians of gender and labour have studied the question of honour profusely. Latin American historians have, says Porter, identified two types of honour: ‘honour as social precedence and honour as virtue.’55 Female honour has been defined as sexual chastity. However, Porter argues, women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries asserted their honour both as virtue and as social precedence (economic and cultural capital). Thus, the removal of sexual chastity in the forms of virginity before marriage and fidelity during marriage meant for women, as we observe in films, that no matter their efforts, their honour was lost.56 What I find worthy of note in films, however, is that non-respectable women are generally depicted as pure-hearted (at least at some point of their lives) and obliged by the circumstances to take up an illegitimate

occupation. This means that in a way, films can be relatively forgiving, even though it is clear that respectability is always what women (must) strive for.

Yet, films show that society never forgives and thus, despite the eventual good intentions or naiveté of illegitimate women, they are predestined to misery and rejection. Moreover, films show that men are an important cause of women’s flawed fate. The lack of a male breadwinner, men’s deceptive seduction and failed romance are the reasons why women see in prostitution and show-business their only chance to attain self-sufficiency. Thus, even though these woman can survive (for some time) in a ruthless and judgemental society, they will never be able to gain respectability in any socioeconomic environment, unless they are lucky enough to find a male saviour capable of forgiving everything and able to stand for their respectability.

Thus, failed romantic love or men’s perfidy can contribute to a woman’s moral downfall and her loss of respectability, while truthful romantic love and men’s uprightness can save her and turn her into a worthy woman.

Punished Upward-Mobility Seekers

Another narrative line is found in the stories of women who seek upward mobility through (untruthful) love and who are punished for their behaviour. This pattern is observable in both Swedish and Mexican films.

This narrative line is reminiscent of Anderson and Fisher’s claim in their study that some female secretaries use their sexual appeal as a way to improve their socioeconomic position in society or to advance in their careers. In Swedish film Bachelor’s Paradise (Ungkarlsparadiset) (1931), for example, the secretary Jeanette (Cissy May) is, at the beginning of the story, involved in a romantic relationship with Charlie (Ernst Larsson), an executive of the company and son of the director. Later on in the story, when Jeannette is surrounded by many successful executives during a leisure weekend at the director’s summer cottage, she reveals her real motives. Jeannette flirts with other men and tries to find out which one of them could offer her more benefits. Charlie realises that Jeanette is not a trustworthy woman, and he moreover meets a new girl that very weekend, a sweet and innocent-looking ballet dancer.

A sequence of the film that shows a fight between Charlie and company executive Berger (Nils Jonsson), followed by a reconciliation of these men and the realisation that Jeannette is not worth the fight, shows that Jeanette has lost the respectability she had when these men first set

Figure 69. Quarrel between Mr. Berger (left) and Charlie (right) over Jeannette. From Bachelor’s Paradise, (1931), AB Irefilm.
their eyes on her. Jeannette’s calculating attitude renders her undeserving of love. Thus, when by the end of the film the protagonist has found a new partner and she ends up alone, Jeanette is portrayed as an unworthy woman.

In *He, She and the Money* (*Han, hon och pengarna*) (1936), Göran’s girlfriend at the beginning of the story, Karin (Ruth Stevens), is depicted as a superficial and greedy woman. Moreover, she lies about her feelings, as she cheats on Göran with the director of the publishing house. Karin is not a worker herself, unlike Jeanette in *Bachelor’s Paradise*, but she is a stockholder and, despite the fact that she does not work, she has interests in the company. At the end of the story, she also loses everything, including her romantic partner and her stake in the company. Her non-respectable behaviour is punished with deprivation from love and money – and perhaps also with prison, if she does not manage to escape before the police apprehend her and her lover. Karin is also depicted as unworthy by the end of the story.

There is a similar case in *Love and Cash Deficit* (*Kärlek och kassabrist*) (1932). At the beginning of the story, Bengt is dating a beautiful, but greedy girl, Svea (Ruth Stevens), who works as a secretary for another company. Svea encourages Bengt to swindle his company so that he can buy her expensive presents. At the same time, Svea flirts with her many-years-senior boss. Svea’s boss gives her a ring, which makes Bengt both jealous and suspicious about his girlfriend’s respectability. Svea ends up alone and unworthy at the end of the film, as she loses Bengt and surely also her job when her boss’ involvement in a fraud is revealed.

Greediness and calculation in love are punished in Swedish romantic comedies. While girls who do not expect upward mobility get it as a reward for their disinterested expression of emotional capital, those who are after money and a better position lose their respectability when their intentions are uncovered and are depicted as unworthy by the end of the story.

There is one Mexican film from my selection which also follows this narrative line. Esther (Virginia Manzano), a secondary character in *The Cackling Hen* (*La gallina clueca*) (1942), is a young girl who lives next door to Doña Teresa (Sara García) and her children. She is good friends with Laura (Gloria Marín), one of Doña Teresa’s daughters. Esther is dating Toño, a rich guy who owns a car. One day Esther goes to see Laura to ask her to go with her on a car ride with Toño and his cousin. She also tries to encourage Laura to leave her boyfriend, a brilliant but poor medical student, for Toño’s cousin, claiming that the latter has a lot of money and is in love with her. Esther explains that,
for her, money is important when choosing a partner. Laura says she is not interested, even after Esther shows her the ring that she got as a present from Toño. Esther mocks Laura, saying that she surely prefers to be the house servant her entire life. But Laura says she is not a servant, that she works at home because she likes it and she wants to help her mother. Doña Teresa overhears the conversation between the girls and commands Esther to go back home and not go for the car ride. In the subsequent scene, Doña Teresa goes to see Doña Consuelo (Eugenia Galindo), Esther’s mother, to warn her about her daughter’s behaviour.

A new sequence with Esther is presented later on in the story when she comes back home after leaving her parental house for a rich man. She goes directly to see Doña Teresa, who, as soon as she sees Esther, dressed like an upper-class woman and driving a car, looks at her with suspicion. The conversation between them shows how Esther’s life has changed since she left home:

Esther says, ‘Doña Teresa, you know why I left my house, my father beat me up and we lived in poverty.’ Doña Teresa, with a sarcastic tone responds ‘Yes, and you liked money and luxury…well, now you have them,’ she says pointing at the car and Esther’s clothes, ‘What else do you want?’ Esther responds, ‘I want to return back home and get my mother to forgive me, I know she has suffered a lot since I left, and you have been so good to us, could you please talk her into forgiving me?’ Doña Teresa’s face lights up with a smile and says, ‘Oh girl, are your words sincere?’ ‘Yes they are, Doña Tere! Will you talk to her? I don’t dare to do it myself,’ says Esther. Doña Teresa says, ‘Yes, I will talk to her and she will forgive you. We mothers forgive everything. But before that you have to give back all those luxurious things you have and go back home with nothing, as you left, poor, without those furs and pieces of jewellery that put shame on you. Will you do that?’ Astonished, Esther responds, ‘But Doña Teresa, do you mean going back to poverty? But it is exactly because I have money that I want to go back and make sure my mother has everything she needs, don’t you understand me?’ Doña Teresa says, ‘Yes dear, I do understand you, but if it’s going to be like that then don’t count on me. The bread your mother buys with that money would have a bitter taste. Come on; go back to your car and your luxurious life. And don’t worry because as long as we have means your mother will always have something to eat.’ Esther says disappointed, ‘So you won’t help me out then. You are a bad woman.’ Doña Teresa says: ‘No, dear I am not. And to demonstrate that I appreciate you as well, I can assure you that if you end up one day poor and homeless you can come to me and I will never deny you whatever you need…but like that, rich for your own shame, I don’t want to hear anything from you. Good bye.’ Esther leaves, sad about not being able to see her mother.

Esther loses her respectability by leaving her parental home and abandoning her mother, but also, due to her unwillingness to reform her ways, she is depicted as an unworthy woman, rich but loveless and without a family she can rely on. This is an example of class transgression that is punished
because the character possesses no emotional capital that can be turned into a satisfying life, which in this case means a domestic family-oriented life.

In the previous examples the characters attempted upward mobility through their involvement in romantic relationships with upper-class men. But mobility can also be sought through the individual’s own work activities. This case is not common for female characters, and when it occurs the outcome is not successful upward mobility.

Swedish film King’s Street (Kungsgatan) (1943) tells the story of Marta (Barbro Kollberg) and Adrian (Sture Lagerwall), a young couple living in the countryside. They like each other very much, but their near future is not consumed by thoughts about the formalisation of their relationship, but, rather, about their life conditions and work. Marta sees her potential future as a farm woman as dreadful and decides to move to Stockholm in search of better work opportunities.

As Marta moves to Stockholm, she seeks to climb up the social ladder and earn enough money to live comfortably and help her family out. Marta finds a way to succeed economically in her new life in the practice of prostitution after several attempts to make a living in other workplaces. Thanks to her new job, Marta is able to live in her own apartment, send money back to her family, dress well, frequent expensive places and all in all have a higher standard of living. All of these improvements are possible to the detriment of her health, respectability and possibilities of attaining truthful love. In this case, an improved economic condition is not a goal of its own, but a means towards having a legitimate job in the future.

Things do not turn out as Marta expects, and she ends up committing suicide at a young age, after spending a long time recovering from a venereal disease at the hospital, and having lost everything: her ability to work, family, friendships, money and love.

King’s Street follows the patterns of the drama genre. Misery and punishment are inescapable after immoral, illegitimate actions. Nevertheless, professor Johan Almkvist, expert in venereal diseases who worked at St. Göran Hospital in Stockholm,57 the very same hospital specialising in venereal diseases and the inspection place for the city’s prostitutes depicted in the film, affirmed in an interview about the film that having observed that world closely through his work, the marriage of prostitutes was not completely unheard of. Almkvist argued that the film showed one of the possible fates prostitutes could encounter; but things could also work differently for some. The professor mentions cases in which women ended up in luxury marriages, marrying for instance barons, rich traders, and the like. ‘It should be recognised…’ Almkvist said, ‘…in the name of truth, that many prostitutes, more than people would commonly believe, get married, most of them surely end up in unhappy marriages,

but not all of them, some have actually lasting marriages.\textsuperscript{58} The interviewee is in fact satisfied with the film’s treatment of the question of prostitution. He believes that such a delicate matter must be taken up in the media in a manner that does not attract the youth to try those ways, but rather shows the immoral and wretched consequences of such practices. The practice of prostitution seems, in Almkvist’s view, rather attractive for young girls, for the forces that pull them into it are present in their society: a longing for money, luxury and pleasure.\textsuperscript{59}

In any case, even though Almkvist said that he had seen happy stories, he approved of the tone of the film warning of the dangers of illegitimacy. Prostitution thus might bring increased economic capital, but it leads to non-respectability. The film, however, shows that for Marta and other young women in the sex business, prostitution is only a regarded a temporary job that will allow them to earn enough starting capital to, later on, start a respectable business or be able to meet someone decent and leave that life.

Despite the fact that this film does not advance a view of prostitution as based on the characters’ excessive ambition or an ardent desire for money and class transgression, its message does show that prostitutes are likely to lose their respectability on a permanent basis, endanger their lives and remain loveless, even though their chances to have an improved socioeconomic position are high.

A historical overview of prostitution described in the State Investigation on Prostitution in Sweden states that the largest number of females prostituted during the last decades of nineteenth century and first decades of the twentieth century came from working-class families, and the second largest from agricultural workers’ families.\textsuperscript{60} Hence, class origin mattered, just as King’s \textit{Street} shows. The film shows that girls began with the trade unwillingly, out of necessity, and driven by their own circumstances, expecting to find an exit in the near future only to discover that leaving that lifestyle was not as easy as they first thought. Thus, belonging to a particular class and gender are depicted as preconditions of the trade. The film shows that even though prostitution is not necessarily the only work possibility for young women, it is the only way in which a working-class or rural single woman can have access to a middle-class lifestyle without depending on a partner. Still, the outcome is unworthiness, because the story does not offer any justification for Martha’s occupational choices. She is unworthy because she makes bad life decisions, despite the fact that the working conditions of women in her position are depicted as limited.

In almost all films analysed so far, the characters who seek upward mobility are women from the working class, deprived peasants or women with few

\textsuperscript{58} ‘Prof. Johan Almkvist: Dans och sprit i förening leder till prostitution.’ (1943).
\textsuperscript{59} ‘Prof. Johan Almkvist: Dans och sprit i förening leder till prostitution.’ (1943).
\textsuperscript{60} SOU 1981: 71, p. 42.
resources other than their physical attractiveness. Most of these women use their beauty as a form of capital that can be exchanged for increased economic capital. Beauty is not only valuable in the labour market; it is also an important form of capital in the marriage market. Just as in the case of work, marriage is depicted in the films as a source of a better economic position, but also of social and symbolic capital.

In many cases we also observed that upward mobility when it occurred (in most cases temporarily and not as a permanent outcome) meant increased economic capital, but since, as historian Ulrika Holgersson argues, class is not (merely) an economic category but, as a social construction, is a classification that is as material as it is cultural, we can in fact see that many of these cases were not examples of upward mobility when the acquisition of economic capital did not also lead to a respectable place in society.

Class Permanence and Working-Class Values

In the previous examples of class permanence, I have observed narrative lines that characterise class permanence as a punishment or as a failure of certain characters to reach a class-based goal, but also those that depict class permanence as a desirable outcome. When class permanence is a desirable outcome, it usually entails permanence in the working class, which, as I have observed earlier, has a broad meaning in films. In this section I refer to the working class in this broader meaning, more related to the endorsement of certain values rather than a particular type of occupation or socioeconomic level. Therefore, the workers that subscribe to these values can be urban or rural workers, impoverished business owners, domestic workers, or certainly, too, the more traditional salaried manual workers.

Some films emphasise the respectability of working-class values explicitly and these will be therefore receive special attention in this section. Beverly Skeggs argues that ‘most representations of working-class people contribute to devaluing and delegitimising their already meagre capitals, putting further blocks on tradability, denying any conversion into symbolic capital.’ This entails that in order for working-class people to acquire symbolic capital, meaning a form of value legitimised by society, they need to claim their own personhood, value or respectability, based on premises different from those of the middle classes, which are out of their reach.

I use a somewhat nuanced view of Skeggs’ argument in this thesis. Many films in fact show an appreciation of working-class values. Swedish and Mexican films depicting the working classes tend to portray them adhering to their own legitimate class values, which in many cases are more positively

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appraised than upper-class values. Many of these class-related values are, moreover, related to work and love practices and certainly intertwine with gender.

In Swedish film *King’s Street*, we can observe the view of Adrian on class belonging. At the beginning of the story the character has no other ambitions than staying at home in the countryside and taking over his parents’ farm. It is not until his girlfriend Marta talks about moving to Stockholm that he realises there might be something for him in the city.

Adrian’s attitude towards work and love is clear from the beginning. First of all, for him, leaving his work in the countryside could only be justified by finding something better. Something better for Adrian means non-manual work; in fact for him this means exclusively a white-collar job. Secondly, he considers that deserving love entails first attaining an improved social standing that he can offer his girlfriend.

In order to follow his principles, Adrian opts for a badly paid job (at the post office) over a better paid job (as a construction worker) just because the former is of the right type: it is performed in an office and it may promise a possibility to ascend the bureaucratic hierarchy.

The view of the working-class ideology the film presents is embodied in a senior construction worker who has had a successful career in the branch and acquired a great respectability among the workers: Moderat (Sven Bergvall), Adrian’s lessor.

A sequence depicting the celebration of Moderat’s birthday shows the respect and praise he is given due to his hard work in the construction branch. In the final scene of this sequence, Moderat asks Adrian about his work and the latter says he has found a job as an errand-boy in a removal company. Moderat offers to get him a job on a construction and Adrian replies, ‘Well…that’s not exactly what I had in mind. We have spadework in the country. There are many people who come to Stockholm to change their path. And I have left an application for a mailman job at the post office. Well, I’m not saying there’s something wrong with construction work.’ The giggles of Moderat’s guests make Adrian feel slightly embarrassed. Moderat then says to him, ‘You shouldn’t regard being a common worker with disdain and instead strive for becoming one of those so-called white-collar workers. Happiness in life is not what you seem to be outwardly, but what you really are yourself. Other than that it is completely irrelevant what you are called. But if you encounter difficulties just hang in there. I have helped so many country boys in the past. I only need to talk to the construction chief. But…good luck with the job at the removal company!’

This sequence shows that there is an ideal male working-class urban identity that Adrian learns about throughout the story, and by the end of the film it becomes his main source of respectability.

Later in the story Adrian learns that leaving the countryside and becoming a city worker is in fact a form of social advancement. When Adrian realises that
Marta has returned to prostitution after her convalescence in the hospital, he gives up all of his former ambitions to become a white-collar city worker. He decides to take the job Moderat offered as a construction worker. Adrian’s ideas of romantic love and work change, and his new understandings of pride, respectability and self-fulfilment are based on his identity as a working-class city dweller.

Not only men assume working-class identities in Swedish films. I have mentioned the film Factory Girls earlier and discussed the female protagonist Karin’s (Birgit Rosengren) involvement with the workers’ movement. Throughout the film, Karin’s sense of respectability is derived from her position as a worker. I also observed, however, that at the end of the story, she gives up all her principles for love, which becomes her foremost source of happiness. Thus, unlike Adrian, Karin’s learned lesson is that love has to be put above everything else, including work and class belonging.

Karin and Adrian learned opposite lessons throughout the development of the story. However, the film shows that Karin’s husband-to-be Harry will be a benevolent company manager who will be on the worker’s side. Hence, working-class values are also endorsed here, even though the female protagonist is expected to give up her working-class identity.

In the film Hanna in High Society (Hanna i societén) (1940), the protagonist Hanna (Rut Holm) is able to experience a temporary upward mobility thanks to an inheritance from her former employer Rutger Hummerborg (Carl Barcklind). Nevertheless, towards the end of the story, Hanna honours her own and her fellow working-class friends’ lifestyle and the personal attributes attached to their working-class identity such as dedication to work, solidarity, integrity and humility.

When Hanna changes her lifestyle due to her social ascent after receiving the inheritance, she finds that the pleasure she found in simple joys had to be substituted by visits to shopping centres and beauty salons. Hanna soon realises that expensive modern tastes do not bring happiness. Thus, she ends up going back to her previous lifestyle and appreciating the simple pleasures of life even more. The main symbol of her return to her old self and working-class identity is when she sits by the kitchen table once again with her friends Johansson (Bengt Djurberg) and Kristin (Dagmar Ebbesen), who drink coffee while Hanna plays the accordion, just like in the old times.

The ultimate source of self-fulfilment for Hanna is her ability to keep working. Her dream comes true by the end of the story when she is asked
to go live at the farm of her former boss’ niece, Monika, and Monika’s fiancé, Gösta, where there also is an electricity company where her at first friend and then fiancé Johanson can work. Happily for all four young people, they can all have the job of their dreams and enjoy love.

Like many other Swedish films, Hanna in High Society criticises the idleness of the upper classes and matches a work ethic with the ‘new type of society’ Sweden has become. The reward for Hanna and Monika for striving for the correct class attitude and their right to work was that truthful romantic love could be realised.

For Hanna and Monika, complete satisfaction only became possible when their romantic partners created the conditions for their work situation. Work gave these two characters a greater sense of respectability than money and urban lifestyles. Their view of work was moreover judged as modern in the film, as they explicitly characterise themselves as a ‘new sort of people’.

Many Swedish films tend to emphasise working-class ideology and its work ethic as a sign of modern times. The upper class and idleness are often criticised, but not so social advancement, a high standard of living or wealth in itself.

There are many Mexican films that deal with the lives of the society’s lowest strata, which in this case I am also calling working class even if the lifestyle, standard of living and even work situation are very different from the Swedish working class depicted in films.

Political economist Menno Vellinga divides Mexican classes into bourgeoisie, middle class, proletariat and sub-proletariat. The members of the latter category, according to the author, carry out more or less unproductive activities in the service and circulation sectors.

In these, workers find themselves engaged in a daily struggle for subsistence, through a variety of marginal jobs as street vendors, car watchers, shoe shiners, lottery and newspapers vendors, domestic workers, casual construction workers, and the like. These occupations belong to sectors of the urban economy characterised by low productivity and little use of technology.63 Many of these workers, Vellinga continues, have no access to the institutions designed to protect the weakest in society, and many of them are immigrants from rural to urban areas.64

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64 Vellinga (1989)p. 72.
This social group, very frequently depicted in films, was thoroughly described by Oscar Lewis in his micro-study of the Sánchez family, a study based on a biographical account of a man and his four adult children living in a one-room home in a Mexico City slum in the forties.\textsuperscript{65}

The great number of Mexican films that deal in one way or another with the question of poverty depict the working classes as either those who have (or have the possibility of) relatively regular employment, either skilled or unskilled or those who have only temporary and very limited employment opportunities. The poor can also often be agricultural labourers or people employed in low income positions in the primary sector. All of these people, often referred to in films as the poor, are, in analytical terms, part of my category of the working class.

The Pepe el Toro trilogy is a very illustrative example of the ways in which the working classes adhere to certain values in order to acquire the respectability that they are denied by the upper classes and the authorities.

The three films that constitute the trilogy are We the Poor (1948), You the Rich (1948) and Pepe el Toro (1953). The protagonist of all the films is young carpenter Pepe el Toro (Pedro Infante). I have described the environment and part of the plot of some of these films in earlier chapters. I will focus here on highlighting parts of these films that constitute an example of working-class values and how these determine the characters’ relationship with work and romantic love.

In We the Poor the life situation of Pepe, his friends and his neighbours is presented. We can observe that being poor means not only having limited access to economic resources, but also to justice and help from acquaintances. There are several situations in this film that illustrate the scarce cultural and social capital of the poor. Despite the limitations of the poor, however, their ability to love and be loved is often emphasised.

We know that Pepe is a righteous man. He has worked as a carpenter from a very young age because he has had to take care of his handicapped mother and his niece Chachita (Evita Muñoz). He is moreover a loyal boyfriend, despite the fact that his attractiveness makes him the target of flirtation from the all young women in the neighbourhood. His bad luck because of the marginalisation and the fight for survival characteristic of his environment constantly put him in difficult situations.

A scene that shows the contrast between upper and working classes can be observed when Pepe goes to see lawyer Montes (Rafael Alcayde), a customer who ordered some work from him, to talk about the payment conditions. Pepe says that he needs 425 pesos, out of which 400 are for the material and only 25 for his work, which is what he needs to buy his mother’s medicines. The lawyer tries to give him a cheque, but Pepe refuses to take it. He says that due to his humble appearance it is hard for him to get the bank clerks to trust him

\textsuperscript{65} Lewis (1962).
and cash cheques. He can therefore only accept cash. In a later scene Pepe goes back to his home and puts the money in a hole in the wall covered by an image of the Virgin of Guadalupe.

In these two scenes we observe how public financial services seem to be out of the reach of the poor and how an informal management of money is more common. The openness of Pepe’s home allows a malicious neighbour to take the money. Thus, when Pepe finds himself owing a sum that for him would be impossible to pay back, he sees that there is no other remedy than going to the moneylender, despite the fact that he knows about the disadvantageous conditions of a possible loan.

The moneylender does not trust that Pepe will be able to repay his loan, despite the fact that he is willing to give his tools and workshop as a guarantee. She can lend only a smaller amount and only if he finds a guarantor willing to give his or her signature. Once again Pepe finds himself trying to appear as a trustworthy man in front of those who are better off. It turns out that nobody wants to sign for Pepe, not even an old school friend who had been able, through his studies, to advance economically. At the end, the only guarantee that Pepe could offer the moneylender was his own work. So the woman lends him a small amount of money in exchange for having some work done for her.

This series of sequences illustrates that work itself and the reputation of being a respectable worker is the first and foremost source of trustworthiness for a working-class man. Similarly, we can see that the level of distrust among social classes, and in particular of the upper towards the working classes, is great. For this reason, the poor must strive to find ways to appear honest and hard-working before better-off social groups.

There are several examples in the film that demonstrate the lack of all forms of cultural, social and economic capital suffered by the working classes. Lack of money, financial stability and security put Pepe in the situation he finds himself. Moreover, the social networks that he has access to cannot be translated into other forms of capital; and the symbolic capital he can eventually have in terms of diligence and a clean reputation is not legitimated by those with authority. Thus, the way of reacting to these circumstances might include extreme forms (such as physical violence).

Pepe, however, represents the righteous working-class masculinity, which entails seeking legitimacy through work and honesty. But a fundamental part of masculinity is also expressed in the way men relate to women. Pepe is surrounded by women throughout the film: his mother, his daughter, his sister, his beloved Celia and many other women in the neighbourhood who attempt to woo him. A righteous working-class masculinity implies being able to show his female family members and partner that he can provide for them.

In the second film of the trilogy, You the Rich, Pepe has a confrontation with his niece’s rich biological grandmother, Doña Charito (Mimi Derba), who wants to take the child to live with her. An illustrative sequence of how Pepe defines righteous masculinity and its connection with the working class
takes place at Doña Charito’s house, where she lives with her brother, her son Manuel (Miguel Manzano), who is Chachita’s biological father, and her daughter-in-law Andrea (Nelly Montiel). Doña Charito offers money to Pepe in exchange for Chachita. Pepe refuses to give his niece away and instead declares himself to be a real man, as opposed to Chachita’s biological father. A real man, Pepe says, ‘is the one who can take the blows of life, which is the case of many from the working class.’

As a real man from the working class, Pepe, in a later sequence in the film, faces a situation in which his manliness is put in doubt. Manuel’s wife Andrea wants to take revenge on her husband, because he and his mother treat her like an object, by seducing Pepe, whom she finds attractive. The scene begins after Andrea asks Pepe to meet her, claiming there is something important she needs to talk about. Part of their conversation is related to their class differences: he is poor and she is rich. Claiming that she wants to help him, Andrea offers Pepe some money.

Pepe, offended, replies, ‘What is that? What…do I look like…a friend of yours?’

‘Please, take it’, says Andrea.

Pepe, angry, responds, ‘You should know that even if I’m wearing these cheap clothes I don’t take money from women because I’m used to earning money myself to give it to them. That’s what men do! Can you see the cal- luses on my hands? These were for the earrings for my Chorreada (Celia), her dresses, the food for her and my Torito (his child). And I will have even more because I still have a lot to give them. When I caress her, with my rough hands, after working for her and her child, she loves me and respects me more because that is what makes me a man!’

Once again work is presented as the basis of a man’s respectability and masculinity. Pepe’s statement also shows that his relationship with his wife is based on his ability to support her.
One of the main contrasts that the films depicts between the working and upper classes is that the latter are represented as unable to have truthful feelings. Family and romantic love are depicted as a matter of power, appearance and status, and, as such, people who do not have a legitimate connection with the family (through name, for example) are treated as disposable. The working class, on the contrary, might not have names and positions that are worth something in society, but their truthful personal relations make their lives better and can lead to respectability despite the difficulties of poverty.

The films also illustrate working-class pride. In order for the poor to gain respectability within their own social class, they need to stand up for their values and not ever give them up for money. Despite the fact that money is one of the greatest needs of the poor, exchanging principles for money is also the greatest breach of their respectability.

The Pepe el Toro trilogy depicts the working classes in a positive light. The rich, on the contrary, are presented as heartless people and therefore are unhappy.

There is a strong relationship between love and work in the message of these films. Pepe is depicted as an upright person and the best person he can be, given the circumstances. Love for his wife and the principles in which he believes (a man must support his family) are certainly a powerful motivation for his work. However, Pepe shows that friendship and family love are also important sources of motivation. Unlike the rich, who are able to buy all types of relationships according to the films, Pepe has many emotional attachments that support and motivate his economic practices. Thus, work is a necessity to sustain and solve the problems of his family and friends, but it is also in itself a source of pride.

Most films show romantic stories in which the end is reached when the couple kiss for the first time or get married. The advantage of this trilogy is that we are able to follow the development of the relationship for a longer...
period. At the beginning of the story, when Pepe and Celia are still dating, the latter does domestic chores at her home where she lives with her mother and stepfather and studies to become a secretary. Once she gets married, she devotes herself to her husband and children. For Celia, respectability is attained through domesticity. Despite the life of scarcity she experiences both at her parental home and later on with Pepe, she never works for a wage on a permanent basis. The only time she takes a job for economic remuneration is also the only time her reputation is threatened. This happens when she decides to take a job as a secretary with lawyer Montes. Otherwise, Celia’s source of respectability is her domesticity and family orientation.

Another example of the endorsement of a working-class identity is observable in the film *I Need Money* (*Necesito dinero*) (1952), in which the female protagonist María Teresa (Sara Montiel) is looking for a rich man in order to marry up. The male protagonist in this story is Manuel (Pedro Infante), a modest mechanic. Just like Pepe, Manuel sees in his work an important source of pride, especially because, having been raised in poverty, he, thanks to his efforts, talent and sacrifices, manages to study engineering by mail and to create a new and improved car engine. He, however, understands the demands of María Teresa, the woman he loves, to have a man who can lift her up from her deprived environment. For this reason, Manuel, thinking that he needs to offer his beloved one ‘what she deserves’, engages in all possible trades in order to earn more money and save enough capital to invest in his own business. These money-making activities include boxing and singing on television.

Manuel, in this film, is contrasted with rich José Antonio (Gustavo Rivero), an elegant and sophisticated young man. It turns out, however, that the rich man is a scoundrel and only wants to use María Teresa as a drug mule, whereas Manuel is a kind, tender-hearted and hard-working man who loves her sincerely and immensely. Manuel ends up changing María Teresa’s views on romantic love. His character and all the things he does for her conquer her heart, and she finally understands that love is more praiseworthy than money. With Manuel, moreover, María Teresa does not have the need to work outside of her home, and she does not have to worry about the wellbeing of her mother and sister anymore.

At the end of the film, María Teresa contents herself with remaining a working-class woman, though rich in love and appreciation. In this case, Manuel’s emotional capital is useful to win love and to succeed in his work goals, which ultimately allow him and María Teresa to gain respectability despite their low socioeconomic status.

These films show that men’s respectability is attained through work. Moreover, they must be able to demonstrate that they are honest and hard-working, able to satisfy the needs of their family (or potential family), show solidarity with friends and be able to fight to defend their own and their family’s reputation. Working-class men are depicted as worthier than upper-class men due to their ability to work, but also because of their ability to demonstrate their love.
In this analysis of righteous values in the working classes, we observe that there are gender differences with regard to how emotions and in particular romantic love and domesticity are a part of the workers’ values.

The gender division of emotion, argue sociologists Duncombe and Marsden, has been persistent throughout history, and this persistence ‘has led to the social reproduction of broadly separate emotional cultures for men and women.’ Although based on a contemporary study, the authors conclude that the differentiated expression of emotional needs between the partners of a heterosexual couple has to do with their differentiated positions in the labour market; however, it can hardly be reduced to the work aspect. They therefore suggest that ‘the increasing complexity of modern life leads individuals of both sexes to place greater emphasis on intimate and loving relationships as a “haven in a heartless world”.’ Men, however, must conform to the role that the gender division of labour assigns them. Associating women with the emotional sphere and men with the productive sphere is not new; Ronny Ambjörnsson proposes that it dates back to the emergence of the industrial society. The collapse of home production led to the transformation of women’s economic role and their increased prominence in the sexual tasks encompassed in the emotional sphere.

What we have observed in this analysis, however, is that the ways in which emotions, or romantic love in particular, are gendered phenomena that affect work practices and motivations is both culturally and historically determined. The gender division of emotion is delineated in film, because films contribute to reflect and reproduce such models of gender difference.

Interestingly, in both Swedish and Mexican films, working-class values are praised even though the living standards and working conditions of the working classes differ in the cinematic representations of both countries.

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Figure 75. Manuel at work with his lower status workshop colleagues. From I Need Money, (1952), Producciones Zacarías S.A. Filmoteca UNAM Collection.

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Class and Modernity

One of the questions I set out to investigate in this chapter was the relationship between class and modernity. How do films judge class categories and class interactions in relation to modernity? Which class-related relationships between work and romantic love are judged as modern and as non-modern respectively?

From the previous analysis several points can be made about class and modernity. The chief point is that both Swedish and Mexican films judge the working-class ideology as modern, whether or not the final reward of the protagonists was to remain or attain a working-class status.

I have argued that one of the characteristics of film narratives in Swedish films is that protagonists tend to be rewarded with upward mobility. However, even in these cases, reward is only possible when characters adopt the righteous attitude towards work.

The working classes in Swedish films are depicted as the bearers of the soundest ideology, as opposed to the highly criticised upper and upper-middle class values. The working classes are at the heart of Swedish modernity because workers can achieve success in a developing society and because successful managers who care about the workers’ wellbeing and improve their working conditions contribute to a better society.

Belonging to the working class is a sign of pride in Swedish films; in fact, those who feel embarrassed by their class of belonging at the beginning of the story learn to appreciate their position and feel a class pride. Hence, even though social advancement is not negatively depicted, the values of the upper classes are regarded as harmful for society.

The working classes in Swedish films are contrasted with the upper classes, their values and behaviour, which involve idleness, luxurious consumption and hypocrisy. The workers, in turn, are hard-working and proud of feeling useful. Despite the disdainful gazes that working-class people sometimes receive from the well-off, their situation is generally speaking not depicted as deprived. The workers can usually, through their work, live a relatively comfortable life despite their limitations. Moreover, working-class people can also succeed economically.

The view of the working classes as steady, solidary and educated is also part of films’ narrative. Primarily working-class men, but also occasionally women, can see in their working-class background a source of pride. Film narratives also show that the working class in Sweden is not a deprived and held-back class, but one that can also progress economically. In the modern Swedish society, the workers do not struggle to justify their respectability because, at the end, it is in fact the working-class people who have the right values, or more correctly the values that should predominate in the modern society, regardless of economic position.
In Mexican films, the working classes can be more correctly identified as ‘the poor’ in terms of how they are represented in films because regardless of what economic activity they perform or whether they own their business, are waged employees or informal workers, they are referred to or refer to themselves as both ‘the workers’ and ‘the poor’. This group is often depicted in films in a positive light, as worthy people. However, modern society is also depicted as being marked by class polarisation in which the poor are always on the losing side. The ideology that the workers endorse, characterised by solidarity, diligence, honesty, thrift, and family orientation, appears as necessary for their survival, but also as a superior way of living when compared to upper-class lifestyles.

In Mexican films there is a relevant gender difference in the way working-class ideology is presented. Whereas in Swedish films we observe female characters that explicitly talk about a working-class pride and whose attitude towards work is depicted as modern because they belong to ‘the new sort of people’ or belong to a leading social group in society, in Mexican films, the worker identity of women is in fact little commented upon. Seldom in Mexican films are women depicted as proud of their specific occupation. On the contrary, even working-class women in films take on a middle-class attitude towards work and marriage. Nevertheless, work can add to the women’s worthiness when it is seen as a sacrifice and a means to obtain a love-related goal.

The working class is thus depicted as modern in Mexican films because it stands for the outcome of modernity, but also because it represents the sound values that modern society needs in order to deal with class polarisation. Films, by showing the working class in a positive light, are legitimising a sector of society that was often regarded with suspicion and that tended to be marginalised by the better-off. Historian Anne Rubenstein argues that one way in which modernity and class intertwine in films, in particular in Pedro Infante’s films (the actor that stars in both Pepe el Toro trilogy and I Need Money), is related to the appearance of machines. The actor consistently associates himself with the machinery of modernity and the possibilities of technological progress through machines (cars, motorcycles, mechanic garages), while he constantly plays the role of the humble working man, whose occupation puts him often in contact with wealthy men, thus uncovering the functioning of class relations in modern urban environments.

Films also comment on modernity and class in the ways they depict the participation of women in the labour market. In Swedish films, modern female workers are young and single, living on their own or as lodgers, with ambitions as workers or consumers; but once they find love, they are happy to adopt a housewifely domestic role and focus on family life. Consumption is a part of modernity, and it becomes a legitimate possibility for those who achieve upward mobility through marriage or those whose work leaves room

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for personal expenses. In Mexican films, the young working women are also depicted as a sign of modernity; however, films emphasise the dangers of city life, entertainment, freedom and an overly relaxed moral behaviour that comes together with the new role of women in the public sphere. In Mexican films, domesticity is depicted as the positive solution to the dangers of modernity and as the expected role of women from all classes. In Mexican films, the consumption of luxury and personal items (fashion, cars, entertainment) is negatively appraised and, unlike in the approach of Swedish films, it is never depicted as a reward.

The representation of the upper class or socioeconomic elites varies in Swedish and Mexican films. In Swedish cinema, there is a distinction between the old-fashioned upper class, characterised by their overbearing and pretentious attitudes and their disdain for the working class, and the modern upper class embodied in democratic managers and benevolent mistresses of the house who appreciate their employees and are willing to work and see themselves on the same level as other social groups. In Swedish films, wealth is not synonymous with unworthiness: upward mobility tends to be the reward for those individuals who demonstrate their endorsement of the working-class ideology.

In Mexican films, on the contrary, the upper class is more consistently depicted in a negative light. Wealthy people are usually depicted as heartless, hypocritical, non-respectable and thus unworthy. Women from the upper class tend to display morally dubious behaviour, and men tend to conduct themselves in a dishonest way both at work and in their relationships with women. Upper middle-class people can sometimes be respectable when they are depicted as educated and willing to help others (for example peasant women or promising but poor men) to improve themselves through education and work. However, modern elites are most commonly depicted as those who unscrupulously take advantage of economic opportunities to the detriment of the working classes.

Eva Illouz characterises the American modern society as one in which emotions are a clearer part of life, in which consumption is a desired ability and closely connected to romance. Emotions are in fact part of the view of modernity that Swedish and Mexican films advance, even though they might not be so in the way Illouz describes.

In Swedish films, we observe a common narrative line characterised by the involvement of women in the work lives of their potential partners. Men’s upward mobility is often the result of the practical help they receive from their partners, or it results from their eagerness to form a family. Female workers often perform emotional work in addition to their expected work activities, which increases the chances of their potential partner to improve his work situation. In the workplace, emotional capital turns out to be essential for the attainment of work benefits for men and upward mobility for the couple.

In Mexican films the family orientation of both men and women is emphasised as one important element in the attainment of respectability and
worthiness. Women’s support of their potential partner and their contentment with the type of lifestyle he can offer results in the emotional capital that leads to respectability and a satisfactory outcome. But men also need to demonstrate devotion for their family and eagerness to, through their work, offer them the best life they can in order to be considered respectable men.

The life of consumption and entertainment that Illouz mentions as the basis of modern romance in America is not relevant in Mexican films.

Romantic love is an important element of the working-class ideology in both Swedish and Mexican films because it is a means through which change can be achieved; love is more commonly a female characteristic, even though both men and women benefit from it. A common explanation of the feminisation of love is related to the process of industrialisation and the emergence of the capitalist society that divided up the public and the private spheres and masculinised the former as it feminised the latter.

Moreover, love tends to bear characteristics of femininity ‘emphasising tenderness, powerlessness, and the expression of emotion’ 70 We observe in films what sociologist Francesca Cancian has argued in her research, that working-class women also perform their love duty through domesticity and the expression of affection, whereas the masculine style of love is connected to being the powerful provider. 71

Conclusion

This chapter has investigated the role of class in the relationship between work and romantic love. In order to approach this matter, I have focused on the question of class mobility by analysing to what extent upward mobility and class permanence were depicted in cinema. The occurrence of class mobility and class permanence as a consequence of work and romantic love, and the intertwining of these two, were appraised differently in different narrative lines common in Swedish and Mexican cinema. I used the concepts of respectability, worthiness and emotional capital in order to assess how class mobility was judged in films. Finally I commented on the relationship between class and modernity.

I began this chapter by mentioning the recurring American Dream motive in American films and arguing that it might be believed to have a bearing on other film cultures due to its popularity and stability in film production. However, Swedish and Mexican contexts might also offer alternative narratives that are more in line with the discourses circulating in both countries during the period this thesis concerns. Instead of the American Dream, the ideal of the People’s Home was relevant in Sweden, which entailed the shattering of

class differences and the creation of a society based on equality and solidarity. Previous research has also found a discourse of upwards mobility in the Swedish public debate and popular culture. Women, in particular, are represented in popular culture as upwardly mobile through marriage. This discourse has had consequences and has also been reproduced in the actual dreams and desires of young women from a lower social status (shop assistants, secretaries) who dreamed of marrying a wealthy man and attaining upward mobility.

In Mexico, the national project has often been put ahead of the class reconciliation project characteristic of Swedish socioeconomic policy. The process of modernisation and the changes in legislation did, however, to some extent improve the working and living situation of the working classes. Still, the same process of modernisation characterised by industrialisation and urbanisation allowed some groups and certain occupational sectors to attain upward mobility, while many others were marginalised in the informal economy. Moreover, the discourse of machismo and the permanence of the patriarchal structure excluded many women from real possibilities of class mobility. The polarisation of classes was more visible than before the Revolution.

The two main narratives observable in films were upward mobility and class permanence. I studied these two narratives by categorising the films as belonging to either one or the other narrative when the final outcome for the observed characters was either upward mobility or class permanence, regardless of whether they temporarily experienced one or the other during the development of the story.

The first important observation here was that an overwhelming majority of Swedish films fell into the first category, while the majority of Mexican films fell into the second category, even though there are examples of both outcomes in both Swedish and Mexican films.

Narratives on upward mobility were the most common in Swedish films, and these most frequently involved women attaining it through marriage and men through hard work. Men, however, often received practical help, emotional support and motivation from (potential) romantic partners in order to achieve upward mobility. In order for upward mobility to be a possibility for women, some preconditions needed to be met: women had to show their respectability through disinterestedness, and they needed to use their emotional capital constituted by a caring and supportive attitude and feminine charm. Female characters also had to prioritise romantic love and family life over work if they were to be rewarded with upward mobility through marriage. Men, in turn, had to be efficient, creative and hard-working. In the few cases in which upward mobility was achieved in the Mexican films of this selection, women had to demonstrate that they could content themselves with a lower socioeconomic status and be first and foremost family oriented and respectable through a morally upright behaviour. In the couple of cases that women achieved upward mobility, this occurred through marriage with respectable men.
Mexican films endorse class permanence as a desirable outcome. In many cases the narrative line presented women who explicitly sought upward mobility, but who during the story learned a lesson and realised that working-class men were better partners if they were hard-working and honest. These women were introduced as non-respectable because of their ambition and cold-heartedness, but when they showed that they actually possessed emotional capital and could use it in their interactions with potential romantic partners, they were able to acquire respectability and turn into worthy women through class permanence.

Non-respectable women were common characters in Swedish and Mexican films. These were upward-mobility seekers who, through untruthful love or illegitimate work, attempted to climb the social ladder. In several Swedish films in which these women appear, they were secondary characters, and they end up being punished in the story: they were usually contrasted with female protagonists who possessed the necessary emotional capital to succeed in love and achieve class mobility. There was, however, one common narrative line in Mexican films that Swedish films very often did not follow: the non-respectable woman could gain worthiness through redemption.

I have noted a typical storyline in Mexican films in which the female protagonist was presented as an ambitious woman seeking class transgression, often involved in illegitimate occupations and morally unacceptable behaviour. Commonly, this woman was depicted as non-respectable from the beginning to the end of the story because the society depicted in films very seldom forgives deviant behaviour. However, the film might still depict this woman as worthy when her behaviour can be justified for the audience. Thus, even though there might be a punishment at the end of the story — death being a recurrent one — women could demonstrate their worthiness if their actions were justified by self-sacrifice, motherhood, family-orientation or total helplessness (when life did not leave any other alternative, but they were good-hearted). In these cases the woman could redeem herself for the external viewer, even though the outcome of the story was still adverse for the offender.

In general, we can conclude that whereas the female characters in Swedish films (Karin, Rita, Hanne and Margit), who did not have ambitions of socioeconomic advancement, were rewarded with both love and an increased economic and social status, the Mexican characters, whose main goal was in fact to gain socioeconomic advancement, were rewarded, as soon as they changed their attitude, merely with love. Perla and Maria Teresa in the Mexican films assumed at the beginning of the stories that money and status would increase their respectability. However, by the end of the film they realised that love itself was enough. Films show that the respectability of working-class women could be attained when they changed their attitudes from eagerness for social advancement to acquiescence. Once they had found love, working-class women needed to make use of their emotional capital in order to have a successful household where love was abundant, but scarcity reigned.
The treatment of the socioeconomic classes in Swedish and Mexican films differs in important ways. Even though there are many similarities in terms of the values that characterise the working classes, their different position in society and the varying pre-eminence of their values matter for the ways in which romantic love and work interact in the cinema of each country.

In this analysis, I have also studied the values that films endorse and present as righteous. In the films from both countries, these are necessarily working-class and are more clearly delineated in films that depict class permanence. Swedish films depict women and men who subscribe to a working-class ideology by explicitly expressing their pride in work, standing up against upper-class lifestyles and articulating their work enjoyment. In these cases, work is highly related to modernity because the characters express an understanding of their work as contributing to the construction of a new society.

In these cases love can play a larger or lesser role. Whereas for Hanna (Hanna in High Society), her satisfaction at the end of the story was to be able to go back to being a domestic worker and also to be together with her beloved electrician Johansson, for Adrian (King’s Street), taking a job at a construction company helped him achieve self-satisfaction and get over his disappointment in love after he realised the woman he loved had fallen into prostitution.

In these cases, work is presented as a fundamental part of the characters’ lives, even more so than in films in which romantic love is presented as the main reward. In Mexican films righteous working-class values are held only by male workers, for even though women can belong to the working-class and work when needed, work pride is only expressed by men. Righteous working-class values are also here related to pride in work, but the characters express no concern with how their work contributes to the larger society; rather, they see their work as fundamental for the well-being of their families (or potential families). A good worker is a breadwinner who can provide for his family, even though he might at times need the help of his family and friends to make ends meet.

Moreover, part of the working-class ideology is that a worker should love his family, as opposed to the upper-classes who are depicted as unable to love or be loved. Love is thus expressed by his work, caring attitude, sobriety, eagerness to defend his family’s respectability and willingness to sacrifice individual success for the family’s well-being. In Mexican films, the emotional capital of men is emphasised as necessary for attaining a righteous working-class identity.

In this chapter, I also discussed the question of class and modernity and found several points of contact between these two concepts. One of these is related to the fact that working-class ideology is regarded as modern in Swedish films, regardless of whether working-class belonging is presented as an outcome. Poverty and deprivation are seen as a result of the process of modernisation in Mexican films, but being able to cope with them is, in turn, a sign of modernity.
The stereotype of the independent working woman appears often in Swedish films: Hanna and her friend Kristine who were proud domestic workers, Monika, (Hanna in High Society), Marta (King’s Street), Hanne and Madame Angèle (Pennies from Heaven), and Karin (Factory Girls) to name only some examples. Although at first glance these women cannot be considered the embodiment of the new woman of the turn of the century that authors like Elin Wägner dealt with in their literary work, they had modern character features. They can be regarded as modern chiefly because of their independence, their eagerness to engage in paid work and because they seemed to make their own life choices. One notion that accompanied the ‘new woman’ debate of the 1920s included the wife’s economic independence based on a companionate marriage (kamratäktenskap). However, what we can observe in Swedish films of this period is that this notion of modern marriage or modern love was not predominant, even if there is a hint of it in one of the films (Factory Girls). On the contrary, romantic love and marriage tended to put women in a domestic role.

Love is, in most Swedish films, usually the means through which people have access to or find their way back to the righteous working-class ideology. The power of love is depicted as life-changing. Love as a force that seeks the beloved one’s well-being, and happiness becomes the motivation to make him or her see the righteous path. Both romantic love and work are essential elements of respectability for the workers, but their ranking differs according to gender. Whereas for women romantic love often entails leaving work after marriage in order to take care of wifely duties at home (with some exceptions discussed above), for men, wage work remains or becomes the basis of their respectability within both private and public life.

In Swedish films we observe two discourses regarding class mobility. On the one hand we have what Sohl argues was for a long time the only way working-class women could climb in the social hierarchy: marriage. It is common in Swedish films that women embark on class journeys as a reward without having planned or expected it. Righteous femininity and honesty in love is rewarded with upward mobility. Class mobility through love presupposes women’s domesticity without paid work after marriage and men’s role as the sole breadwinner.

Romantic love has the important function of teaching characters the right relationship with class. Whenever women or men are dissatisfied with their class background or want to cling to upper-class lifestyles, romantic partners tend to be those who teach the deviant proper working-class values.

In Swedish films there are different approaches to class, one that is positive towards upward mobility and one that acknowledges working-class values as

modern and thus desirable. The happy ending of films is commonly achieved by giving a working woman a role as a middle-class housewife or by giving a middle or upper-class non-working woman a role as a worker.

Mexican films emphasize the question of poverty, deprivation and the poor’s lack of access to society’s institutions. Whereas in Swedish films modernity is signalled by the pre-eminence of working-class values and to some extent their way of living, in Mexican films the class struggle is a sign of modern times, not because class struggle was desirable, but because it seemed unavoidable in a modern society. Particularly in the cities, the contrast between the poor and the rich became a token of industrial advancement and capitalism.

Pepe’s (Pepe el Toro trilogy) great pride was being able to support his family on his own. We know, however, that his niece Chachita would take sporadic jobs in secret to contribute to the household’s expenses, which indicates that, despite Pepe’s attempt to be the sole breadwinner, he had many difficulties to make ends meet with his income. The point the film makes however is that a man is a better man or a ‘real man’ when he can provide economically for his beloved ones, and he cannot even call himself a man if he takes more than he gives (drinks the household resources away, uses drugs) or abandons those with fewer possibilities to make a sufficient income (women, children). Romantic love, as well as family and other emotional attachments, are always a motivation for work in the hegemonic masculinity of working-class men.

But love is not only a fundamental motivation for work in Mexican films. Love is also a means to achieve a type of respectability that is valid within and outside the working-class environment. Hard-working men are more cherished in the marriage market and more respected in their community. Ideal working-class masculinity, which is based on a middle-class family ideal, is attained by those men who respect their wives, that is, those who do not abuse them or force them to work.

According to films, work is for men the main source of worthiness, and this is attained through love thanks to the support of their female partner (emotional capital of women), while at the same time love constitutes a motivation for work (being a real man means supporting a family).

For women, work occupies different places in their lives depending on their class background and marital status. Single women in many cases need to contribute to the household income, while married women help out their husbands often temporarily when the financial situation becomes too difficult. However, films show that even for working-class women, family life and domesticity are the greatest attributes of righteous femininity. Working-class women, especially those at the lowest level of society, have very little capital to exchange. The most valuable asset of women in the marriage market is their respectability. Women’s righteous morality is, in Mexican films, a fundamental precondition to succeed in the love market. Beauty and wifely skills are characteristics that in many cases determine their success in romance and their worthiness. However, moral faults can easily ruin women’s symbolic capital.
What Mexican working classes always have in abundance according to film narratives, however, as opposed to the upper classes, is emotional capital. It is often commented upon in films that the poor might not have a penny, but they have love. This was expressed twice in Pepe el Toro trilogy, first by lawyer Montes (Rafael Alcayde) and then by Chachita’s rich grandmother, Doña Charito (Mimi Derba). Love can solve all the problems of the poor because through love, they find creativity and strength to fight adversity.

This chapter showed that the configuration of class differences matters in the relationship between work and romantic love. Which characters are deemed respectable and ultimately worthy at the end of the film stories has to do with class of belonging and gender, and the definitions of respectability and worthiness are in line with the economic, political and cultural context of the countries in which the films were produced, even though films did not always mirror social and political debates, but rather took stances that endorsed specific class- and gender-related discourses.
CHAPTER 6
The Dynamics of Work and Love

I was making good money dancing – better than most men’s salaries – but after we wed Taylor made me give it up. It wasn’t respectable, his mother told him. She was quite Victorian. We had to live with her for the first five years of our marriage, which was dreadful.1

The above quote is not from a film – it comes from an interview with Margaret Scott, a British woman born on the same day as Queen Elizabeth II. In conjunction with the Queen’s ninetieth birthday in 2016, her life was contrasted with that of several women who shared her birthday, but had led very different lives. These women had lived in a country at war. Margaret married when she was nineteen in the mid-1940s, but before that she worked as a tap dancer, entertaining the troops as part of the war effort. The way she describes her life and in particular the time she met her husband and got married could well fit the plot of one of the films analysed in this thesis. Margaret was a real woman and yet, like the women in my films, she saw her life affected by the specific conditions in which work and romantic love intertwined in her own national context, as well as by notions of respectability.

In this study I have examined the representation of the relationship between work and romantic love in modernity in Swedish and Mexican cinema from the period 1930 to 1955. I have been inspired by Eva Illouz’s claim that our understanding of modern society changes when we focus on emotions.

I sought to challenge the assumption that there is a clear-cut division between the public and the private spheres and that the former is characterised by the absence of emotions and the latter by an overflow of emotions. The private-public dichotomy has often been portrayed as reflecting one world of intimacy and family and another world of sociability and the market economy.2 This separation has, moreover, been considered a characteristic of the modern industrial society.

Illouz has also studied a period that she labels as modern and locates in the first decades of the twentieth century, but her study case is the United States. Although modernity in the United States matches timewise the processes of modernisation that Sweden and Mexico went through in the two-and-a-half decades I study, what modernity entails is culturally and historically bound.

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1 ‘We Were Born on the Same Day, but We’ve Led Very Different Lives’ (2016), p. 49.
I thus took on the challenge of verifying Illouz’s arguments with two other empirical examples.

Illouz claims that ‘the making of capitalism went hand in hand with the making of an intensely specialised emotional culture and that when we focus on this dimension of capitalism we may be in a position to uncover another order in the social organisation of capitalism.’

Hence, even though I assumed that traditional accounts of modernity that emphasise a separation of spheres might not necessarily describe the social phenomenon accurately, I realised that to be able to say something about modernity I needed to first investigate the connection between the economic and the emotional dimensions of life.

The aim of this study was therefore twofold: First, I sought to investigate the relationship between the economic and emotional dimensions of the social organisation of modernity; second, I wanted to shed light on how our understanding of modernity in Sweden and Mexico was modified as a consequence of bringing emotions into focus.

In order to approach these questions, I chose to narrow down the economic and emotional dimensions to particular economic and emotional phenomena: work and romantic love. Work stands for the economic dimension and romantic love stands for the emotional dimension. Work and romantic love, according to traditional views of modernity, belong to separate spheres and are not supposed to mix, but if Illouz’s claim is true, that is, if the boundaries between public and private and the economic and the emotional are blurred, then these two social and cultural phenomena should be more intertwined than has previously been assumed.

Approaching understandings of work and romantic love is a challenge. I have argued that cinema is an incomparable way to reach prevailing discourses on cultural practices, because as a popular mass cultural product, it reflects realities and experiences, but also desires, dreams, and expectations. Moreover, films are most frequently about romantic love, and since work is a predominant part of an individual’s life, it is also often depicted in film stories.

The aims of this thesis have been approached from three different angles. Firstly I studied the issue of spatiality and I focused particularly on domestic spaces in the city and countryside. The reason that spatiality was relevant is that I was interested in viewing whether a separation of the emotional and economic dimensions of life was in fact depicted in films. By observing how space was organised and how people moved and interacted within determined places, I sought to assess how films conceived the intertwining of economic and emotional practices – work and romantic love – which values were attributed to these practices, and what was the base on which these practices were judged. Furthermore, the city-countryside dichotomy has been commonly used to explain modernity, and I wanted to examine to what extent this dichotomy expressed understandings of modernity in films.

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Secondly, I have studied the question of gender. Illouz reminds us that the division between women and men is the most ‘fundamental division and distinction organising most societies around the world’ and that this is based on emotional cultures. It is therefore expected that emotional regimes be gender dependent. I thus expected the connection between work and romantic love to vary for women and men. I was particularly interested in finding out if and how modernity touched gender structures and to what extent these potential changes also modified the relationship between work and romantic love.

Thirdly I looked at the question of class. The process of modernisation entails changes in class structures; Beverly Skeggs argues that class relations have been reconfigured through different social periods, even though certain characteristics of the working classes have remained. One of the effects of modernity in class structures, which has been noted by sociologist Lynette Finch, is that the discursive construct of the modern family is set at the core of all definitions of the working class; the modern family, moreover, entails the middle-class behaviour of women. So class categories are dependent on historical contexts, and they produce real effects which are lived out on a daily basis; class is part of the process through which the category ‘woman’ (and certainly too ‘man’) is produced. Thus, the relationship between work and romantic love has a class basis that intertwines with gender.

In order to address work and romantic love in films and their relation to modernity, I have used the concepts of emotional capital, respectability and worthiness in order to map out how films judged the actions of the characters, and what kinds of messages films conveyed to audiences with regards to the relationship between work and romantic love.

Space

In the first empirical chapter of this thesis, I focused the analysis on how films spatially represented modernity. I presented an account of how domestic spaces in the city and countryside were depicted and in which ways films defined modern and non-modern spaces. I also sought to investigate how work and romantic love intertwined in the different spatial environments I observed in films and also how the use of space accounted for different characters’ respectability and worthiness.

The configuration of space, as well as the ways in which people moved around and interacted with others in determined spaces, revealed the values

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5 Talking about the British case Skeggs argues that ‘the working classes are still “massified” and marked as others in academic and popular representations where they appear as pathological.’ Skeggs (1997), p. 3.
and attitudes attributed to work and love practices. For example, the representation of domestic work in Swedish and in Mexican films differed in the ways in which workers were valued by their employers and the ways in which workers lived their romantic lives. These differences were clear through space. In Swedish films, workers were able to move around in private spaces; their work performance improved when their working conditions were better and their interactions with employers reinforced their status as (increasingly professionalised) workers; moreover, they were allowed to have a romantic life, to form a family and to change their occupation after marriage. Domestic workers in Mexican films moved within domestic environments not as workers but as household members, freely but maintaining a subordinated position. Domestic workers were depicted as motherly but unmarriageable. The presence of romantic partners was depicted as forbidden in the employer’s home; at the same time, the domestic worker was not allowed free time or a life outside of the workplace. The differences in the appraisal of work and the worker in Swedish and Mexican films were thus expressed through spatiality.

The analysis also showed that in the countryside, in both the Swedish and Mexican films of my selection, people were more genuine and more community-oriented. Female peasants in Mexican films, however, were, despite their pureness of heart and proneness to self-sacrifice, also in need of modernisation in order to increase their worthiness; whereas Swedish films showed that in moving to the countryside city girls found an improved satisfaction with life, romantic love and increased their worthiness.

These are only a couple of examples of how the analysis of space provided an understanding of the work and romantic love practices that enhanced or decreased emotional capital, respectability and worthiness, and how this dynamic was related to other dimensions such as gender and class.

I found that modernity was signalled in films through a variety of space-related motives. When looking at domestic settings, particularly in urban environments, it was common in both Swedish and Mexican films to see functionalist setups, a range of domestic appliances and novel-looking and uncluttered spatial arrangements in middle- and upper-class homes. In all cases I interpreted this aesthetic view as signalling modernity. However, the kind of people who inhabited domestic spaces and how they related to others and to their environment differed in Swedish and Mexican films.

In Swedish films I noted that through the depiction of the domestic worker as a professional whose role in the domestic sphere was one of home assistant as opposed to a ‘servant’, films expressed a stance on modernity based on the rationalisation of domestic work. This point is reinforced by the negative depiction of the upper-class snobbish housewife as holding a non-modern attitude towards work. Despite the fact that Swedish films tended to present domestic work as rationalised and professional, or at least more so than in a recent past, they also showed that paid work at home was not necessarily
devoid of romantic love: domestic workers could live out their romances in the homes where they worked.

Mexican films had a very different approach to domestic work. There were no references to work as a professional activity but, rather, domestic workers were usually depicted as low-status members of the household or family members. For domestic workers, romantic relationships were inadmissible and, even though they occurred and were depicted in films, they were imbued with secrecy and illegitimacy. The behaviour of domestic workers, as of other family members, was under the surveillance of the family patriarch. Domestic work in general had the status of an emotional, rather than economic occupation. Moreover, the spatial arrangement of the home in Mexican films showed that there was a strict hierarchy in the organisation of family life. To a larger extent than in Swedish films, Mexican films showed that men, in particular the heads of the households, had a determinant role in decision-making in matters that were usually the realm of the mistress of the house in Swedish films. The Mexican patriarch decided over the lives of the children, purchases of household items, courting practices of household members, etc. The hierarchical organisation of family life was visible in the organisation of domestic spaces.

Other domestic spatial arrangements visible in films that say something about modernity are the typically Swedish ‘one-room and kitchen apartments’ and ‘the lodger’. Swedish films showed that male and female single young workers tended to live in either small apartments or rented rooms as a temporary arrangement before marriage. One-room and kitchen apartments were characterised as particularly modern in films because they represented rationalised living conditions, even though the apartments themselves were not necessarily functionalistic. The lodger arrangement was not in itself depicted as modern, but the upwardly mobile worker was. In these cases, however, the domestic environments did not receive much attention in the stories; both the work and love lives of the young workers were predominantly played out in the public sphere. In Mexican films, even though these types of living arrangements were not commonly depicted, when they were, they showed how the domestic spaces displayed a disposition of gender and class hierarchies. Work and romantic love within domestic environments must follow a morally accepted spatial separation.

A spatial arrangement that was common in Mexican films depicting urban environments was the inner-city slum or vecindad. Films showed that modernity creates poverty and destitution, materialised in deprived living standards and overcrowding. Films about the lives of the poor, which were very common in this period, depicted housing conditions characterised by openness and the close connection between living and work spaces. It is in these domestic environments that the intertwinement between work and romantic love was most evident. When these types of living arrangements were depicted in Swedish films, they are characterised as non-modern and occupied by people who were explicitly opposed to the social changes that modernity had brought about.
Countryside environments were depicted differently in Swedish and Mexican films. In Swedish films there were two main discourses around the countryside: one that emphasised its desirable and modern characteristics and one that emphasised its non-modern features; sometimes both occurred in the same film. When the countryside is the setting for film stories, it was common that the narrative offered a contrast with the city as part of the plot, as when characters from the city (most commonly young women) arrived in the countryside and experienced rural life. In many cases, city people brought novel manners, fashion garments, new products, education, and more rational ways to do everyday chores (food conservation, for instance). Thus, in a way, city characters brought modernity with them to the countryside. However, there were also non-modern characters from the city, such as the snobbish housewife who treated rural workers with disdain. Rural workers often stood for modern attitudes towards democracy and equality, which are depicted as desirable traits. And these traits were modern inasmuch as they were necessary for the establishment and strengthening of a prosperous modern society.

In Swedish films we observed both well-off and modest rural households. Whereas in the former the living conditions were similar to those in the cities, in the latter the non-modern aesthetics and the lack of access to the comforts of modern society were emphasised. The lifestyle of rural workers was usually depicted as non-modern because of their limited connection to city ideas, education, fashion, products, etc., but regardless of whether their lifestyles were non-modern or the appearance of their home arrangements was outdated, their attitudes towards work and their unpretentious ways of relating to each other were modern and necessary to incorporate into the emerging new society. In the countryside, work, not only domestic work but also preparation for field work, the administration of the farm, etc., often occurred within the boundaries of the home; romantic love often occurred outside of the home in open spaces in natural surroundings. Thus, work and romantic love practices often shared the same spaces.

In Mexican films, the countryside was more decidedly depicted as a non-modern space, in which different levels of isolation could be found, which in turn determined the social status of the individuals who occupied those spaces. The poorest countryside dwellers lived and worked in the more isolated spaces. The gender division of labour was clear in Mexican films: men worked out in the fields, and women did so too sometimes, but they were mainly responsible for working at home with food preparation, clothes-making and mending, cleaning, caring for others, etc. However, the spatial organisation of work in the countryside was not straightforward. Just as in the urban vecindad, in the countryside the workplace could also be attached to the living spaces, and the living spaces could be open enough to allow the moral scrutiny of neighbours. The home was not always depicted as a private and intimate place. Moreover, the role of the community in the surveillance of the moral behaviour of its members and particularly women was highlighted.
Marriage was depicted as the only source of legitimacy for romantic practices, an institution zealously guarded by the community.

Modernity was embodied by educated well-off men, whereas non-modernity was personified in the illiterate rural woman who needed to be saved and educated. Some visual signs of non-modernity that were incontestably related to women were the ground level brazier, the ground level bed, and the bare-foot woman who made food touching the dough with her bare hands. The close contact between the woman and the ground that we observe in films indicated her status in the hierarchy; she was placed at the bottom of the gender and class hierarchy that reigned in the countryside. Therefore, these women were the foremost recipients of modernising ambitions, which they had access to mainly through love in film stories.

I demonstrated in this chapter that there is no such a thing as two separate spheres, one for the intimate and emotional life and one for rational work. Rather, the intimate and the public, as well as work and romantic love practices often occurred in the same place, though in different conditions, depending on spatial (and other) circumstances. I also showed that both city and countryside environments bore features of the modern and non-modern.

The democratic and egalitarian attitude of countryside people often stands for modernity in Swedish films, regardless of whether they brought their values to the cities or city people met such values in their encounter with the countryside. These attitudes were regarded as the basis of a working-class ideology that characterised modern Sweden in films. In Mexican films, the countryside was depicted as a non-modern place that bore the seeds of national identity, but needed to catch up with the rational modern urban society. The relationship between women and the land was depicted as constituting the traditional core of the rural lifestyle, but a non-modern one. The educated and well-off man then had the ability to bring modernity to the countryside and save women (and peasants in general) from backwardness. Romantic love was, in film narratives, a common way to learn about or attain modernity. Non-modern attitudes, practices and values were abandoned after romantic love showed the way towards modernity and individuals through love also found their right working role.

Gender

Previous research into gender and modernity in Sweden and Mexico during the period 1930 to 1955 emphasises the predominance of a gender contract based on middle-class ideals, which entailed that women were mainly responsible for the family and household while men were the breadwinners. However, particularly in the Mexican case, scholars have highlighted the relevance of class differences, which entailed that working-class women might not necessarily follow middle-class models of gender organisation of work.
Thus, since gender experiences appear to be defined by class, I chose to structure chapter four on gender, taking occupational differences into consideration. The aim of this chapter was to investigate the gendered patterns in the relationship between work and romantic love and the differing effects of this relationship on women and men. I also examined what these gender patterns say about the way films represented modernity. In order to approach these questions, I used the concepts of emotional capital, respectability and worthiness.

In this chapter I focused separately on female and male characters who had entrepreneurial or managerial occupations and those who were salaried employees, and observed how film stories depicted their relationships with work and romantic love. When considering higher status workers I demonstrated that films portrayed male and female characters differently.

Films commented on the entrepreneurial characters’ ability to combine their love and work lives. One of the possibilities that films advanced was the incompatibility of work and romantic love. For women this incompatibility was related to the working woman’s lack of emotional capital in both Swedish and Mexican films; moreover, their failure to attain love led to dissatisfaction and unworthiness. In contrast, male entrepreneurial workers who lacked a love life could still be depicted as respectable and self-contented. Loveless men were not common in Mexican films.

Films also presented cases in which work and romantic love were fully compatible for both women and men. This was the case for women in Mexican films when their entrepreneurial activities were justified – if the workers were heads of family and supported their household through their work, in the absence of a male breadwinner. This was also the case for most male workers in both Swedish and Mexican films, except mature managerial workers with an authoritarian approach to work.

A recurrent narrative line involved a young hard-working man who, thanks to his own efforts and the help of a romantic partner, attained an improvement in his work status. This man was, by the end of the story, depicted as content and worthy.

Female entrepreneurs or professional women were not recurrent characters in films, but when they were depicted, they often left their occupation when they encountered or accepted love in their lives. Women could gain respectability and worthiness when they accepted love as a priority in their lives or when their work was justified by their need to support themselves in the absence of a male partner. However, more often than not, high-status work was not a common, natural or desirable occupation for women.

In Swedish films, women tended to lose interest in a successful career when love arrived, whereas in Mexican films women kept working if they were depicted as ‘deserving,’ when their work was the basis for the sustenance of a family. Men, on the contrary, could be worthy as ‘only workers’, or gain worthiness by improving their work position, which they could do thanks to their
work abilities and the help of their romantic partners. One of the main distinctions, however, between Swedish and Mexican film stories when depicting these types of male workers was that Mexican characters tended to display a clearer role as moral pillars in their family, responsible for the preservation of a hierarchical gendered organisation in the household.

When depicting salaried employees, film stories were less concerned with the question of whether work and love were compatible. Rather, female and male employees were most commonly young and prone to seeking love with a view to family formation. The different narrative lines were more related to how love affected work practices and motivations or how work affected the abilities of individuals to find a proper partner. The question I posed in these cases was how romantic love affected work practices and motivations.

The main difference between how women and men in films experience the intertwining between work and romantic love is that they derive respectability and worthiness from different setups. When love arrived in the lives of female employees in Swedish films, the characters appeared to be ready to change their work role and enter into a wifely role instead. Even though most films stories do not go further than the couple’s engagement or their agreement to become a couple, sometimes the upcoming role as a housewife is implied (like in Pennies from Heaven when the protagonist is told that instead of getting a job she is to become a wife, or in The Department Store Girl when her partner offers the protagonist a ‘better position,’ meaning marriage). In either case, love entails happiness and worthiness for women as a reward for their proper use of emotional capital to support their partners and make them feel valued. Love could also lead women to revise their motivations to work or their outlooks on life.

Another storyline depicted female characters who, at the beginning of the story, were regarded as non-respectable because they were overly ambitious and attempted to attain social and economic benefits from untruthful romantic practices. These women, however, changed their outlooks on life and motivation when they found love, if they possessed emotional capital – which was often the case in Mexican films. If these women did not possess emotional capital, they ended up punished, being denied love and losing their chance to improve their socioeconomic position. When women found love, they commonly found moral self-improvement and gained respectability thanks to their partners or their own self-discovery derived from their truthful feelings, which allowed them to see that it was love that mattered the most. The self-improvement of men, also through love and the support of their partners, was, in turn, related to their work position.

In the films studied here, romantic love is constantly portrayed as a life-changing force for women; through love women find happiness, learn to adhere to proper gender roles, attain upward mobility, or find their life vocation. For men, love can also be life changing and a driving force to become
better workers and better men and to attain happiness. However, many male characters experienced little change in their life after their encounter with love.

In Swedish and Mexican films, men whose work life changed little after finding love were depicted as righteous and hard-working from the beginning, and as such they were expected to be valued for what they were. These men often had partners who had to learn that the working-class lifestyle was more respectable and worthier than the bourgeois one. Mexican films also tended to emphasise the fact that working-class people were not expected to change their work status or their socioeconomic position. So in many cases, men, prior to their romantic involvement, had a high sense of respectability and work pride and continued having it after they found love, which ‘only’ made them significantly happier.

Two features of the relationship between work and romantic love from a gender perspective were derived from the analysis in this chapter. One of them was the tendency of Mexican films to depict the participation of young women in paid work as a dangerous undertaking. Several films told stories in which young women ended up in life-threatening circumstances or losing their respectability as a consequence of their work choices or due to the fact that their paid work led to their presence in the public sphere. These women, who in films had occupations ranging from secretary to prostitute, tended to have thorny love relationships.

The outcomes varied. Either women were saved by men – and truthful romantic love allowed them to escape perils – or the very fact that they were out in the public sphere made them also more vulnerable to malicious men who hurt them and led them to lose respectability. This storyline is common in Mexican films and almost absent in Swedish ones.

Emotional capital was valued differently for women and men. Whereas for women a proneness to self-sacrifice and a caring and loving attitude were the basis of their emotional capital, for men an overly caring attitude and self-sacrifice towards their potential partner were depicted as a sign of weakness, and these traits were characteristic of a subordinated masculinity. Respectable men were expected to have emotional capital, but it had to be of the right sort. They had to prove that they could be caring fathers, family-oriented, relatively temperate (moderate drinking was acceptable and even depicted as a sign of masculinity as long as it did not affect the family’s wellbeing), non-violent towards their family, but able to exert moderate violence against those who posed a threat to the respectability and wellbeing of their families. In Mexican films, the emotional regimes that were expected to guide men’s actions are more visible than in Swedish films.

Another question that I studied in chapter four was the view of modernity that films advanced in terms of the relationship between work and romantic love from a gender perspective. I sought to answer the following question: Which gender structures are judged as modern and non-modern in films and what effect do they have on how romantic love and work interact?
As a general indication of how films approached the connection between modernity and gender, I can say that Swedish films depicted the modern gender structure as following the housewife ideal, in which women were primarily responsible for homemaking, and men for productive work outside of the household. However, in modern society, single women and men could attain self-sufficiency and cultivate a sense of individuality by educating themselves, working for pay and engaging in free-time activities and sports before they pursued a family-oriented life after marriage.

Mexican films on the contrary depicted modern society as one characterised by an increased range of work and entertainment opportunities for women and men, but this very feature was portrayed as threatening for women.

Thanks to the opening up of work opportunities in a modern society, women in Mexican films could contribute to the household income, which was necessary when they were heads of households, belonged to a middle-class family struggling to keep up with their accustomed living standard or belonged to an impoverished household and needed to supplement a male income. Film stories expressed anxieties derived from the fact that women had a greater ability to participate in the labour market and be outside of the domestic sphere. Often films told stories of women getting into trouble and losing their respectability due to their poor judgements as a result of having too many liberties and too little family and male supervision.

In Swedish films, the question of consumption is also related to modernity. Women were depicted as prone to consume personal and luxury items. Fashionable garments and entertainment were often depicted as products of modernity that many women desired. When the desire for consumption led to a behaviour that endorsed untruthful romantic practices, it was considered non-respectable and was punished, but otherwise consumption was acceptable and could even be part of the reward for a righteous use of emotional capital. In Mexican films, on the contrary, even if the consumption of luxury, personal goods and entertainment was also depicted as a possibility in modern society, it was regarded as a non-respectable practice. Consumption was depicted as one of the undesirable effects of modern society.

Modern love in both Swedish and Mexican films was necessarily devoid of economic motivations, and it was expected to lead to marriage and family formation.

Films also set the framework for proper gender roles for men in modern society. Swedish films recurrently depicted the mature strict manager who had built a fortune through hard work, but whose management style was being questioned by workers and younger managers. This character embodied non-modernity and one of his main features was, in fact, his lack of romantic love and family attachments. Modern masculinity in Swedish films was represented by the class-conscious worker, who could be either the hard working and productive manual worker, or the class-conscious democratic and benevolent manager. In either case modern masculinity was based on class.
Modern masculinity in Mexican films, in turn, was based, apart from class, on the family role of men. Modern men in Mexican films were hard-working and productive workers, able to support their families (which in many cases could also mean an extended family unit constituted by not only wife and children but also parents and parents-in-law), but they were also the moral pillars of the family and good fathers. In the modern Mexican society, the patriarchal family unit was dwindling. Thus, modern men had to know how to balance their moral authority and retain the foundations of gender structures, while at the same time acknowledging that patriarchy was being redefined. A non-modern man was a strict patriarch or a poor provider. In Mexican films, the depiction of revised gender structures contributed to provide stability in the face of the unsettling effects of modernity.

Class

The interaction between work and romantic love is imbued with considerations of class. In chapter five I focused on the question of class mobility in order to assess the possible outcomes of the intertwine ment between work and romantic love. I observed the necessary conditions film stories established for the possibilities of upward mobility and class permanence. One point of departure in this analysis was the comparison of Swedish and Mexican film narratives to the commonplace of upward mobility of the American Dream discourse in American films, because it is a recognisable and recurrent narrative in cinema and other popular culture products.

However, in the Swedish and Mexican context, I asserted that the American Dream might not be the most predominant film discourse. In Sweden, the creation of the People’s Home and the increased advancement opportunities for the working class might generate a discourse in which class mobility was seen as possible and to some extent desirable, and the question would then be, under which conditions and how far would the dream go? In Mexico, upward mobility was possible for certain sectors, while others saw their lives characterised by inescapable pauperisation. So the question here was whether films presented upward mobility as a desirable dream and under which circumstances this could be achieved.

One of the most striking results in this chapter was that there is a clear and conclusive difference between Swedish and Mexican films regarding how they approach the question of class. Upward mobility was a significantly more common outcome in Swedish film narratives than it was in Mexican films. The typical ‘marrying the boss (or boss-to-be)’ motif is one example of a narrative that recurred in Swedish films. In order for women to reach this outcome, however, they needed to, first, not expect it and second, demonstrate their respectability, which entailed being modest, humble and having a feminine charm. Upward mobility for women was attained through love; that
is, by establishing a relationship with a view to marriage with men from a higher class or who were in the process of socioeconomic advancement. Even in those cases in which women sought socioeconomic advancement through work, love contributed to making it possible and to making women aware of the fact that love itself and family life were more important than work.

Upward mobility was depicted as an aspiration for certain women both in Swedish and Mexican films. In these cases the stories showed a variety of outcomes. In the Swedish films of my selection, it was more common that women with class-climbing aspirations were secondary characters who used their feminine charms in order to conquer well-off men. These women were usually contrasted with righteous female protagonists who demonstrated their truthful love and were unassuming. The most common outcome for these women was punishment, which ranged from ending up lonely to prosecution or death. In Swedish film *King’s Street*, we observed a storyline that was unique in the sense that the ambitious woman was the protagonist and not a secondary character. The tragedy genre, moreover, was not as common in Swedish as in Mexican films, hence the uniqueness of this film narrative. In all these cases, however, class ambition was punished because women did not possess the necessary emotional capital to change their ways, so they were depicted as non-respectable and unworthy.

Nonetheless, despite the fact that upward mobility was more common in Swedish than in Mexican films, it happened more often in the latter that women’s class ambition was forgiven and women were able to be worthy despite their loss of respectability, either through their acceptance of class permanence or a family-oriented justification for their behaviour.

The most common class-related outcome in Mexican films for women was class permanence. Respectable women were those who were contented with their class belonging and did not expect to experience a change in that respect. However, as I hinted at above, many film characters in Mexican films were in fact ambitious women seeking class advancement; these women were often film protagonists. The main difference from Swedish films is that in Mexican films women could gain worthiness through redemption. In fact, a common narrative line was that women, over the course of the story, learned to accept their class and thus gain respectability and worthiness. Other common narrative line entailed that women could justify their non-respectable ambitions and actions when it turned out that they had family-related goals or lacked social capital in the form of a family or partner support. In all of these cases, worthiness was achieved when women demonstrated that romantic love and family attachments were their priority.

So far I have referred to the relationship of women to class mobility, but male characters also had a specific class-related relationship to work and romantic love. Mexican and Swedish film stories also have differing class outcomes for men. The upward mobility of men was the most common outcome of Swedish stories; socioeconomic advancement was depicted as a reward for
the respectable, and respectability was achieved through hard work, honesty and class consciousness. Moreover, upward mobility was motivated and practically aided by romantic partners or potential partners. Thus, for men, upward mobility was a reward that was based on their respectability and made possible thanks to love.

In Mexican films, on the contrary, just as in the case of female characters, men did not generally achieve upward mobility. Rather, the challenge for men in the story was to teach women that even though they could not offer class advancement, what they could offer was good enough to make them happy and form a respectable family. However, men still had to put efforts into their own self-improvement. Even though they did not necessarily need to become rich in order to find love, they needed to show work ambition, intelligence, industriousness, honesty, family orientation and affection. Men in Mexican films, however, also received help from romantic partners in achieving self-improvement, usually in the form of emotional support, but also through a contribution to increasing the household income or helping out in other ways when the economic situation of the household was constrained.

Although it was uncommon, some Swedish films also presented stories of class permanence. Most commonly, when class permanence occurred, the stories involved characters from the countryside. In these films the main argument was that there was respectability and pride in work, and that a working-class lifestyle was more desirable than an upper-class one. When class permanence was presented as a desirable outcome, the worker was usually contrasted to upper-class characters, who were characterised as arrogant, idle and crooked.

In Mexican films, criticism of the upper-classes was also a common feature, and apart from the fact that wealthy characters were portrayed as dishonourable and deceitful, they were also unable to love and be loved.

A remarkable feature of how class was depicted in films is that even though we observe a very different way to approach class mobility in Swedish and Mexican films and despite the fact that outcomes and rewards for righteous behaviour varied, in both cases we observe an endorsement of working-class values. In both Swedish and Mexican films, the working classes were respectable; in Swedish films, we can also observe that a member of the upper-classes with a working-class identity could be just as worthy as the class-conscious manual worker. Women, however, were more prone than men to aspire to class mobility, and their respectability was demonstrated by their ability to renounce those class-related ambitions.

Class-related values are connected to views of modernity in films. Just as the American Dream in American popular culture discourses was related to a view that class mobility was a real possibility in modern American society, particular views on class mobility were also part of modernity discourses in Sweden and Mexico.

In both Swedish and Mexican films, stories endorsed an appreciation of the working class. In Swedish films the working classes were depicted as modern
because the workers could achieve success and attain an improved standard of living. Thanks to the opportunities that modern societies offer, the working classes, who were in many cases active seekers of progress and development, could contribute to building a more productive and fairer society. Thus, being working class was a source of respectability in Swedish films, even though workers could leave their class of origin. Another source of pride was to be a democratic manager able to contribute to the wellbeing of the workers.

In Mexican films, the relationship between the working classes and modernity had a very different basis. The working class in Mexican films can be more generally defined as ‘the poor’, so they could be salaried employees, informal workers or even business owners whose work did not yield enough profits to improve their socioeconomic position. The poor were depicted in films as being a direct consequence of the modern society. The changes that modernisation brought about appeared to bring benefits for some, but not necessarily for those whose work was threatened by new economic activities and market dynamics, such as the peasants, certain tradesmen (carpenters), domestic workers, badly paid shop assistants and even skilled workers (mechanics) whose qualifications were not backed by a degree or a network of contacts in the industrial sector.

Modernity in Mexican films was depicted as synonymous with class polarisation and an increased social and economic inequality. In such circumstances, even though the working classes had little economic, social and cultural capital to advance in the social hierarchy, they had their class pride, their respectability and love. Working class women, in addition, had to demonstrate that they could navigate the dangers of modern society in such a way that they retained their respectability. So, for women, modernity was not only characterised by inequality and class polarisation, but also by an increased risk of falling into moral traps that could directly affect their ability to maintain their respectability and worthiness.

Understanding the Results: The Dynamics of Work and Romantic Love

The point of departure of this thesis was the assumption that work and romantic love, which in this case stand for an economic and an emotional dimension of life, respectively, are intertwined practices. Examining how they interacted with each other in a context of modernity allowed us to better understand the relationship between emotions and the economy, as well as the process of modernisation in the two national cases this thesis deals with.

I have shown throughout the analysis that work and romantic love do not belong to separate spheres of life. I demonstrated that work and romantic practices take place in common spaces, both in domestic and in public spheres.
and in city and countryside environments; that both men and women depicted in films had specific roles within emotional regimes and work structures; and that class differences and class attachments governed how individuals related to work and romantic love. However, the differences between the two national cases were significant enough to conclude that cultural and contextual specificities matter, even though in both cases it was clear that emotions were at the centre of economic and social life.

What did bringing emotions to the fore unveil about the economy? Eva Illouz finds a culture of emotions taking a place in social life through the emergence of a language of psychology, originated in Freudian psychoanalysis but diffused by popular culture and popular science products such as advice literature, cinema, magazines and the like. The new language of emotions that psychology made available and the norms it established moved into new places such as the corporation. In this sense, Illouz sees an increasing presence of emotionality and methods to deal with emotions in the realm of economic action.

In this thesis I am looking at one of these vehicles of emotional norms: film. By looking at how films portray the role of emotions in social life, I am approaching the new ways in which economic practices were made sense of. Unlike Illouz, I am not particularly interested in how the culture of emotions was used in the workplace, but, rather, how films illustrated different points of contact between emotions and the economy or romantic love and work, including workplaces but also more intimate spheres.

Some traditional narratives of modernity can be questioned when highlighting the relationship between work and romantic love:

One of the common narratives of modern industrial society is related to the gender separation of spheres. About one century before the period I study, Alexis de Toqueville noted a separation of male and female spheres in the portrayal of young middle-class women. Historians of the nineteenth and twentieth century have also relied on the metaphor of the separate spheres to describe the role of women and highlight their subordination in society. In a capitalist society, it has been argued, ‘the patriarchal variant of separate spheres was not congruent with capitalist social relations’ so the position of women had the potential to be enhanced by loosening the patriarchal control on property. Thus, the breakup of the patriarchal economy destabilised the traditional version of separate spheres. The notion of separate spheres was observed as a consequence of the changes brought about by the modern industrial society, which then were loosened by capitalism. In this study I noted that films allude to this discourse, even though it was not a focal point of analysis.

The analysis in this thesis showed that domestic spaces are not necessarily female-coded, just as public spaces are not necessarily male-coded. Rather, a number of conditions determine the gender identity of spatiality. For example,

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in Swedish films, it was common to observe how housewives were in charge of domestic work and all decisions concerning the home and family, but at the same time we could also see that the idle housewife who domineered over domestic workers would eventually be replaced by the domestically-oriented housewife who would take over work herself, but who also could work outside of the household. In Mexican films, on the contrary, we observed that part of the role of the head of the household was in fact to decide over domestic issues related to the family and the organisation of housework. The roles of women and men within the confines of the home were moreover related to their civil and family status, as well as their work status. So their role was defined according to whether they were single, dating, living in the parental home, or whether they were wives, husbands, salaried workers, etc.; and most decisively if they belonged to the Swedish or Mexican culture. Thus, we learned that the individual’s emotional attachments as well as their work status determined their role in the domestic and the public spheres.

Another notion traditionally connected to modernity and capitalism is that of rationalisation. Rationalisation, Anthony Giddens argues, can be expressed in technology or the organisation of human activities. Rationality has been placed in opposition to emotion; and the process of modernisation of Western societies has often been equalled to a process of rationalisation. But by arguing that emotions are at the core of modernity and by showing empirical proof, we can begin examining novel understandings of modernity. In this thesis I looked at how films portrayed the rationalisation of work both at home and in the workplace. The results were illuminating in this respect. I noted that both Swedish and Mexican films depicted functionalist homes, kitchen appliances, cars, mechanical workshops, factories, trains, and many other motifs that hinted at a rational mode of production and lifestyle. Nevertheless, even the most rational spaces and the most rationally-inclined people were surrounded by indications of emotionality.

In chapter three on spatiality and domesticity, we observed, among other things, how domestic workers moved around in domestic spaces and how they related to other people as well as to objects and physical spaces. In Swedish films, I showed that the question of the professionalisation of work was visible and highlighted in film stories. The work of domestic workers was more explicitly appreciated, and this appreciation of work was a sign of the changing attitudes of non-modern mistresses of the house. Also, despite the presence of time and work-saving appliances, work itself was not necessarily more rationalised, nor did people spend less time in the kitchen. Modern devices could also be depicted as unnecessary and undesirable for the diligent worker. But even in other workplaces such as the factory and the mechanical workshop, the worker’s mind was not necessarily entirely focused on productivity.

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10 Williams (1998).
and the improvement of work practices; it was also interested in a romantic partner that made the worker’s life happy inside and outside the workplace. So emotions were a natural and inseparable part of the rational worker’s everyday life and his or her work practices and motivations.

But we also saw a different story. In Mexican films, for example, the professional domestic worker was in fact completely absent in the stories. In turn, the domestic worker was not depicted as a worker, but as a family member, if one with a subordinated status within the family. Some of the responsibilities of the worker were emotional tasks, which ranged from mothering to wifely, caring activities. In Mexican films, domestic work was not depicted as rational and the spatial organisation of the household had a patriarchal structure. The ability of different members of the household to make decisions or to be in certain domestic places was related not only to their gender and family status, but also to the emotional relationship they had with the head of the household. The male breadwinner decided which productive and reproductive occupations other household members could have, but he also had to fulfil his proper role. He was expected to exert control over female sexuality, secure women’s morality and make sure family members adhered to their socially assigned roles; additionally, the modern head of household also had to know when to loosen his patriarchal grip. Within the confines of the home, Mexican films showed, spaces do not necessarily follow a rational organisation; rather, the setup of rooms and how they are used follow emotional and status-based arrangements.

Related to the question of rationality, the concept of individualism is also closely connected to modernity. Individualism ‘connotes a dynamic capitalist economic rationality – utilitarian, competitive, and profit maximizing.’ So when a society is characterised as individualist within the framework of modernity, it means that it is one in which the capitalist economic rationality is imbued with values and practices that enhance the predominant economic system. Individualism can be defined as a modern Western phenomenon, and also here the United States has been the country often named as representing the embodiment of individualism. In this analysis, I have not specifically searched for signs of individualism, but it has been hinted at as part of the attempt to understand the representation of modernity in films.

One of the arguments that I brought up in the study was that, in Swedish films, the democratic attitude of rural workers and the solidary stance of workers were features of the type of modernity films advanced. In this sense, it was more a community feeling of fraternity that defined the modern, rather than an individualist approach to self-improvement or social progress. Caring about fellow-workers and the community were, moreover, attitudes that could be learned and adopted thanks to the support of a more community-oriented

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romantic partner when a particular character had at the beginning of the story a more individualistic stance.

In Mexican films, too, class solidarity appeared as a fundamental strategy of survival for the poor. The family, the neighbourhood, the community and the nation were often presented as important groups of belonging that not only allowed the least privileged to create economic networks of survival, but also entailed networks of moral and emotional support in order to demonstrate respectability. Individually oriented people, on the contrary, could be economically successful, but emotionally poor and thus unworthy. Community ties, which in many cases were strengthened through marriage and romantic love relationships, were fundamental for work practices. The contribution of all family members to the income of the family – which was on many occasions necessary due to the difficulties of accommodating to the male sole breadwinner model – was only possible thanks to the variety of connections that a social network allowed. Therefore, the question of individuality as part of modernity was not only absent in the Swedish and Mexican societies depicted in the films I studied, it was also not necessarily desirable.

Another question that often comes up when discussing modernity is the extent to which gender structures change in a society. The question of gender, which has permeated the whole study and received special attention in chapter four, offered illuminating results. Commonly expressed ideas about the relationship between gender and modernity are that capitalist development loosens the patriarchal grip on women; creates the stereotype of the consuming woman; and that it allows a larger freedom of movement for women, including a broader ability to participate in the labour market.13 Swedish and Mexican films give a picture of the roles attributed to women and men in their respective societies and how they relate to work and romantic love practices.

I began the analysis of gender structures in Swedish films by presenting Yvonne Hirdman’s theory of the gender contract, noting that she identifies the predominance of a housewife contract in the period of study of this thesis. The housewife contract entails that a household is composed of a male breadwinner and a female housemaker. I also mentioned that other gender questions were discussed during this period, such as the right of married women to work for pay and the reorganisation and rationalisation of domestic work.

The representation of gender structures in society in Swedish films did not yield unexpected results. I noted that the most common outcome of Swedish films was in fact in line with the housewife contract. The reward that film characters received, after demonstrating their respectability and after going through a series of difficulties, was in fact to be part of a household unit formed by a male breadwinner and a female housewife. Nevertheless, this was not the only possible outcome. Films also showed stories in which both members of the household took paid work, and the female partner found con-

13 For questions of modernity and consumption see, for example, Felski (2009).
tentment in productive activities. This was more often the case in countryside environments than in the cities, and women were in these cases enchanted by a life near nature. There were also cases in which gender roles did not adapt to the housewife contract; either women worked for pay and did not have a male partner even though they were at marriageable age or past marriage age, or men were also workers and, many times, successful ones, but did not have a family to support. These individuals were usually secondary characters and often their fate stood in contrast with the protagonists’ who were rewarded with their places in households that accommodated to the housewife contract. Yet, the characters who did not adapt to the gender contract were depicted as respectable, even if they could not reach as much happiness and contentment as the protagonists did.

In the Mexican case, I mentioned as a point of context that the period of study of this thesis was characterised by being an unsettling time for gender structures. After the Mexican Revolution, authorities, opinion builders and social reformers attempted to create a type of gender contract in which women and men could easily find their place and recognise their role at the same time as the transformations society was going through were acknowledged. Historian Mary Kay Vaughan talks about a process of the ‘modernisation of patriarchy’ when she studies the period 1940–1960, particularly making reference to the countryside. According to Vaughan, rural women were taught to be modern through the introduction of notions of hygiene and secularisation, modern medicine, etc., as well as the introduction of new technologies for food preparation (like the corn mill), electricity, running water, etc. Two competing ideals of the Mexican woman were the self-sacrificing martyr and the modernist patriot. Men, in turn, struggled between a masculinity based on the power and violence of the macho or what can be considered a ‘hyper-virility, [which was] Mexico’s defensive response to global inferiority and to its history of colonialism’ and the role of family protector.

Macías-González and Rubenstein argue that popular understandings of gender reflected variability, recognised racial and class differences in gender ideology and saw gender as fluid, permeable and in negotiation. Films, in fact, reflected this variability and showed that class differences were crucial for the appraisal of gender. The housewife contract that was predominant in the Swedish public debate as well as in cinema was present in Mexican cinema too, but it was not prevalent there. The fact that more working-class than upper-class women were depicted in Mexican cinema meant that the most common outcome was that women remained in their class of origin and did

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14 Vaughan (2000).
not acquire a housewifely role without paid work. Still, the role of women was primarily regarded as domestically oriented.

However, Mexican films showed that the patriarchal role of men encompassed the organisation of domestic activities and decisions about the work and love life of family members. Films showed that gender roles, which to a large extent decided work roles and the participation of individuals in the economy, were clearly determined by emotional circumstances, mainly the development of romantic love relationships.

The most interesting feature of the results of the gender analysis in this thesis is that there are large differences between the Swedish and Mexican cases. Despite the fact that the general framework of the gender structure does not vary greatly, we can see that deviations from gender norms are treated differently. In Swedish films, women and men who do not conform to the gender contract can still be respectable and worthy, even if not entirely happy. In Mexican films, on the contrary, we observe more cases of women (more so than men) who deviate from the feminine ideal, and when they do, they are depicted as non-respectable, despite the fact that they can still be worthy if this deviation is justifiable because of their family role or the absence of a male saviour. Moreover, Mexican films tend to emphasise the moral dangers of modern society, particularly for women. Mexican films to a much greater extent than Swedish films present concerns about the inability of modern society to control women’s sexual behaviour. Women’s work in the public sphere in Mexican films is equalled to women’s increased sexual freedom, whereas in Swedish films, this is depicted as a desirable occupation that gives single women the opportunity to be self-sufficient and consume the products that modern society has to offer. In both cases, however, marriage is the vehicle towards a better life; either through an improved life-standard as in Swedish films, or a safe and protected existence as in Mexican films.

This study demonstrated that work and romantic love are two intertwined practices whose representation in films shows that emotions and the economy are inseparable and essential parts of modernity, even if modernity in fact means something different and has different features in different historical contexts. This study offered a more complete understanding of what modernity entailed in Mexico and Sweden, two countries that went through similar processes of transformation in parallel, based on two very different sets of historical conditions.
La economía y las emociones han sido consideradas por un largo tiempo dos dimensiones distintas y separadas de la vida social. Sin embargo, en esta tesis, busco demostrar que esto no es así, sino que en realidad estas dos dimensiones están entrelazadas. Es decir, no podemos aislar los fenómenos económicos de su dimensión emocional y viceversa. En esta tesis me enfoco en el periodo que va de 1930 a 1955 y el cual designo como la era de la modernidad en Suecia y México.

El concepto de modernidad tiene una relevancia especial en este estudio porque una de las premisas de las que parto es que, en un periodo de profundos cambios sociales, económicos y culturales, la relación entre lo económico y lo emocional es particularmente visible. De acuerdo a la socióloga Eva Illouz, quien estudia la modernidad en Estados Unidos y la localiza en un periodo similar al de este estudio, es imposible entender los cambios que ocurrieron en este periodo si no ponemos atención a su dimensión emocional. Illouz caracteriza este periodo como uno de capitalismo de consumo y sostiene que el amor romántico se ha convertido en un elemento esencial en la sociedad de mercado de masas.

Así como Illouz, yo también estoy interesada en examinar de qué manera el estudio de la conexión entre lo económico y lo emocional afecta nuestra comprensión del periodo de la modernidad. En esta tesis me enfoco en dos fenómenos específicos que representan la dimensión económica y emocional respectivamente: el trabajo y el amor romántico. La razón por la cual he seleccionado estos dos fenómenos es que ambos constituyen una parte central de la vida de la gran mayoría de las personas en la sociedad occidental. El trabajo asalariado, así como el matrimonio, son dos instituciones que han sido el foco de atención en las discusiones relacionadas con la formación del estado moderno (el estado de bienestar en Suecia y el estado posrevolucionario en México). Sin embargo, en ese estudio, el trabajo y el amor romántico se extienden más allá de tales instituciones, pues también me interesa el trabajo no asalariado y las nociones de amor romántico que no necesariamente culminan en matrimonio, pero que tienen el potencial de hacerlo.
Esta tesis es un estudio comparativo de dos países: Suecia y México. La comparación es una parte fundamental del estudio porque a través del contraste entre dos casos nacionales es posible observar cuáles son los factores que intervienen en la relación entre amor y trabajo. Dado que las nociones de trabajo y amor romántico están basadas en el contexto histórico y la cultura, es de esperarse que la manera en que interactúan varíe en dos países. Estas variaciones así como las similitudes que se identifiquen nos ayudarán a entender las condiciones en las cuales la interacción economía y emociones ocurre.

Para aproximarnos a la relación entre el trabajo y el amor romántico y observar de qué manera su estudio nos permite entender mejor la modernidad en Suecia y México, utilizo los conceptos teóricos: capital emocional (emotional capital), respetabilidad (respectability) y dignidad (worthiness). Adicionalmente, esta tesis está estructurada en tres dimensiones: espacialidad y domesticidad, género, y clase. Cada dimensión corresponde a un capítulo empírico en este estudio, y en cada uno de los capítulos utilizo los tres conceptos teóricos para examinar la manera en la que el cine representa la relación entre trabajo y amor romántico en Suecia y México.

En el capítulo 3, titulado Domesticidades urbanas y rurales, me enfoco en la cuestión espacial, principalmente en los espacios domésticos dentro de la dicotomía ciudad-campo. La modernidad de principios del siglo veinte, caracterizada por el surgimiento de una sociedad industrial capitalista, tuvo consecuencias en la distribución de la población en zonas urbanas y rurales pero también en la manera en la que estos espacios fueron percibidos y valorados de acuerdo a su relación con “lo moderno” y lo “no moderno.” Por lo tanto, resulta relevante observar cómo los diferentes espacios son representados en el cine. En este capítulo examino dos cuestiones: por un lado me interesa observar qué tipo de espacios muestran las películas como modernos o no modernos, y por otro lado, busco identificar qué tipo de configuraciones espaciales muestran las películas, cómo representan el uso del espacio y la manera en la que los personajes se mueven dentro de los diferentes espacios e interactúan con otras personas y objetos. A partir de la observación de tales interacciones busco identificar las prácticas que las narrativas cinematográficas muestran como respetables y dignas. La manera en la que los personajes usan el espacio habla mucho de cómo estos son juzgados. El análisis en este capítulo demostró que en el cine sueco el campo es muchas veces representado como moderno, no necesariamente debido a su configuración espacial sino porque ciertos valores atribuidos a la gente del campo son presentados como necesarios para la construcción de la sociedad moderna, por ejemplo, las actitudes democráticas, igualitarias y colectivas, que se contrastan con el elitismo de las clases altas urbanas. Sin embargo, el campo también puede ser representado como un espacio no-moderno y a su vez monótono e inmóvil, del cual las nuevas generaciones quieren escapar por una vida más excitante en la ciudad. Una de las maneras en las que el cine representa la relación entre trabajo y amor romántico en este contexto es a través de la narrativa recurrente.
de la joven que se muda de la ciudad al campo donde encuentra el amor real y la posibilidad de trabajar en un ambiente genuino, lejos de las pretensiones de la sociedad de consumo. Otro tema en el que me enfoqué en este capítulo es de los trabajadores domésticos. Las películas muestran casos en los que trabajadores domésticos provenientes del campo llegan a la ciudad y se encuentran con nuevas prácticas tanto laborales como románticas, y viceversa. Las películas muestran que en ambientes urbanos hay una mayor tendencia hacia la profesionalización del trabajo doméstico, aunque esto no impide que los trabajadores tengan también una vida romántica en sus lugares de trabajo. En las ciudades es más común ver la representación del trabajo doméstico como algo temporal, pues cuando el trabajador ha encontrado una pareja estable, deja esta ocupación por un papel de ama de casa, en el caso de las mujeres, o un trabajo de mayor estatus en el caso de los hombres. Los trabajadores en el campo, por el contrario, no presentan un cambio de ocupación sino que continúan con su idílica vida cerca de la naturaleza y rodeados de amor y un sentimiento de comunidad. En el cine mexicano, es común observar el contraste entre el campo y la ciudad. Generalmente, el campo es representado como un lugar no-moderno, pero, como en el cine sueco, hay ciertos atributos de la gente del campo que son juzgados como necesarios para la supervivencia en la vida urbana moderna, por ejemplo, la solidaridad de clases y los valores revolucionarios. Sin embargo, la gente del campo frecuentemente es representada como ignorante e irracional y como un obstáculo para la modernidad. También aquí podemos observar personajes que se mudan del campo a la ciudad y viceversa, llevando consigo valores y actitudes de su lugar de origen a su nuevo medio. Comúnmente, el cine mexicano muestra diferencias sociales en ambos contextos. Una línea narrativa que las películas siguen es la caracterizada por la relación entre una mujer rural pobre pero respetable y pura de corazón y un hombre educado y de mayor estatus socioeconómico. El hombre representa la modernidad y ayuda a la mujer a superarse. La mujer en estos casos, aprende a utilizar instrumentos de la sociedad moderna en su vida cotidiana (duerme en cama en vez de petate, usa zapatos, confía en la medicina en vez del curandero, etc.) pero también aprende a trabajar y a usar sus habilidades en el mercado laboral para poder mantenerse a sí misma y a su familia en caso de necesitarlo. El cine mexicano de esta época también representa frecuentemente medios urbanos, en particular el de las clases menos privilegiadas. La representación de la vecindad es común y en ella podemos observar la esfera del hogar, la cual, en vez de caracterizarse por su privacidad, es más bien representada como una esfera pública. Las vecindades en el cine se caracterizan por su naturaleza abierta, por la cercana conexión entre sus habitantes y la fuerza de las redes sociales. El lugar de trabajo es representado físicamente cerca del hogar o dentro del hogar, en el caso de las personas que trabajan en su casa (costureras, lavanderas, etc.). Relaciones románticas así como disputas familiares ocurren a la vista de todos, incluso si ocurren en espacios domésticos. Pero esto implica también que cuando hay
problemas laborales, tanto la pareja como los vecinos y los amigos pueden intervenir y ayudar a quien se encuentre en aprietos. La ciudad moderna en el cine se representa en el modo de vida de las vecindades y en las desigualdades sociales que son visibles en los espacios domésticos. Modernidad parece ser sinónimo de pobreza y desigualdad, y por tanto, las configuraciones espaciales del hogar y del trabajo requieren una cercanía tal que permita la solidaridad y por tanto la supervivencia de los pobres. Estos son algunos de los temas que trato en este capítulo y concluyo mostrando que las configuraciones espaciales hablan mucho de la manera en la que el cine sueco y mexicano representan la modernidad y las reacciones ante los cambios que ésta trae.

En el capítulo 4, titulado *Trabajadores respetables y parejas felices: un análisis de género*, estudio la manera en la que las películas representan el papel del género en la relación entre trabajo y amor romántico. Mi objetivo es examinar si la conexión trabajo- amor romántico sigue patrones de género y en tal caso, cómo estos patrones se relacionan con la modernidad. En este capítulo analicé dos categorías de trabajadores: la primera es la de trabajadores profesionales o emprendedores, donde incluí a aquellos con una ocupación calificada como profesional, aquellos que ocupan puestos gerenciales o son dueños de sus propios negocios; la segunda categoría incluye empleados asalariados sin funciones gerenciales o son trabajadores de manera separada. Analicé trabajadoras y trabajadores de manera separada.

Entre los resultados del análisis encontré que hay una diferencia importante en cómo hombres y mujeres son representados en el cine como trabajadores. Por ejemplo, en el cine sueco, un personaje recurrente es el hombre maduro, gerente de una empresa, con un estilo gerencial bastante autoritario, a punto de retirarse. Este personaje es comúnmente representado sin pareja romántica. El gerente es generalmente sólo representado en su lugar de trabajo y no es su medio doméstico. Sin embargo, éste suele ser un personaje secundario que va a ser sustituido por un joven con una actitud democrática hacia sus empleados y cuya vida amorosa se encuentra en el centro de la historia. Mujeres en puestos gerenciales o profesionales, en el cine sueco, también son representadas sin pareja romántica. En estos casos, tanto hombres como mujeres son representados como respetables en su sociedad, pero no necesariamente felices. En el caso de las mujeres, el contraste entre la mujer que tiene éxito en los negocios pero falla en el amor y la mujer que tiene éxito en el amor aunque no en el trabajo, es bastante marcado. Una mujer que falla en el amor en el cine sueco no necesariamente pierde su dignidad o su respetabilidad pero no logra la felicidad total.

En el cine mexicano podemos observar una variedad de relaciones entre amor y trabajo así como una variedad de consecuencias. Las mujeres que tienen éxito en los negocios o buscan una carrera profesional generalmente tienen dificultades para encontrar amor romántico. Sin embargo, las historias presentan diferentes posibilidades. Mujeres que buscan una carrera al principio de la historia pero cambian sus prioridades y aprenden que el amor es
más importante pueden ser recompensadas con una vida amorosa, felicidad y respetabilidad. Pero también están los casos en los que el éxito en la vida laboral es presentado como respetable; esto es en aquellos casos en los que la mujer tiene una justificación emocional para el trabajo, por ejemplo, cuando es la jefa de familia o necesita contribuir al ingreso familiar. En estos casos, el éxito en el trabajo no representa un obstáculo para el amor.

Uno de los puntos interesantes que pude observar en este análisis es que las películas muestran actitudes diferentes hacia el trabajo femenino en el cine sueco y el mexicano. Mientras que en el cine sueco, muchas mujeres cambian su ocupación después de encontrar amor y muchos hombres logran un avance en su vida laboral gracias a la ayuda de su pareja romántica, en el cine mexicano vemos que es más común que tanto mujeres como hombres mantengan su ocupación original, pero el desenlace de la historia muestra que ambos adquieren respetabilidad y una vida más feliz después de encontrar una pareja estable. El cine mexicano, a diferencia del sueco, presenta el tema de las mujeres trabajadoras como un peligro para estabilidad de la estructura de género y la moralidad de la sociedad mexicana moderna. Las mujeres trabajadoras, particularmente aquellas de clase media, que gracias a las oportunidades laborales que se les presentan pueden estar en la esfera pública, ir a lugares de esparcimiento y estar en contacto con hombres de diferentes clases sociales, son representadas en peligro de perder su respetabilidad. Problemas sociales como el consumo de alcohol, el crimen, la prostitución, el sexo premarital y los embarazos no deseados son presentados en el cine como las principales amenazas a la respetabilidad de las mujeres trabajadoras. El cine muestra que el trabajo femenino, principalmente el de mujeres jóvenes de la clase media, representa un peligro, debido a la falta de supervisión familiar. Este tema está prácticamente ausente en el cine sueco. Sin embargo, el tema de la prostitución aparece, aunque no es tan común como en el cine mexicano, y éste se muestra como consecuencia de la sociedad moderna y de los inadecuados juicios de las mujeres trabajadoras y no necesariamente como consecuencia de la falta de supervisión familiar.

El capítulo 4, titulado Las dinámicas de clase tiene como objetivo investigar el papel de la clase en la relación entre trabajo y amor romántico. Además, investigo cómo el papel de la clase en esta relación refleja nociones de modernidad en el cine. La aproximación que hago a la clase es a través del tema de movilidad social. Por tanto, investigo cuáles son las posibles interacciones que ocurren en la conexión trabajo y amor romántico y concretamente analizo en qué medida la movilidad social es posible como resultado de tales interacciones. De tal manera, busco responder si la movilidad social es posible en las historias filmicas, si tal movilidad tiene un efecto en la respetabilidad y dignidad de los personajes y en qué medida ésta refleja la modernidad.

Este capítulo está organizado de manera temática y presento líneas narrativas recurrentes en las películas que componen la selección de esta tesis. Dos temas son centrales en este capítulo: movilidad social y permanencia de clase.
Dentro de estos temas podemos encontrar una variedad de líneas narrativas y los resultados más interesantes son los siguientes. El cine sueco y el mexicano tratan el tema de clase de una manera muy distinta. Mientras que en el cine sueco analizado en esta tesis es mucho más común observar historias de ascenso social, en el cine mexicano, por el contrario, la narrativa más común es la de la permanencia de clase. En la gran mayoría de las historias de cine sueco podemos ver cómo el ascenso social ocurre a través del trabajo, en el caso de los hombres, y el matrimonio en el caso de las mujeres. Los hombres suelen obtener mejores trabajos gracias a sus propios méritos pero también comúnmente, gracias a la ayuda y a la motivación de sus parejas amorosas. Por tanto, la pareja suele, al final de la historia, obtener como recompensa amor y la posibilidad de escalar socialmente. En el cine mexicano, por el contrario, es más común que las mujeres busquen avance socioeconómico a través de una pareja romántica (aunque en ocasiones, también a través de sus propios méritos en el trabajo), pero el ascenso social no es posible, pues es juzgado como no respetable. Por el contrario, la recompensa llega solamente si las mujeres aceptan que el amor es más importante que el estatus socioeconómico, y sólo entonces logran conquistar el amor y ser felices. De hecho, hombres y mujeres pertenecientes a la clase alta suelen ser representados como infelices e incapaces de amar y ser amados.

Otra marcada diferencia entre las historias fílmicas suecas y mexicanas durante este periodo es que aunque la ambición es vista como poco respetable e indigna en el cine de ambos países, el cine mexicano suele dar una mayor libertad a los personajes femeninos de reivindicarse y recuperar su dignidad si sus acciones son justificadas. La ambición y la búsqueda de una más alta posición socioeconómica puede estar justificada por la maternidad, o por la necesidad de la mujer de abrirse camino en la sociedad a falta de una familia y una pareja que provea por ella. En el cine sueco, es más común observar mujeres cuya ambición es presentada como un apetito individual de dinero y posición social. En tales casos, estas mujeres que generalmente son personajes secundarios, reciben un castigo al final de la historia, y terminan sin amor y sin avance socioeconómico.

Este capítulo muestra que el cine sueco y el mexicano tienen una postura muy distinta en relación a la movilidad social. La movilidad social aparece como más fácilmente alcanzable en la sociedad sueca representada en su cine, que en la mexicana. Además ésta es juzgada de maneras muy distintas en el cine de ambos países.

En el capítulo 6 presento un resumen de los resultados a los que llegué en los capítulos empíricos así como una reflexión en torno a la manera en que el estudio de la interacción entre el trabajo y el amor romántico modifican nuestro entendimiento de la modernidad en Suecia y México.

Estudiosos de la modernidad (Eva Illouz, Anthony Giddens, entre otros) han conectado este periodo con las nociones de racionalidad, individualismo y las transformaciones de las estructuras de género. Sin embargo, en este es-
tudio hemos observado que dichas nociones tienen una relación más compleja con el proceso de modernización de lo que se ha asumido. Tanto las películas suecas como las mexicanas se presentan espacios racionales en términos estéticos. Es posible observar casas funcionalistas, novedosos utensilios de cocina, coches, talleres mecánicos, fábricas, trenes, entre otros motivos que sugieren modos de producción y estilos de vida racionales. Sin embargo, incluso los espacios más racionales y los personajes con estilos de vida más orientados a la tecnología y racionalidad, están, en las historias, ligados a las emociones. Los personajes que observamos en las historias utilizan la tecnología y los espacios racionales sólo parcialmente para incrementar su productividad o mejorar su rendimiento en el trabajo o en la vida cotidiana; en realidad los personajes interactúan con los espacios y objetos racionales siguiendo sus inclinaciones emocionales, y en particular sus motivaciones románticas.

De la misma manera, aunque la noción de individualismo ha sido identificada con la modernidad, las historias en el cine sueco y mexicano muestran que en realidad, la modernidad que se observa en ambos países en este periodo, destaca la solidaridad y el sentimiento de comunidad como características necesarias para el surgimiento de una sociedad moderna pero también como estrategia de sobrevivencia en un medio ambiente que amenaza el bienestar de ciertos sectores sociales (los pobres o la clase trabajadora). Así, comportamientos individualistas son castigados o considerados poco dignos en las sociedades modernas que el cine representa.

Discursos sobre la modernidad también se han caracterizado por considerar los cambios en las estructuras de género como liberadores y como favorables hacia las mujeres. Sin embargo, el cine sueco muestra que el contrato de género que la historiadora Yvonne Hirdman ha identificado en Suecia en el periodo 1930 a 1955 basado en la unidad familiar formada por un hombre proveedor y una mujer a cargo del cuidado del hogar, está presente en el cine. Este contrato de género no es particularmente liberador de la mujer, puesto que ésta está encajonada en un papel determinado del cual resulta difícil desviarse sin que haya consecuencias para su respetabilidad y dignidad. En las películas mexicanas, aunque es posible ver que el control patriarcal estricto muchas veces es cuestionado y al final de la historia puede verse relajado, en realidad, la mayoría de las historias presentan una continuidad de la estructura patriarcal. En muchas ocasiones las mujeres son representadas como propensas a tomar demasiadas libertades, las cuales resultan perjudiciales para su respetabilidad y dignidad. Por tanto, aunque las películas pueden presentar una modernidad caracterizada por una mayor libertad de maniobra de las mujeres, mayores posibilidades de moverse en espacios públicos y una mayor participación en el mercado laboral, hay también una continuidad importante en las estructuras de género que encasillan a hombres y mujeres en roles predeterminados.

Finalmente, en este estudio he demostrado que el trabajo y el amor romántico son dos prácticas entrelazadas, cuya representación en el cine muestra que las emociones y la economía son inseparables y al mismo tiempo son
una parte central de la modernidad – incluso si la modernidad tiene signifi-
cados distintos en diferentes contextos históricos. Este estudio ofrece una
perspectiva, si no completamente distinta, al menos más compleja sobre la
modernidad en Suecia y en México, dos países que atravesaron un proceso de
transformación de manera paralela pero que claramente tuvieron condiciones
históricas muy distintas.
Appendix

In this appendix I present a synopsis of each of the films I analyse in this thesis. This list is ordered chronologically. The year indicates when the film had its premiere in the country where it was produced (either Sweden or Mexico) unless otherwise stated. The first title is the original, in its original language, followed by an English translation in parentheses. If the production company released the film in an English-speaking country and provided a title in English, I use this translation; otherwise the translation is my own.

Swedish films

**Ungkarlsparadiset** (Bachelor’s Paradise) (1931)
Director: Matts A. Stenström
Film Production Company: AB Irefilm
Synopsis
The film tells the story of a leisure weekend enjoyed by several workers of a company, taking place at the summer cottage of the company director Ernst Brock (Gunnar Bohman), or, as he calls it, his bachelor’s paradise. The director’s son, Charlie (Ernst Larsson), is dating Secretary Jeanette (Cissy May). Even though Ernst very firmly indicates that he wants a male-only environment, Charlie convinces him that a feminine touch is needed in order to help out with the food and tend to the guests and persuades Ernst to take Jeanette on the trip. At the cottage Jeanette makes sure the men are pleased, but she also asks them to help her out a bit, since she is all alone with all the work. The guests, in an attempt to please her and flirt with her, offer to help. Jeanette flirts with one of the executives, Berger (Engelbert Bertel-Nordström), and he responds. When Charlie finds them alone in the woods, he, upset, hits Berger, but he also gets mad at Jeanette and puts some distance between them. One evening, during a walk in the woods, some of the guests find a group of dancers and their choreographer who had gotten lost and are sitting around a bonfire. The men take them to Ernst’s house. When Ernst sees them coming, he is not very happy because the women disturb the quietness of the place. However, the rest of the guests, except for Jeanette, are happy to have beautiful girls around. The girls, thankful, entertain the men with their dances. One of the dancers in the group is sweet Maj (Maj Gillberg), a quiet and modest girl who steals Charlie’s and Ernst’s heart. Jealous, Jeanette complains to Charlie
and accuses him of falling in love with a fallen woman. Maj overhears the conversation, and before she can hear how Charlie defends her, she runs away and tries to leave the island on a little boat. The boat tips over, but Charlie is there to save her. Maj and Charlie reconcile.

**Kärlek och kassabrist** (Love and Cash Deficit) (1932)
Director: Gustaf Molander
Film Production Company: Film AB Minerva
Synopsis
This film takes place during Walpurgis day and May day and tells the story of some of the workers at the company, Importbolaget. Secretary Margit (Tutta Rolf) is in love with accountant Bengt (Edvin Adolphson). They both live as lodgers in the home of doorman Andersson (Sigurd Wallén), who works at the same company, and his wife, Augusta (Dagmar Ebbesen). During Walpurgis day, the company is subject to an audit, and there are rumours about shady practices at the company. All the attention and suspicions are directed towards the accountant. On the same day, the director of the company, Gyllén (Thor Modéen), summons a meeting with other company directors and proposes to form a support network. All the company directors are aware of the fact that stealing money from the company is a common practice among them, so they realise they need to guarantee they will have each other’s backs if one of them were to get into trouble. They decide to form an association, which they call The Association of Poor Embezzlers. Bengt has a girlfriend called Svea (Ruth Stevens), who has expensive tastes and tries to persuade Bengt to misappropriate some money to buy her a fur coat. At the Walpurgis Night party, Bengt and Svea break up because he realises that his girlfriend is only interested in money. After that he spends a delightful night with his colleague Margit. The suspicions of embezzlement grow stronger when Bengt asks Andersson to buy him a train ticket to Copenhagen. At that moment Andersson and Margit believe he wants to flee. Andersson and Margit put all their savings together in the company’s cash box to cover for the money they believe Bengt might have stolen. However, it turns out that Bengt has not embezzled any money; instead the police find out that Gyllén is the culprit. On board the train to Copenhagen, Bengt finds Margit, who was ready to flee with him, as well as Andersson and Augusta, who were taking vacation for the first time. At that moment, Margit and Andersson learn that Bengt is about to take over the management of the company and Bengt and Margit become a couple.

**Vi som går köksvägen** (Servants’ Entrance) (1932)
Director: Gustaf Molander
Film Production Company: AB Bild & Ton, A/S Oslo Talefilm
Synopsis
Helga (Tutta Bentzen) is the daughter of wealthy director Breder (Mathias Taube), who owns a motorcycle company. Helga wants to experience new
adventures in Paris, but her father, claiming that his company is not doing very well, rejects her request. Helga’s friends claim that she would not be able to do domestic work, so they bet on it and Helga decides to take a position as a domestic worker. After a failed job at a home in the city, Helga finds a position in the countryside with Beck (Carl Barcklind), the owner of a farm called Vingar. In this house, Helga gets acquainted with all the staff, her colleagues Laura (Karin Swanström) and Olga (Rut Holm), farmhand Anders (Siegfried Fischer) and driver Frigård (Bengt Djurberg). Helga is attracted to Frigård, who is a very smart and sympathetic young man and who dedicates all his free time to learning about engines and working on an invention to increase the speed of motorcycles. He is able to do so thanks to the support of his boss, Beck, who allows him to work at a garage on the farm. Helga is very different from her colleagues. She has special abilities, as she can speak English and French, is good at gymnastics and has a very different way of dressing and taking care of her appearance. Frigård, in fact, suspects that she might not be who she says she is and is therefore reluctant to court her. However, Helga manages to charm Frigård and reassure him, so they start dating after a romantic stroll in the fields. One day, there is a party at the house and one of Helga’s rich friends is there and recognises her. Frigård happens to overhear a conversation between them and he believes that Helga is only using him to have fun, so he leaves Vingar. Frigård’s new motorcycle is ready, and he is able to compete in a race against Breder’s motorcycle, which has a strong position in the market. Frigård wins the race and Breder offers him a job. After Frigård signs the employment contract, he finds out who Helga is. Frigård and Helga get back together; this time, however, Frigård has improved his work position and he is satisfied with it. He can then be together with Helga, despite the fact that she actually comes from a wealthy background.

Pojkarna på Storholmen (The Storholmen Brothers) (1932)
Director: Sigurd Wallén
Film Production Company: Film AB Minerva
Synopsis
The Sjölund family, composed of an old fisherman, August (Sigurd Wallén), his wife Kristin (Emmy Albiin) and their young daughter Aina (Birgit Tengroth), live in Lillholmen. They are about to receive a young girl, Sonja (Margit Manstad), from Stockholm, whose tutor, worried about the dangers an orphan girl can be exposed to in the city, decides to send her to a foster family out on a calm island in Stockholm’s archipelago. On the neighbouring island, Storholmen, the brothers Gunnar (Bengt Djurberg) and Ivar (Sture Lagerwall) live with their mother, widow Andersson (Anna Olin) and their cousin Sixten (Fridolf Rhudin), who is engaged to Amalia (Maja Cederborgh). On the day of Sonja’s arrival, Ivar picks her up at the harbour and takes her to Lillholmen. On the way there, Ivar and Sonja have a romantic moment of intimacy, but before they kiss, Sonja asks Ivar to hurry up and take her to her foster family.
After this, Ivar becomes obsessed with Sonja. Aina is in love with Ivar, and before Sonja’s arrival he had courted her. However, as soon as the Storholmen boys meet Sonja, they all become enthralled by her charm. At the beginning Aina is jealous of Sonja, but they soon become good friends. Sonja understands that Aina and Ivar should be together, so she rejects Ivar’s courtship and tries to convince him to court Aina instead. Sonja falls in love with Gunnar, but he finds it difficult to court her, knowing that Ivar and Sixten are after her. Sonja and Gunnar get together at the end of the story, as do Aina and Ivar. Sixten and Amalia also reconcile. Sonja will stay on Storholmen for good.

Hemslavinnor (Home Slaves) (1933)
Home Slaves is the second version of the theatre play Den ny Husassistent (The New House Assistant), from 1920 by Axel Frische and Christian Bogø. The film was made in three versions: first a silent film made with the name Hemslavinnor (Home Slaves) in 1923, then a second version with the same name in 1933 and a third version called Vi Hemslavinnor (We Home Slaves) in 1942.
Director: Ragnar Widestedt
Film Production Company: AB Nordisk Filmproduktion, Nordisk Film A/S
Synopsis
The Rosenqvist family has problems keeping their domestic workers because Mrs. Klara (Anna Widforss) is far too demanding and too unpleasant towards them. When the story begins, young Greta (Isa Quensel) is employed in the home, and she is having trouble with her employer Klara because Greta is always willing to stand up for herself. Greta is dismissed after locking Klara in the closet, insulting the son of the family and generally taking too long to do as she is told, especially when her fiancé is in the house visiting her. After Greta is dismissed, she immediately finds a new job at the Bergmans, a couple who are friends of the Rosenqvists. The Rosenqvist family then employs Kristina (Dagmar Ebbesen), a mature woman from the countryside. It turns out that Greta is Palle Rosenqvist’s (Valdemar Dalquist) daughter; he had fathered her out of wedlock when he was young. He actually knows this, and this is the reason he employed her in the first place. Now that Palle has found his daughter, he wants to care for her, but he cannot prevent his wife from dismissing her. Still, he keeps an eye on her while she works at their friends’ home. One day Kristina realises that Palle is her long-lost love, the man with whom she had a child, whom she had to give up for adoption. Klara finds this out when Kristina confesses to her, after she is caught kissing a photo of young Palle that she found in her employers’ bedroom. Thus, it turns out that Greta is Kristina’s and Palle’s daughter. Greta dreams of marrying her fiancé and having a home of her own, and especially of having all the material comforts she had been denied all her life. When Greta finds out about her biological parents, she becomes very happy to finally meet her family − she is particularly pleased about the fact that her father is such a wealthy man. Klara Rosenqvist becomes
very upset when all this comes to light and threatens to leave her husband. Palle says that she can leave, but only with the few things she brought into the marriage. Klara is thus left without much option, so she decides to stay together with Palle. Kristina helps them reconcile. At the end of the film, it is clear that Greta and Palle will help Kristina have a comfortable life so that she will not need to work anymore. Greta will marry her boyfriend and have a house of her own.

**Flickan från varuhuset** *(The Department Store Girl) (1933)*
Director: Torsten Lundqvist, Anders Henrikson
Film Production Company: AB Irefilm

**Synopsis**
Ann-Marie (Brita Appelgren) works at a big department store, in the men’s outfit section. One day, Erik Lindström (Nils Ohlin), the son of the store director, comes back home from abroad where he has spent some years studying. Before he goes to see his father at his office, he meets Ann-Marie in the store, and, finding her appealing, he flirts with her, acting as a customer. Afterwards, he visits his father and convinces him to let him work incognito in the men’s outfit section so he can learn the trade. Erik’s father accepts and Erik starts working next to Ann-Marie. At the beginning, Ann-Marie is annoyed at Erik’s flirtatiousness and the special treatment she feels he is getting at work. In an advertisement activity consisting of a bathing suit parade at a fancy recreational centre in Stockholm, a suitor of Ann-Marie, together with a female associate, plan of a robbery of the store. At the same time, the marketing director and Erik’s cousin, who also trained abroad, plan an advertising campaign consisting of a mock robbery. These two things happen at the same time the following evening. However, Ann-Marie is able to stop the real robbery and lock the culprits up. That night, Ann-Marie and Erik find themselves on their own in the store and have a romantic date with dance and dinner. By the end of the night, the director arrives in the store and finds out about all that happened. He also finds out that his son has become engaged to Ann-Marie, whom he welcomes to the family. Only then does Ann-Marie realise that Erik is the son of the manager and that he will take over his father’s position.

**Kvinnorna kring Larsson** *(The Women around Larsson) (1934)*
Director: Schamyl Bauman
Film Production Company: AB Europa Film

**Synopsis**
Larsson (Edvard Persson) is a shoemaker who works at his home-workshop and lives with his sister. In the neighbourhood, composed of a few houses connected by an inner yard, there also lives a photographer and a blacksmith with his daughter. Larsson is a lazy worker. Even though he is always complaining about modern machines stripping him of his livelihood, he spends more time resting than completing his jobs. Larsson has a difficult relationship with his
bossy sister, so one day he decides to put an advert in the newspaper, requesting a domestic worker. Mia (Dagmar Ebbesen) responds the advert, and after the interview she gets the job, as she manages to captivate Larsson. Larsson’s sister gets upset about this and leaves the house. Mia is accommodating and kind towards Larsson, so after a while he proposes and they get married soon after. Blacksmith Jansson (Gideon Wahlberg) finds an unconscious young man in the coal barge and takes him home. The young man calls himself Arne (Sture Lagerwall) and stays in their home for some time. Arne starts working with Jansson and falls in love with his daughter Birgit (Birgit Rosengren). It turns out that Arne is the son of a rich man, but they had fallen out when Arne borrowed money from him and went to work on a ship. After a few misunderstandings between Arne and Birgit, they get together at the end and Arne reconciles with his father. As for Larsson, his life as a married man is not as he thought it would be. Mia stops doing domestic work and makes Larsson do everything in their home. Moreover, Mia tells Larsson that she has a son and that he will come live with them soon. Larsson then considers a divorce. Larsson reconciles with his sister, who in turn, finds love with the photographer from the neighbourhood.

Flickor på fabrik (Factory Girls) (1935)
Director: Sölve Cederstrand
Film Production Company: AB Europa Films
Synopsis
Karin (Birgit Rosengren) is one of the many people employed at a lamp factory in Stockholm. Most of her co-workers in the same division are women, but the factory has many male employees as well. Karin lives in a working-class apartment, in the same building as the leader of the labour union, a widower with a small child. Karin is a very enthusiastic activist in the workers’ question. One day, Harry (Fritiof Billquist), the son of the company director, comes back to Sweden after years of studies abroad, and before he takes over the company, which is the wish of his father, he requests to be allowed to work incognito as a regular worker. He also wants to be able to live in a working-class area and get to know the employees better. His father believes this is a crazy idea, but cannot discourage him, so Harry starts in the company as a regular manual worker. When Harry goes to see an apartment to rent, he meets Karin and as he becomes attracted to her he decides right away to take the apartment. Karin and Harry start seeing each other often, both at work and at home, and they fall in love. Harry confesses his love, but Karin rejects him because she says that love is incompatible with the workers’ struggle and she has already decided about her priorities. Karin lives with her brother Björn (Helge Hagerman), and they have promised each other they will never get married because the workers’ struggle is more important. Björn meets Harry’s sister Margit (Karin Ekelund), and they fall in love. Björn decides very soon to give love a chance and does not place much importance on the promise he made with
Karin. After a while, Karin realises that her love is greater than anything else, so she accepts Harry’s proposal of marriage. A conflict arises when one of the workers, who is in love with Karin, tells her that Harry is a liar, that he is the director’s son and is using her to spy on them. Karin believes him and breaks off the engagement. Harry takes over the director’s position and accepts all of the demands of the labour union. Soon after, however, Karin decides that she wants to be with Harry, even though she thinks he is a traitor. So Karin and Harry get back together before Karin realises that Harry is not a traitor, but instead is in favour of the workers’ cause.

**Fröken blir piga** (Lady Turns Maid) (1936)
Director: Ivar Johansson
Film Production Company: AB Sveriges Biografägares Distributionsbyrå
Synopsis
Alva Rosengren (Marianne Löfgren) is a young girl newly graduated as a domestic science teacher. She finds out about a maid position in the countryside, which she is eager to take. She believes that life in the countryside will do her good, so she convinces her reluctant parents to let her take the job during the summer. Alva takes the name Anna and lies about her background when she introduces herself as the new maid at Karl-Axel Allard’s (Ernst Eklund) farm. At the farm there is another maid, called Hildegard (Carin Swensson); they divide the tasks so that Hildegard will take care of spadework and the care of big animals, while Anna will take care of the kitchen and the care of smaller animals. Arthur Lundquist (Sten Lindgren) is a truck driver who also does chores at the farm regularly. Hildergard is in love with Arthur, but Arthur falls in love with Anna. This love triangle creates conflicts between the characters, but Anna helps Hildegard get Arthur’s attention. One day, Karl-Axel’s brother and his sister in law, Laura (Hjördis Petterson), come to his farm to spend some days there. Laura is authoritarian and uncongenial towards the farm workers, especially Hildegard. Moreover, she abuses her position as a guest, bossing around and consuming more food than she is offered. She even mistreats Hildegard when she considers her to be insolent. The conflicts between the arrogant upper-class woman and the modest workers are a central part in the plot. By the end of the story, Anna gets a job offer as a teacher in the city. She knows she is supposed to take it because her time at the farm is almost over, but she is so happy there that she does not want to leave. It is not only the fact that she enjoys country life that makes her sad about leaving, she has also fallen in love with Karl-Axel. The boss has fallen in love with Anna, or Alva, as he has at this point revealed that he knows who she was. Karl-Axel proposes to Alva and she accepts. She, then, can stay at the farm for good.
**Han, hon och pengarna** (He, She and the Money) (1936)
Director: Anders Henrikson
Film Production Company: AB Svensk Filmindustri
Synopsis
Göran (Håkan Westergren) is an upper-class brat, used to spending his life partying, gambling and out in nightclubs with his equally-minded girlfriend Karin (Ruth Stevens). One day Göran is summoned to hear about an inheritance he is entitled to (one million kronor plus shares in a publishing house) on the condition that he takes over the management the business, which his uncle owned, increases the profits by one quarter of a million kronor in one year and marries his girlfriend Karin. The female protagonist of the film is Rita Perkins (Kirsten Heiberg), a very qualified secretary with high work motivation. Göran starts working, not knowing anything about the business, but learning the trade thanks to his co-workers and more specifically thanks to Rita. The magazines that the company publishes become more and more successful due to the good ideas of the workers and the good quality of the work. Karin is, during the same year, dating the CEO of the company in secret, a man who is defrauding the publishing house. By the end of the one-year-period, Rita and Göran have become a good team and have fallen in love with each other. Göran has learned all about the work, and the company has reached the required profits; the only thing left that Göran must do to get the inheritance is to marry Karin. However, he decides to break up with Karin because he realises that he does not love her. Subsequently, he declares his love to Rita, and even though he would have no money and no work, he is sure that his ability to work would be enough to start all over again. The situation gets complicated when the CEO tries to trick Göran, but Rita uncovers a fraud the CEO committed and frees Göran from all trouble. At the end, the lawyer finds a clause in the will that says that Göran does not necessarily need to marry Karin, so after all Göran can have the money, the company and still be able to marry Rita.

**Familjen Andersson** (The Andersson Family) (1937)
Director: Sigurd Wallén
Film Production Company: AB Svensk Talfilm
Synopsis
Kalle Andersson (Sigurd Wallén) and his wife Maja (Elsa Carlsson) run a modest laundry business. Working in the laundry work are a couple of employees, their daughter Elsa (Inga-Bodil Vetterlund) and Kalle’s mother. Kalle and Maja are very different from each other. Whereas Kalle is happy with their modest life and is satisfied with simple joys, such as the football pools, Maja dreams about belonging to the upper class, having a nice big house and frequenting high society. Maja’s sister is married to a wealthy man, and she has the sort of life Maja desires. One day they are invited to Maja’s sister’s house and there the Anderssons are offered a business opportunity. Maja’s brother-in-law Garpe (Ragnar Widestedt) and Consul Bruhn (Arthur Fischer)
offer to let them to take over a modern laundry business. Even though to do this they need to invest all their savings, Maja accepts because she sees in this business the opportunity to climb up socially. Kalle is reluctant, however, and after a fight Kalle and Maja decide to get a divorce and Maja will start the new business on her own. It turns out that the whole business was a scam and the modern laundry was in fact indebted and badly managed. Kalle wins at the football pools and is able to pay off his wife’s debts after she has been insulted by her new rich friends. Maja regrets having been so greedy and realises that her husband is the only righteous man. They get back together and are able to keep the big house where Maja lived, as well as the modern laundry. Nevertheless, those things will be passed on to their daughter who is going to marry an engineer. Maja and Kalle will go back to their two-room apartment and their old-fashioned laundry business. Maja is happy with the outcome.

**En flicka kommer till stå:n** (A Girl Comes to the City) (1937)
Director: Carlo Keil-Möller, Thor Brooks
Film Production Company: AB Irefilm
Synopsis
Ulla (Isa Quensel) works in a grocery shop, but after yelling at her boss, defending a co-worker who had been unjustly dismissed, she loses her job as well. Ulla decides to move to Stockholm to try her luck there. As soon as she arrives, her luggage is stolen and she finds herself alone, with no money and nowhere to go. Ulla uses several tricks to survive in the city, such as making wagers for food and taxi rides. She realises that finding a job in the city is more difficult than expected, but she manages to find one in a department store. On her first day, however, Ulla is dismissed for neglecting her customers and flirting with a co-worker, Gösta (Einar Axelsson). When Gösta finds out about Ulla’s situation, he asks her to go with him to his place to have dinner. Ulla accepts. At Göstas’s place, Ulla meets Gösta’s flatmate, painter Pålle (Åke Ohberg), and his neighbour, piano tuner Pontus (Nils Wahlbom). Gösta and Pålle say to Ulla that she can stay at their place until she finds a job and a place of her own. Ulla goes to different interviews and tries different jobs. Ulla’s first job is as a proof-reader at a newspaper. When she reads a review that a harsh critic has written about Gösta’s work (he is an amateur writer), she modifies it so that he gets praise. When the author of the review sees what she has done, Ulla is dismissed. Ulla gets another job as a chambermaid with Widow Greta Öhman (Tollie Zellman). Ulla wants to help Pålle’s career by recommending his work as a portrait painter. Mrs. Öhman hires Pålle, and she also sees him as a good catch for her daughter Viveka (Ruth Stevens). Viveka shows interest in Pålle too. At the same time Ulla has fallen in love with Pålle, so she plots a misunderstanding between him and Viveka, which upsets Pålle. Mrs. Öhman organises a party in her house to unveil Pålle’s portrait of her. Piano tuner Pontus pretends to be a consul-general and praises the painting when it is revealed, which makes everyone agree that it is an exquisite piece of
art. During the party, Mrs. Öhman announces the engagement between Viveka and Pålle, even though Viveka is in love with Gösta. Ulla, upset, scolds everybody at the party and accuses them of being superficial, before going back to the kitchen. Pålle follows her to the kitchen and they reconcile in an embrace.

**Herr Husassistenten** (Mr. Home Assistant) (1938)
The film was created after a theatre play from 1937, *Den mandlige Hussassistent* (The Male House Assistant) by Fleming Lynge and Axel Frische. The play was made in two filmic versions: *Herr Husassistenten* (Mr. Home Assistant) from 1938 and *En karl i köket* (A Man in the Kitchen) from 1954.

**Director:** Ragnar Arvedson

**Film Production Company:** AB Wivefilm

**Synopsis**

Viktor Lundin (Elof Ahrle) is a car mechanic. He works in a garage managed by a greedy man. Whereas for Viktor the motto of his work is ‘good service’ and he is always ready to work with a smile on his lips, his boss’s idea of work is to earn as much as possible with as little work as possible. For this reason, Viktor and his boss have an argument over a customer who, according to the boss, received too much service for too little pay. The argument ends in a fight and Viktor quits his job. Viktor’s dream is to start his own garage. He has told all of his ideas to a customer, lawyer Runge (Gösta Cederlund), who finding the business interesting offers to be his partner and give him 20 thousand kronor if Viktor manages to raise the same amount. Another customer, accountant Pontén (Gösta Gustafson), who holds Viktor in high esteem, offers to lend him 10 thousand kronor, which Viktor can pay back whenever he is able. Viktor is then ready to enter into a partnership with lawyer Runge and director Ramgård (Stig Järrel). Accountant Pontén dies, and Runge finds a debt certificate and buys it. This means that if Viktor does not pay 30 thousand kronor for the business, he must leave it. Thus, Viktor ends up completely bankrupt, with nothing but Pontén’s old bicycle, which he uses as a ‘rolling garage.’ Viktor has an accident on his bicycle involving one of the domestic workers at Runge’s house. So he happens to step into the house and meet Mrs. Runge (Tollie Zellman). Viktor asks her for a job as a domestic worker and she hires him. Mrs. Runge is very happy with her new employee. Runge’s niece, Karin (Aino Taube), lives with them, and she is almost engaged, against her will, to director Ramgård. Karin is tired of her upper-class life and wants to work. Viktor and Karin become good friends, and when Karin finds out what her uncle has done, she decides to help Viktor. She seeks the help of her godfather Ludde (Carl Barcklind). Ludde solves the situation by becoming Viktor’s partner and investing 30 thousand kronor on his behalf. Viktor builds the garage and proposes to Karin. At the end of the story, Viktor has recovered his garage, and he is about to marry the woman he loves. Karin will be able to work as she had always wanted.
**Pengar från skyn** (Pennies from Heaven) (1938)
Director: Rune Carlsten
Film Production Company: AB Alba-Film
Synopsis
Three orphaned siblings, Hanne (Signe Hasso), Christian (Olle Karlefeldt) and Gustaf (Tord Stål) receive 5,000 kronor each from their uncle, Leopold Paseman (Carl Barcklind). They had not had any contact with their uncle before this, because he had argued bitterly with their now deceased father. When they get the money, they also learn that their uncle has promised to will his company to the one who manages to increase the gift by investing the money in some profitable business. Gustaf is working on an engine invention, but the 5,000 kronor are not enough for him to complete his work, so he asks his siblings to pool their money, but they reject the idea. Gustaf can only buy a new engine to keep practicing. Christian opens an advertising agency. Hanne, who worked as a shopkeeper in a fancy women’s clothing boutique, decides to invest the money in a shop of her own.

Leopold asks one of his employees, Hans (Olof Widgren), to spy on his nephews and niece and inform him how they were doing with the money. Before Hans knows that Hanne is the Paseman niece, they meet casually on the street and Hans becomes attracted to her from that moment. Hans and Hanne start dating, but when Hanne realises that Hans has given her a fake name and that her uncle asked him to spy on her, she becomes disappointed and breaks off the relationship because she believes that he did not really care about her. In reality Hans fell in love with Hanne from the moment they met.

All three siblings fail in their endeavours. Hans and Hanne’s bumpy relationship improves by the end of the story when Hans saves her from her bad business decisions that had put her on the brink of ruin. Finally, Leopold Paseman goes to meet his nephews and niece and offers them a new opportunity. Gustaf gets to work on his invention at his uncle’s company; Christian also gets a position that suits him in the same company; Hanne gets to be Hans’ wife; and Hans gets the position as director of the company.

**Hanna i societén** (Hanna in High Society) (1940)
Director: Gunnar Olsson
Film Production Company: AB Europa Film
Synopsis
Hanna (Rut Holm) is the loyal domestic worker in the home of retired colonel Rutger Hummerberg’s (Carl Barcklind). The colonel is a difficult person; he is obsessed with weapons, hunting and everything that has to do with the military. He likes everything his own way and is not patient in dealing with other people, particularly his family. Despite the constant reprimands Hanna receives, Rutger appreciates her very much. On Rutger’s birthday, the family comes to his house to celebrate him. The family is clearly interested in pleasing him only to get at the inheritance. That same day, young Gösta (Karl
Arne Holmsten), the son of an old friend of Rutger, comes to visit him. At the party Gösta and Rutger’s niece, Monika (Eivor Landström), get acquainted and seem to like each other, although Monika is engaged. She is very different from the rest of the family; she is a modest girl who wishes nothing more than to be able to work on a farm. Rutger dies, and when the family gets together for the reading of the will, they realise that he has left all his money and his house to his domestic worker Hanna. The family gets very upset and do all they can to prevent Hanna from getting the money. They, for example, try to get a doctor to declare Hanna insane and unable to handle the fortune, but they fail. Hanna tries the upper-class life for a while, but she dislikes it, particularly because she misses her good friend Kristine (Dagmar Ebbesen) and her beloved Johansson (Bengt Djurberg). She also realises that the people around her are hypocritical. Hanna decides to give her money away to set up a retirement home for domestic workers, and she decides to keep working. Monika breaks up with her fiancé, who has turned out to be a swindler, and becomes engaged to Gösta. Gösta has a farm, where Monika can work as she desired, and they ask Hanna to come live with them. By the end of the film, Johansson and Hanna also get married and their first son will bear Rutger’s name.

**Vi hemslavinnor** (We Home Slaves) (1942)
Third filmic version of the theatre play *Den ny Husassistent* (The New House Assistant) from 1920.
Director: Schamyl Bauman
Film Production Company: AB Wivefilm
Synopsis

In the Larsson’s home, there is a constant rotation of domestic workers. Laura Larsson (Hjördis Petterson) is a difficult mistress; she is too demanding and authoritarian. One day, after having dismissed one of the domestic workers, director Teodor Larsson (Ernst Eklund) takes the initiative to hire a domestic worker himself. He goes to the employment agency and there he meets Kristiana (Dagmar Ebbesen), a mature woman newly arrived in Stockholm from the countryside. Kristiana arrives at the house as the new employee. Laura starts discussing work conditions with Kristiana, and she finds out that this new employee is very different from the ones she has had before. Firstly, Kristiana asks to be employed for at least one year, and she asks nothing more than being allowed to go to church every Saturday. Laura does not seem to have much choice, so she accepts these and other of Kristiana’s eccentricities. Kristiana tells Ingrid (Maj-Britt Håkansson), the daughter of Teodor and Laura, that she had a son out of wedlock when she was young and was forced to give him up for adoption. Kristiana has been saving money to give to her son on his birthday, so when she goes to see the lawyer to pass on the money, she gets a recent picture of him. It turns out that Kristiana’s son, Gunnar (Karl-Arne Holmsten), is Ingrid’s boyfriend, a pilot. Kristiana finds this out on the day of their engagement party when she sees Gunnar’s face as she brings the
engagement cake into the dining room. Kristiana gets so nervous when she sees Gunnar that she drops the cake. Embarrassed, Kristiana leaves the house without saying a word, but before this little Palle (Kaj Hjelm), Ingrid’s brother, sees Kristiana when she is crying in her room, with the photo of Gunnar in her hands. Everything became clear after this, and Gunnar goes to find his mother in a guest house. The film ends with the wedding of Gunnar and Ingrid and the welcoming of Kristiana into the Larsson family.

Kungsgatan (King’s Street) (1943)
The film was made after the novel with the same name by Ivar Lo-Johansson from 1935.
Director: Gösta Cederlund
Film Production Company: Film AB Imago
Synopsis
Marta (Barbro Kollberg) is a country girl who comes from a poor landless family. She is seeing Adrian (Sture Lagerwall), the son of a landowning family. Unlike Adrian, Marta dreams of a life of excitement in the city and looks with disdain upon a future in the countryside. Thus, Marta decides to try her luck in Stockholm and moves there to find a job. Adrian does the same in order to be able to be with Marta. However, they do not meet in Stockholm at the beginning, because Adrian is committed to finding a good job and a good socio-economic position before looking for Marta. Marta finds a job very easily in a café, but she is harassed by all the men there, even her boss. She quits after her boss insinuates that she needs to pay sexual favours in order to keep her job. Marta meets a prostitute called Dolly (Marianne Löfgren), who shares her dream to be a perfumery owner with Marta. Marta, excited about the possibility of becoming Dolly’s partner, enters the prostitution business to save up for their future enterprise. Marta is a very successful prostitute at the beginning, but she becomes ill and starts losing her looks and energy very quickly. For Adrian, getting started in Stockholm is more difficult, but he manages to get a job first at the post office and then in the construction branch, thanks to the help of his landlord. Marta and Adrian find each other, and they resume their relationship for a short while, but since Marta has to stay for a long time at the hospital being treated of a venereal disease, they split up. After that, they do not see each other again until at the very end of the story, when Adrian finds Marta on the streets, looking sick and weak. Adrian, disappointed, walks away, and Marta commits suicide on the train tracks.

En förtjusande fröken (A Charming Young Lady) (1945)
Director: Börje Larsson
Film Production Company: Film AB Lux
Synopsis
Paul Norman (Max Hansen) works at an insurance company and his girlfriend is the director’s secretary, Louise (Agneta Lagerfeldt). Louise’s father also
works in the same company, but he does not consider Paul to be a good match for his daughter. The day has come for Paul to ask for Louise’s hand and he prepares everything for the big day. The night before, however, a young woman, Anette (Annalisa Ericson), has an accident in the vicinity of Paul’s house and goes with her driver to Paul’s house to ask for help. She, however, is a spoiled rich girl and acts in a very snobbish way. She does not ask for Paul’s help, but rather bosses him around. Thus, initially Paul and Anette get off on the wrong foot – they dislike each other a lot. On the same night a bohemian friend of Paul’s, painter Felix Munk (Sture Lagerwall), also arrives with his girlfriend Rose (Marianne Löfgren) at Paul’s house unexpectedly. Thus, when Louise arrives with her father, they find the house full of eccentric strangers, which makes a bad impression on Louise’s father. Paul, however, still has a chance to earn the permission of Louise’s father to marry his daughter if he improves his work position. For this reason he takes on a difficult, but very important account, knowing that if he succeeds in making this man a client of the company it could be a breakthrough in his career. The client is the owner of a chocolate factory, who turns out to be Anette’s father. Anette and Paul are complete opposites and they argue all the time. However, Anette realises that she actually likes Paul and decides to take a job as a secretary in the company where he works, just to be near him. However, the only thing that Anette accomplished with her day of work was to make Louise’s father finally come to a decision and refuse to ever accept Paul’s marriage with Louise. After a while, however, Paul realises that Anette is the woman he actually loves, so he stops her wedding with another man. At the end of the film, Anette and Paul get married.

**En karl i köket** (A Man in the Kitchen) (1954)
The film was created after a theatre play from 1937, *Den mandlige Hussassistent* (The Male House Assistant) by Fleming Lynge and Axel Frische. The play was made in two filmic versions: *Herr Husassistenten* (Mr. Home Assistant) from 1938 and *En karl i köket* (A Man in the Kitchen) from 1954.

**Director:** Rolf Husberg
**Film Production Company:** AB Sandrew- Produktion

**Synopsis**
Olle Larsson (Herman Ahlsell) is a headwaiter at a restaurant, but his dream is to start his own hotel business. He asks for a loan and, together with his partner Torsten Lindström (Kjell Nordin斯基öld), plans to start the new business. Lawyer Stenmark (Holger Löwenadler) is going to help them out with the legal aspects of the business, but he is good friends with Torsten and they conspire to leave Olle out of the agreement. Olle’s creditor, director Olsson, dies, and the lawyer buys the debt certificate, which entails that Olle loses his part of the business because he cannot pay off his debt immediately. Olle does not get disheartened, however. He decides to start from scratch and finds a job as a domestic worker. Olle starts working and the mistress of the house is very
happy with him. Olle then realises he is working at lawyer Stenmark’s house. The lawyer’s daughter Karin (Ittla Frodi) becomes very good friends with Olle, and when she finds out what has happened decides to help him get his business back. Karin does so with the aid of a friend of the family, Axel Möller (Hugo Björne), who after hearing the story from Karin decides to help Olle by becoming his partner. Finally, Olle is ready to open his hotel. Karin, who is now his wife, helps him with the decorating, and finally we see that even lawyer Stenmark and his wife help out with the work on the day of the opening.

**Mexican Films**

**Santa** (1932)
Santa was the second version of the literary work Santa by Mexican writer Federico Gamboa, published in 1903. This version was also the first Mexican feature film to use sound.
Director: Antonio Moreno
Film Production Company: Nacional
Synopsis
Santa (Lupita Tovar) is a poor peasant girl who is seduced by a military man, Marcelino (Donald Reed), who abandons her when the troops leave the village. When Santa’s brothers realise she has been involved in a relationship, they, together with their mother, throw her out of the house. Santa, with nowhere to go, starts to work in Elvira’s brothel. Santa is the most popular girl at the brothel. Bullfighter El Jarameño (Juan José Martínez Casado), a customer of the brothel, and Hipólito (Carlos Orellana), the pianist, fall in love with her. One day Santa’s brothers go to see her at a house where she is partying with her workfellows, El Jarameño and his friends, and when they find her they let her know that their mother has died. After that Santa decides to leave that life and goes to live with El Jarameño. One day, however, El Jarameño catches Santa with Marcelino, who has come back to seduce her, so he throws her out of his house. Santa is sick and tired, but she wanders around on the streets; she has by then lost her attractiveness. Hipólito uses all his savings so that Santa can be operated for the cancer that afflicts her, but she does not survive the operation. Hipólito buries her.

**La sangre manda** (The Call of the Blood) (1933)
Director: José Bohr/ Rafael J. Sevilla
Film Production Company: Internacionales
Synopsis
Don Pedro Bolívar makes his irresponsible son José Bolívar work at his foundry. José has never worked; on the contrary, he is used to a life of leisure, parties and drinking. But Don Pedro has had enough and forces his son to start as a manual worker. José goes to work on his first day right after a party, inebriated
Ahí está el detalle (You are Missing the Point) (1940)

Director: Juan Bustillo Oro

Film Production Company: Grovas-Oro Films

Synopsis

Domestic worker Paz (Dolores Camarillo) asks her boyfriend Cantinflas (Mario Moreno) – a shameless slacker who arrives punctually every night at the house where she works to get his dinner – to kill Bobby, the rabid dog of the house. She has been commanded by her boss to do it herself, but she does not dare to. A gangster, also called Bobby (Antonio Bravo), extorts the mistress of the house, Lolita (Sofía Álvarez), regarding some un-dated letters she had sent him some time ago when they were to dating. Don Cayetano (Joaquín Pardavé), Lolita’s husband, suffers from inveterate jealousy and has called the police and asked them to come to the house at a time when he is supposed to
be on a business trip to catch Lolita with her alleged lover. When the police and then Don Cayetano arrive in the house, both the gangster and Cantinflas are there. Paz hides them both, but Don Cayetano finds Cantinflas. Paz says that he is Doña Lolita’s brother Leonardo, whom they have been trying to locate in order to collect the inheritance from their father. Cantinflas takes advantage of the situation and lives in luxury in the house until the partner of the real Leonardo, Clotilde (Sara García), comes with their eight children to find him. Don Cayetano forces Cantinflas to marry Clotilde, but the wedding is interrupted by the police who arrest him for having killed Bobby, the gangster. At the trial, Cantinflas confesses to having killed Bobby (thinking that it was the dog they were talking about) and is sentenced to death. However, before it is too late, the real Leonardo arrives and confesses that it was he who killed Bobby to help his sister. Cantinflas goes back to his old life and gets back together with Paz. Nothing changes.

**Santa (1943)**
Director: Norman Foster  
Film Production Company: Francisco P. Cabrera, Juan de la Cruz Alarcón  
Synopsis  
Peasant girl Santa (Esther Fernández) arrives at Elvira’s (Fanny Schiller) brothel, after having met her by chance while she was picking prickly pears in the field and Elvira and her assistant had an accident on the road right next to her. Once Santa arrives at the brothel, she starts remembering her recent past and the story of how she was seduced and abandoned by Marcelino (Víctor Manuel Mendoza) and her miscarriage, followed by her family’s decision to throw her out of the house. The pianist of the brothel, Hipólito (José Cibrián), falls in love with her. Santa goes to live with bullfighter El Jarameño (Ricardo Montalbán). One day Marcelino comes back and seduces Santa again. El Jarameño catches them by surprise and sends Santa back to the brothel, but he pays Elvira to take care of Santa as she is sick. Elvira takes the money, but throws Santa out. Santa ends up in a sleazy brothel and her health worsens. Hipólito takes Santa to live with him. She agrees to marry Hipólito, but she does not survive the operation that Hipólito had paid for.

**La gallina clueca (The Cackling Hen) (1941)**
Director: Fernando de Fuentes  
Film Production Company: Mundiales  
Synopsis  
Mature woman Doña Teresa (Sara García), mother of three young children, travels to Mexico City from a town in Northern Mexico. On their way to the city, their car breaks down, but luckily they chance upon merchant Don Ángel (Domingo Soler), who picks them up and takes them to the city. On the way, they stop at a shop where Don Ángel was supposed to leave his produce, but since he arrives late, the shopkeeper refuses to take it. Doña Teresa helps him
out by convincing the retailer not only to take the produce, but to pay even more than he was supposed to. In this way, Doña Teresa is able to show her remarkable selling skills, and Don Ángel then proposes a partnership running a grocery store. Doña Teresa is able to buy a house, and after several years of hard work Doña Teresa’s son, José (David Silva), finishes his studies in medicine. The oldest daughter, Lucía (Josefina Romagnoli), gets married, and youngest daughter, Pita (Carmen Molina), dates a military man. Don Ángel moves into Doña Teresa’s house and proposes to her. Teresa says no and confesses that her husband had not died, but she had left him because he was a drunkard. Still, they end up living as a family together with Lucía, who has been abandoned by her husband and goes back to her mother’s house with her infant twins.

**Arriba las mujeres (Top Women) (1943)**
Director: Carlos Orellana
Film Production Company: Producciones Rodríguez Hermanos
Synopsis
Farmer Laureano (Carlos Orellana) goes to Mexico City with his daughter Chole (Margarita Cortés), who is about to get married, to visit his compadre (his daughter’s godfather) Don Próspero (Manuel Noriega). He hopes that Don Próspero and his wife Felicidad (Consuelo Guerrero de Luna) will allow his daughter to live with them and their two daughters for a while so that she learns how to be a refined housewife. It turns out that Doña Felicidad has adopted a new attitude and become a feminist leader, presiding over the League of the Mottled Shirts. She is a dedicated lawyer, dresses in a manly way and has an overbearing attitude towards men. She also instils in their daughters the same approach to work and men and is ready to do the same with the farmer’s daughter. The partners of all these women create the Union of Oppressed Men, and when Don Próspero announces this to his wife, she asks for a divorce. When Don Próspero grants her the divorce, she regrets it and realises that she actually loves her husband and does not want to lose him. At the end of the story, all the women end up deferring to their men and abandoning their feminist ideas.

**Rosenda (1948)**
Director: Julio Bracho
Film Production Company: Clasa Films Mundiales
Synopsis
Mule driver Salustio (Rodolfo Acosta) requests that the patriarch of the small village where he lives, Don Ponciano (Fernando Soler), ask for his girlfriend’s hand on his behalf. Salustio’s girlfriend, peasant girl Rosenda (Rita Macedo), lives with her parents in an isolated hut out in the fields. Rosenda’s father rejects the proposal, as he dislikes Salustio, but finding that Rosenda has behaved improperly, seeing Salustio in secret, he throws her out of his house and
makes her go with Don Ponciano. As soon as Salustio finds out that Rosenda has been forced to leave her home, he disappears. Don Ponciano takes Rosenda to live with the seamstress Doña Pomposa (Lupe del Castillo), and he becomes Rosenda’s guardian. Don Ponciano teaches Rosenda how to read and write and they become lovers. After some time Salustio returns; he has become an outlaw known as General Tejón. Don Ponciano marries Rosenda and leaves her with the priest of the village while he confronts Salustio. Salustio abducts Don Ponciano and the priest, but Rosenda has the chance to go live in the city with two mature single friends of Don Ponciano. One day, Rosenda reads in the newspaper that Salustio and Ponciano have died, so she leaves the house of the women friends of Don Ponciano to start a life of her own and work for her child, rejecting Don Ponciano’s wealth. The newspaper report was however incorrect; in fact Don Ponciano was alive and looking for Rosenda. One year later, Don Ponciano finds Rosenda and their son at a train crossing.

Salón México (1948)
Director: Emilio Fernández
Film Production Company: Clasa Films Mundiales
Synopsis
The film begins when rogue Paco (Rodolfo Acosta) and nightclub hostess Mercedes (Marga López) win a dancing contest. He keeps the prize even though they had agreed to share it, but Mecedes needs it badly to pay for her sister’s school fees. Mercedes hides from her little sister Beatriz (Silvia Derbez) what she does for a living to be able to keep her in a renowned Catholic boarding school. The night of the dancing contest, Mercedes waits until Paco has gone to sleep with a prostitute in a hotel room and then she breaks into the room and steals the money. When Paco realises what happened, he finds Mercedes and beats her up, but the policeman who guards the cabaret defends her. The policeman, Lupe (Miguel Inclán), finds out about Mercedes’ double life, and he finds it admirable that she does what she does for her sister. Lupe proposes to Mercedes, but she cannot accept because she needs to keep working at the cabaret in order to pay for her sister’s expensive fees. They decide to get married once Beatriz gets married herself. Roberto (Roberto Cañedo), the son of the boarding school’s director, is a lieutenant aviator who had fought with the 201st Fighter Squadron for the Allies in the Second World War, becoming lame in one leg as a result. He falls in love with Beatriz and asks Mercedes for her hand. Paco robs a bank, and when the police are after him, he goes to Mercedes’ room to hide. The police apprehend both of them, but she is set free after a while with Lupe’s help. To celebrate his stag night, Roberto goes to the Salón México cabaret with his friends and when Mercedes sees them, she refuses to tend them to avoid being recognised. Mercedes is dismissed for this. Paco escapes from prison, finds Mercedes and tries to take her with him by force. Mercedes stabs him and Paco shoots her. They both
die. The lieutenant finds out everything, but he does not care and still marries Beatriz.

**Dueña y señora** (Owner and Mistress) (1948)
Director: Tito Davison
Film Production Company: Filmex
Synopsis
Widower Fernando (Domingo Soler) returns home after a trip to the United States with his new fiancée Isabel (Marga López). The news comes as a surprise for his adult children and the domestic worker Toña (Sara García). Two of the children, Lalo (Manuel Fábregas) and Beba (Alma Rosa Aguirre), accept their father’s fiancée and are happy for them, but that is not the case for his son Luis (Rubén Rojo) and Toña, who is Luis’s biological mother. Still, Toña tries to convince Luis to accept the relationship. During Fernando and Isabel’s engagement party, Luis announces that he will marry his girlfriend Luisa. In spite of the conflicts between Luis and his father and Luis and Isabel, the latter falls in love with Luis. Don Fernando catches Isabel and Luis kissing, and he beats Luis up and calls him a bastard. Toña then confesses that she is his mother. After some time, Fernando changes his mind and accepts the engagement between Luis and Isabel. Toña will remain the mistress of the house.

**Nosotros los pobres** (We the Poor) (1947)
Director: Ismael Rodríguez
Film Production Company: Producciones Rodríguez Hermanos
Synopsis
Carpenter Pepe El Toro (Pedro Infante) lives in an inner-city slum with his mother, who is mute and paralytic, and his niece Chachita (Evita Muñoz), whom he has raised as his daughter. He is the boyfriend of Celia (Blanca Estela Pavón), or La Chorreada (the dirty one), as he affectionately calls her, who lives in the house next door with her mother and stepfather. There are a variety of people living and hanging around the neighbourhood, such as flirtatious La que se levanta tarde (the late awakener) and the shop assistant, the female drunkards La Guayaba (Guava) and La Tostada (Toast), El Atarantado (Dozy), a boy who innocently courts Chachita, and many more. Pepe’s luck changes when Celia’s stepfather steals the money that a rich lawyer had given to Pepe to buy materials for some carpentry work. The robbery occurred in the presence of Pepe’s mother, but her inability to speak and move prevented her from doing anything about it or telling Pepe who had done it. Since Pepe cannot pay the money back to the lawyer, he goes to the moneylender. However, he is unable to find a guarantee, so he finally borrows the money in exchange for work. A couple of criminals propose that Pepe steal from the moneylender, but Pepe refuses. They then do so themselves and kill her, but manage to get Pepe caught in the moneylender’s house, which turns him into the main sus-
pect. The lawyer Montes (Rafael Alcayde), who moreover is attracted to Celia, forces Pepe go to jail, where he is arrested for a crime he did not commit.

Lawyer Montes attempts to seduce Celia, offering her first a good job and then help with Pepe’s legal situation. Celia accepts having a sexual liaison with him only when she believes that he can save Pepe, but it turns out that that the lawyer cannot do anything for him. This incident remains secret, so it does not affect her relationship with Pepe even though she had been willing to give up Pepe in order to save him.

Celia’s stepfather starts having hallucinations with Pepe’s mother’s eyes and beats her up badly. Pepe’s mother end up in the hospital, as does Pepe’s sister Yolanda (Carmen Montejo), who is ill with tuberculosis and in agony. Pepe escapes from prison to go see his mother, and he finds Chachita insulting Yolanda, because, from a scene she witnessed earlier on, Chachita believes Yolanda is a woman who wants to seduce her father. In fact Yolanda is her real mother, Pepe then explains everything to Chachita, and the girl hugs her mother and forgives her before she dies. Chachita’s grandmother dies soon after. Pepe is caught and taken back to prison. Back in his cell, Pepe finds the real perpetrator of the crime and takes his eye out to make him confess. After the murderer’s confession, Pepe is set free. Pepe and Celia get married and have a little boy.

Ustedes los ricos (You the Rich) (1948)
Director: Ismael Rodríguez
Film Production Company: Producciones Rodríguez Hermanos
Synopsis
(Continues from We the Poor) Carpenter Pepe El Toro is living a happy life with the cooperative carpentry he runs, his wife Celia, their child El Torito and their niece Chachita. One day Pepe happens to crash in his truck into Manuel’s (Miguel Manzano) car. Manuel happens to be Chachita’s rich biological father, who abandoned both Chachita and her mother. Manuel asks Chachita to go live with him, but she rejects him. Nevertheless, in order to counter her school friend’s bullying and show off, she calls and asks him to send a car to her school to pick her up. Chachita only uses the car and driver to cross the street and impress her friends. Andrea (Nelly Montiel), Manuel’s wife, flirts with Pepe, and he takes her out to dance as she appears so lonely and vulnerable. The day after, however, it is Celia’s birthday. Pepe arrives late and drunk, but with a mariachi band, and plays a serenade for her. Celia suspects infidelity, but she never protests and ends up forgiving Pepe and repressing her feelings. Due to malicious intrigues created by Manuel’s mother, the cooperative is confiscated. Chachita goes to live with her biological father in order to save Pepe, but comes back to him when Pepe scolds her. El tuerto (The One-eyed) (Jorge Arriaga), the man whom Pepe made confess his crime in the previous film, has escaped prison, and a friend of Pepe, El Camello (Camel) (Jesús García), wants to alert him, but is run over before he can do
so. El tuerto succeeds in burning Pepe’s carpentry down. Chachita’s father Manuel dies saving her from the fire, but Pepe’s son dies. Pepe locks himself up in a room and grieves. He leaves the room only after El tuerto sets a trap for him to make him go out. Pepe, El tuerto and two of his henchmen fight on the top of a building. Pepe survives, but one of the men dies electrocuted and the other two fall from the roof. Time passes by and Pepe and Celia have children again, twins this time. One day, when they are celebrating Chachita’s birthday, Chachita’s grandmother comes to see her and they accept her now that she has ended up lonely and regretful of her past actions.

Aventurera (Adventuress) (1949)
Director: Alberto Gout
Film Production Company: P. Calderón
Synopsis
Elena (Ninón Sevilla) is a dance student who, one day, after returning home early from her class, catches her mother with a lover. When the mother finds her affair revealed, she runs away with her lover and her husband commits suicide. Elena, completely on her own, tries to find a job in many different places, but she is harassed and taken advantage of wherever she goes. Elena finds her friend Lucio (Tito Junco) by chance, and after hearing her new situation, he gets her drunk and sells her to a madam called Rosaura (Andrea Palma), who drugs her in order to prostitute her in her cabaret. Elena resigns herself to doing the job after she is subdued by force when attempting to fight it. One day, Elena finds her mother’s lover in the cabaret and hits him with a bottle; as a punishment Rosaura orders her thug Rengo (Cripple) (Miguel Inclán) to mark her face with a knife, but Lucio prevents this and takes Elena away with him. Lucio plans a jeweller’s robbery, but one of his accomplices informs on him. Elena escapes and goes to Mexico City, where she finds a job in a fancy cabaret and succeeds as a dancer. One day, the man who betrayed Lucio finds her and blackmails her. Elena agrees to marry a millionaire, Mario (Rubén Rojo), whom she does not love, but who can help her escape the extortion. It turns out that Mario is the son of Rosaura, who hides her illegal activities from her family. Elena sees in her marriage a good opportunity to take revenge on her former exploiter. Elena embarrasses Mario and Rosaura in front of their upper-class friends and flirts with Mario’s younger brother. Elena finds out that her mother is on her deathbed, so she goes to her hometown in the north of the country. While she is there, Rosaura orders Rengo to kill Elena, but the thug falls in love with her and not only he does not kill her, but he defends her from the blackmailer. Mario looks for Elena, and when he finds her, he also finds out about his mother’s activities. Lucio, who has escaped from prison, appears, and he wants to force Elena to cross the border to the United States with him. He beats Mario up and takes Elena by force. On the street, when Lucio is about to kill Elena, Rengo stabs him. Elena goes home with Mario, with whom she has finally fallen in love.
**Una familia de tantas** (A Family Like Many Others) (1948)
Director: Fernando Galindo
Film Production Company: Azteca

**Synopsis**
Don Rodrigo (Fernando Soler) is the authoritarian head of a middle-class family. The oldest children, Héctor (Felipe de Alba) and Estela (Isabel del Puerto), have paid jobs. Young Maru (Martha Roth), who is about to turn 15, answer the door one day when she is left on her own in the house doing domestic chores. The visitor is Roberto (David Silva), a vacuum cleaner vendor, who steps into the house without letting Maru say anything and starts demonstrating the machine. Maru and Roberto fall in love. Héctor must marry his girlfriend, who is pregnant with his child, even though he does not want to. Estela kisses her boyfriend on the street and her father sees her and slaps her, for which she runs away from home with her boyfriend. A cousin of Maru asks her hand on marriage and Don Rodrigo accepts, considering him a good catch for her. Roberto, however, comes back to the house, this time attempting to sell a refrigerator, and he then also asks for Maru’s hand. Don Rodrigo rejects the proposal because he does not trust Roberto’s, in his view, unconventional occupation. Nevertheless, Maru’s mother and her siblings support her and she finally marries Roberto. Maru’s mother blesses her even though Don Rodrigo prohibits everyone in the family to attend the wedding.

**Cuando los hijos odian** (When the Children Hate) (1949)
Director: Joselito Rodriguez
Film Production Company: Astor

**Synopsis**
The protagonist of the film, Lolita (Amanda del Llano), runs a bakery in a city working-class neighbourhood. She lives with her drunkard father Ramón (Miguel Inclán), her self-denying mother Doña Carmelita (Lupe Inclán), her mentally handicapped brother Tachito (Carlos Orellana) and the domestic worker Nicolasa (Delia Magaña). A new bakery opens in the neighbourhood, owned by José Luis (Eduardo Noriega) who lives with his mother. One day a neighbour leaves orphaned child Lupita with Doña Carmelita for a while, but she never returns. A few bakers and a master baker work at Lolita’s bakery. One of the bakers, El Estoperol (Fernando Soto), is in love with Lolita, and he believes himself to be courting her, but the master baker makes Nicolasa believe that it is she El Estoperol loves. After several misunderstandings, El Estoperol and Nicolasa end up getting married. Lolita is courted by José Luis, but she rejects love because she is afraid to get married and have children because she believes they might have the same handicap as her brother. A doctor dispels Lolita’s worries, but José Luis’s mother is opposed to the marriage because she also believes Lolita could have a problem in her genes. Finally, Lolita’s mother confesses that Tachito’s condition was the result of a beating.
her husband gave her while she was pregnant and not due to a genetic problem. In the end, the wedding can take place without impediments.

**Los olvidados** (The Young and the Damned) (1950)
Director: Luis Buñuel
Film Production Company: Ultramar
Synopsis
The story takes place in the Mexico City slums and follows the lives of some of its inhabitants. Pedro (Alfonso Mejía) is a young boy, despised by his mother. He gets involved with a young crook called El Jaibo (Roberto Cobo), who has just escaped from prison. Pedro finds a job at a blacksmith’s, and he is a witness when El Jaibo kills a young worker whom he believed had denounced him. El Jaibo steals a knife from Pedro’s workplace. Pedro is accused of theft, and his mother takes him to a reformatory. She then has an affair with El Jaibo. The director of the reformatory gives Pedro a banknote and asks him to go and get him some cigarettes; he does this to show Pedro that he is trusted. El Jaibo bumps into Pedro and robs him. Pedro runs after El Jaibo and they get into a fight, but Pedro gets beaten up as he is younger and smaller. Pedro then reports the murder of the young worker and El Jaibo runs away. El Jaibo returns one night to take revenge and kills Pedro. A blind man who was robbed by El Jaibo reveals his hiding place. The police shoot El Jaibo as he attempts to escape. Pedro’s mother looks for her son desperately, but the neighbours who find his body take him covered to dispose of him somewhere far away.

**Doña Diabla** (The Devil is a Woman) (1949)
Director: Tito Davison
Film Production Company: Filmex
Synopsis
Newly wed Ángela (Maria Félix) finds out that her husband wants to give her away to some men in exchange for some benefits for his career. She decides to take revenge on him. Angela manages to get her husband imprisoned for fraud, and after that she devotes her life to exploiting as many men as possible. Angela’s daughter, Angélica (Perla Aguilar), studies at a boarding school where her mother put her so that she could not find out what Ángela does, but also to protect her from the evil of the world. When Angélica finishes school, she goes to live with her mother and falls in love with Adrián (Víctor Junco), Ángela’s lover and business partner. Adrián finds takes advantage of the fact that Angélica loves him so that he can manipulate Ángela. Adrian tells Angélica about her mother’s activities. Angélica runs away with Adrian, but in order to save her daughter, Angela kills Adrián and turns herself in to the police.
**Mujeres que trabajan** (Women Who Work) (1952)
Director: Julio Bracho
Film Production Company: Internacional
Synopsis
The film tells the story of several women who live in a guest house for working women run by an old-fashioned old lady. Claudia (Rosita Quintana) is the owner of a fancy clothes boutique. She is the most successful worker and has the largest room, which is an apartment within the house, but she prefers to live there because she does not like to be alone, even though she is not particularly social with the rest of the girls. Claudia employs models, recommended by Laura’s (Andrea Palma) employment agency. Isabel (Columba Domínguez) is a newly arrived girl at the same guest house, who is in search of a job with Laura. Isabel talks very little about her life and hides her pregnancy. Claudia falls in love with Alfredo (Alberto Carriére), despite her attempts to stay away from men and love. She realises one day that Alfredo is the husband of one of her best clients. Back at the guest house, Isabel and Claudia talk. Isabel, it turns out, had worked as a governess, but been dismissed when her boss discovered she was pregnant. Claudia finds out that Alfredo is the father of Isabel’s child. Claudia kills Alfredo.

**Necesito dinero** (I Need Money) (1951)
Director: Miguel Zacarías
Film Production Company: Zacarías
Synopsis
A mechanic worker, Manuel (Pedro Infante), falls in love with a girl even though he has only seen her legs through a window in the basement where the workshop is located. One day, by chance, he finds her on a bus while he is running an errand for his boss. He happens to drop something on the floor, and when he is bending down, he recognises the feet of his beloved. He talks to her then, but she is completely uninterested. The woman is María Teresa (Sara Montiel), a young and beautiful woman who works in a jeweller’s and supports her mother and younger sister. María Teresa’s mother and father were well off at the beginning of their marriage, but the father became an alcoholic and violent with his family, and he went bankrupt and then died. Only María Teresa’s older sister had experienced the times of abundance and remembered the family drama, which she related to María Teresa. All this happened when María Teresa was a child, so she has always experienced a life of precariousness from which she wants to escape. María Teresa decides after much hesitation to date a rich man she met at the jeweller’s in order to escape poverty, even though she does not love him. Later on, however, María Teresa finds out that he only wanted to exploit her. Manuel rents the room that María Teresa’s mother had advertised without María Teresa’s consent. He also works very hard to earn as much money as possible to be deserving of her. One day Manuel finds a briefcase with money in a taxi, and, using the money, buys the
mechanical workshop where he works. Later on, Manuel finds out that the money belonged to a customer of the workshop who had been dismissed from his work at the bank for losing the money, so Manuel gives him the money back and pays for the workshop with his own savings. Manuel does not become rich, but he is able to start his own business after putting a lot of effort and taking a variety of jobs. María Teresa falls in love with Manuel and she accepts a modest life for love. They become a couple.

El rebozo de Soledad (Soledad’s Shawl) (1952)
Director: Roberto Gavaldón
Film Production Company: STPC, Televoz
Synopsis
Doctor Alberto (Arturo de Córdova) works in a small village in the Mexican countryside. He has trouble with the village’s chief because the latter does not agree to close the factory that is polluting the water and making everyone ill with typhoid fever. A peasant prevents the doctor from curing his mother, taking her instead to the village’s healer which leads to her death. The doctor is tired of the backwardness of the village, and when he is offered a job as a researcher in the capital, he leaves. Nevertheless, at the train station, before he leaves, he finds a woman with an very ill baby in her arms. He saves the baby’s life by operating on him right away. After this, and convinced by the village’s priest Juan (Domingo Soler), he decides to stay. Soledad (Estela Inda) goes to the doctor’s house to ask him to come see her brother who has fallen off a horse and broken his arm. Alberto falls in love with Soledad and she returns his feelings, but Soledad is being courted by Roque (Pedro Armendáriz), a peasant leader. Roque gives Soledad a shawl, which she rejects, but he chases her and insists she take it. One day, after Soledad rejects Roque in front of all the guests at a wedding, he chases her, catching her in the fields, and rapes her under a bridge. Alberto proposes to Soledad, but she cannot accept because of the rape, which left her pregnant. Soledad’s brother believes the father of Soledad’s child is Alberto and goes to see him to ask for an explanation and make him do the right thing. In order to avoid conflicts, Alberto takes responsibility for the pregnancy. However, Roque proposes to Soledad and she accepts because he is the actual father of her child. Roque kills the chief of the village and is forced to flee. Soledad flees with him. Roque asks Alberto to help with the birth, but Soledad dies, even though the baby survives. Roque is killed by one of the chief’s men. Alberto stays in the village.

Pepe el Toro (1952)
Director: Ismael Rodríguez
Film Production Company: Producciones Rodriguez Hermanos
Synopsis
(Follows from You the Rich) Chachita becomes a millionaire when her biological grandmother dies, as she is named as the only heir. Chachita and Pepe have
a big party and buy presents for everyone in the neighbourhood. The presents have been bought on credit and are delivered to the neighbourhood before they were paid for. However, the grandmother’s relatives fight for the money, claiming that there is no way Chachita can prove she is the actual grandchild so she can never get the inheritance. The creditors refuse to take back most of the presents because they say they have been delivered and used; instead they want to receive their payments immediately. Pepe finds himself with an enormous debt. At the police station, Pepe punches one of the creditors, and when the official sees him, and feeling sympathy for him, he recommends Pepe take a job as a boxer. At this point Pepe’s wife Celia and their twins have died in an accident. Pepe, taking the advice seriously, finds his old school friend Lalo (Joaquín Cordero), a professional boxer, who lends him money, but recommends that he does not start boxing. The creditors confiscate the machines that Pepe had just bought on credit for his carpentry workshop. El Atarandado (Freddy Hernández), Chachita’s boyfriend, is arrested for breaking the seals on the carpentry shop that the police had put there to prevent Pepe from opening it. With no other choice, Pepe boxes for money. Pepe must box against his friend Lalo. Unfortunately, Pepe ends up killing his friend, so he locks himself up in his room, depressed. Amalia (Amanda del Llano), Lalo’s widow, cannot forgive him, but Lucha (Irma Dorantes), a neighbour who is in love with Pepe, convinces her to do so. Pepe earns the love of Lalo’s children. Pepe fights for the championship title against Baby. He is losing the fight, but when he sees Amalia, he recovers his spirit and wins. Chachita and El Atarandado get married and have a child.

La illusion viaja en tranvía (Illusion Travels streetcar) (1953)
Director: Luis Buñuel
Film Production Company: Clasa films mundiales
Synopsis
Streetcar drivers El Tarrajas (Fernando Soto) and El Caireles (Carlos Navarro) fix streetcar 133, which had been considered unfixable and sent to be dismantled. Happy at their achievement, they get drunk at the pre-Christmas celebration in their neighbourhood, where they also participate in the traditional Christmas play. Lupita (Lilia Prado), El Tarrajas’s sister, who is being courted by El Caireles, makes the latter jealous by flirting with Pablo (Javier de la Parra), a taxi driver from the neighbourhood. El Caireles and El Tarrajas take the streetcar for a ride in the city without authorisation, allowing passengers on for free. Pablo catches up with them in his car, but they crash. El Tarrajas and El Caireles want to take the streetcar back to the workshop so they try to avoid taking more passengers, but an inspector makes them keep working. When a retired streetcar worker gets on the streetcar, he realises the situation and reports them. When the bosses try to verify the this report, however, the 133 is already back in its place. At first Lupita had been mad at her brother and
El Caireles, but she later on helped them solve the situation. She falls in love with El Caireles, and they end up together by the end of the story.

¿Con quién andan nuestras hijas? (Who Are Our Daughters With?) (1955)
Director: Julio Alejandro (adaptation), Marco Aurelio Galindo (story)
Film Production Company: Corsa

Synopsis
The film tells the stories of several young girls from different class backgrounds and occupations. Isabel (Silvia Derbez) is a secretary who lives with her middle-class family in an apartment in Mexico City. Isabel’s family is composed of her parents and younger sister Alicia (Martha Mijares), who is a student. Isabel falls in love with Rodrigo (César del Campo), a rich but idle young man for whom a young girl committed suicide in the past when she discovered he was only interested in having sex with her. When Isabel finds out about this, thanks to her father who found the evidence in an old newspaper, she breaks up with him. Rodrigo, in revenge, seduces Isabel’s younger sister Alicia, but Isabel prevents them from running away together. A school friend of Alicia, Cristina (Luz María Aguilar), is the daughter of a rich businessman. Cristina lives in a big house with her father and the domestic workers, but her father is never at home, which saddens Cristina. Cristina meets a motherly woman in a park who becomes her friend, but the woman attempts to sell her to a brothel. A young and beautiful prostitute saves Cristina, and it turns out she is her actual mother, who demands that Cristina’s father, whom she abandoned, look after their daughter better. Lucía (Yolanda Varela) is a colleague of Isabel at the office; she supports her parents economically. Lucía spends her free time with her boyfriend and friends. Lucía’s boyfriend, Mario (Álvaro Ortiz), knows some people who are involved in the drug business, and even though he does not work for them regularly, he turns to them when he has problems. One day, Lucía, Mario and their friends borrow Mario’s brother’s car and crash it. In order to fix it before the brother finds out, they need to get money quickly and Mario accepts a drug smuggling job. Moreover, they ask Lucía to cash a cheque for them, which she does with money from the office, but the cheque turns out to be fake. Mario dies, their other friend is arrested and Lucía is left in difficulties with the police. She must pay the money back to avoid going to jail. Lucía’s father asks for her forgiveness for not paying enough attention to her activities and advises her to confess everything to the police. Lucía’s father helps her out of the situation.

Beatriz (Magda Guzmán) is the ex-girlfriend of the secretaries’ boss. She owns a flower shop that she received from her upper-class parents to keep her busy and avoid involvement with men. Beatriz still loves her ex-boyfriend and becomes his lover, even though he is married. Beatriz gets pregnant, so she sells the flower shop and goes away to start her life from scratch with her child elsewhere.
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Database comprising television programmes and films

*Svenska Filminstitutet*
Online Database comprising film information (reviews, synopses, etc.) http://www.sfi.se/sv/svensk-filmdatabas/

*Cineteca Nacional México*
Documentation centre with printed material and stills from films.

*Filmoteca UNAM*
Documentation centre with printed material and study copies of audiovisual material and stills from films.

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Vi som går köksvägen (Servants’ Entrance) (1932)
Pojkarna på Storholmen (The Storholmen Brothers) (1932)
Hemslavinnor (Home Slaves) (1933)
Flickan från varuhuset (The Department Store Girl) (1933)
Kvinnorna kring Larsson (The Women around Larsson) (1934)
Flickor på fabrik (Factory Girls) (1935)
Fröken blir piga (Lady Turns Maid) (1936)
Han, hon och pengarna (He, She and the Money) (1936)
Familjen Andersson (The Andersson Family) (1937)
En flicka kommer till sta’n (A Girl Comes to the City) (1937)
Herr Husassistenten (Mr. Home Assistant) (1938)
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Volumes 1–9 are part of the series *Ekonomisk-historiska studier*, Scandinavian University Books, which were published in 1965–1973 by Esselte Studium, Stockholm.

Under its new title, the series is included in the publication group *Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis* and is distributed in the same way as the other series of that group.

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