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Multiple Stories At Once: The Use of Triptychs and Ensemble Casts in Lucia, Amores Perros, and La Ciénaga

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Multiple Stories At Once:
The Use of Triptychs and Ensemble Casts in
Lucia, Amores Perros, and La Ciénaga

Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of the Arts
of Bard College

by
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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: <i>Lucia</i>	3
Chapter 2: <i>Amores Perros</i>	13
Chapter 3: <i>La Ciénaga</i>	41
Conclusion.....	69
Bibliography.....	71

Introduction

As I became more interested in Latin American history and culture through the classes I took at Bard but also my experience with culture in everyday life, on top of my own ethnic heritage, I thought it would be perfect to make my senior thesis on Latin American film. I went through Latin American films available and what stood out to me the most were three films in particular, *Lucia* by Humberto Solás, *Amores Perros* by Alejandro González Iñárritu, and *La Ciénaga* by Lucrecia Martel. What became apparent to me with all these films revolved around their structures and how they tied in with other cinematic techniques of each film. *Lucia* presented an example of a tripartite structure consisting of three separate chapters with three different stories around protagonists named Lucia in three different times in Cuban history. *Amores Perros* also takes on this structure as it examines three relationships and the amorality around them in modern day Mexico City. Finally, *La Ciénaga* departs from the tripartite structure instead focusing on the dynamics within one upper middle class family in modern day Argentina. I went about close analysis similarly with each film. I first watched each film around four or five times taking notes on patterns I noticed in each movie whether that be in the form of dialogue, symbols, cinematography, or narrative elements. I made sure to focus as well on mise en scene and anything else I could pick up on that would help me to understand what motivates each story and decipher any overarching themes. I would then take the time to research scholarly articles on the film and watch interviews with the filmmakers of the films to either provide support for my developing ideas or to provide avenues of thought to investigate as I prepare to write. Before I started writing for each chapter I would then look over all my notes from my times rewatching the films and from the sources I engaged with and tried to formulate an argument. When I had

trouble with that, as I often did given the lack of experience with writing on films with these structures, I just started writing, putting pen to paper about said patterns I noticed. Through writing about each title, I had the film pulled up for convenience as I constantly went back and rewatched scenes to make for accurate analysis. From this method I concluded that each film provides a sociological dive into the societies they stem from applying the triptych structure as well as the use of the ensemble cast to explore the various dynamics that dictate their characters' relationships to each other, their environment, the past, and looks towards the future. Despite the differing national and historical contexts these films and filmmakers derive from they still settle on certain narrative and cinematic techniques to tell their stories, hinting at a faint throughline of the Latin American experience and of how film is used to communicate that.

Chapter 1: *Lucia*

The first two Lucia's in their position of wealth are able to keep a distance from politics until they can't. The first shot of the film brings us to a town square where we then are brought to focus on Lucia arriving at church by horse drawn carriage. Politics and racial hierarchies are made clear within this first sequence as the coachman is someone of darker skin as the people he works for are not only wealthy but of a lighter complexion. Within the town square are people of all classes but as Lucia and her circle move throughout the space, they are only concerned with each other and other rich folk. This is emphasized as people of lower classes remain on the edges of the frame or within the periphery, mirroring the perspective of Lucia and her friends, they aren't concerned with people of the lower class. Even when they are looking, in colonial-inspired jealousy and ridicule at Paquita, another woman of wealth, who has a husband from Europe, people of the working class and soldiers walk right in front of their gaze. Even as viewers we ignore them, instead focusing, as they are, on that lucky woman. Not only is this a sign of their numbness or willing lack of awareness to other classes around them but it also marks their relative distance from the war for independence happening at the same time. The soldiers' presence, despite what they represent, only serves as a disruption to their view. We come to find out they're quite aware that there is a war going on as they knit and make things for Cuban soldiers, which aligns with their expected roles as women during times of revolution. However, additionally as people of the upper class, they don't see or participate in fighting, can live comfortably, and go about their Sunday despite their overall colonized position as Cubans. A similar expression of the working class on the periphery comes again when her and Rafael meet for the second time. As it rains, you have poorer people on the right side of the frame and even a

darker skinned man of the lower class in the middle. However, just like Lucia, our focus is on Rafael. As the camera pans, following Lucia move throughout the space, that darker skinned man then is placed to the right edge of the frame. What follows is a cut to a two shot of Lucia and Rafael and as the camera zooms in on them, any sign of others is removed from our focus but also Lucia's as the intimacy of this moment between two "lovers" is emphasized. In this scene she is also made to be unaware of her position as a colonized subject as he rejects her name and renames her "Gardenia", equating her to nature, specifically a plant that has roots in tropical areas. Later on when they are walking in Lucia's backyard orchard, she almost advertises the fruit Cuba has to offer and knowing, in hindsight that he is representative of Spanish colonial interests, these scenes showcase a particular colonial tension within the process of Rafael courting Lucia. The numbness to the classes is further revealed later when Lucia and her friends are leaving church and to the right of the frame are two people of lower class, and again, of a darker skin partially clothed. Lucia and her friends move through the space, not acknowledging them. Instead Lucia's friends gather around to hear a story somewhat representing Lucia's relationship with Rafael but of course, Lucia is unaware of this. Again, the film cuts to a shot focusing on two people, removing those poor men from the previous shot. This time, while we are focused on Lucia and her friend, a darker skinned woman appears behind them, her face on the periphery of the image. Again Lucia's tense positionality is made clear as despite the fact she ignores the working class around her, she is discussing news of her revolutionary brother, who in the scene before had lied to Rafael about.

Lucia's distance from the colonial politics of her time is also exhibited in the sequence where we are introduced to Fernandina. Lucia and her friends are knitting for the revolution until they hear

the commotion going on outside. The film cuts from them knitting to an overhead shot of cows pulling a cart with a dead man through the streets. This overhead shot, along with the fact that we see them look down to the streets from the window above, represent they are observing what's happening from above, in a socio-economic sense but also observing from a distance. They are inside, comfortable and safe, in the white-colored, European-styled home and can just 'come away from the window' while tension arises in the darkness of the streets.

At the same time, her connection to Fernandina is first established for this 1895 episode through editing and correlation of events in each of their stories. They watch above as Fernandina interacts with the soldiers right after Lucia interacts with a soldier, unbeknownst to her, of her own. While their interactions represent opposites: Lucia's is that of attraction to Rafael while Fernandina's is one of tension and friction. This tension is expressed through the perspective of the shaky camera that follows her and the yelling soldier through the space along with the sloppy physicality between Fernandina, the soldier and everyone else in the street. This tension is then exacerbated when put in contrast to the steady camera and white-dominant images of Lucia and her friends in the apartment above. This connection is made apparent again when Lucia's friend tells the proposed story of Fernandina's origins which include being a nun, blessing the dead on a battlefield. After telling of how Fernandina and other nuns were raped and the women react in a mix of awe, horror, or intrigue, the film then cuts to them reciting the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary in church. While the characters may be trying to seek forgiveness for their indulgence in such a story, the editing puts into association two events that again portray opposites: safety and resolve versus danger and terror. Two events again also marked by different techniques to match these opposites. The telling of Fernandina's story is

marked by a shaky, mobile camera, with overexposed shots to emphasize the contrast between darkness and light in this surreal telling of war's violence, along with the use of silence, chilling instrumentation, and a medley of voices, helpless groans, to signify the expansive effect this type of violence registers for many people of this time. Whereas in the scene following, we have a more steady camera that only uses two shots, one that captures them all praying and one that focuses on Lucia's profile, as it was her that saw the most horror in the retelling of Fernandina's rape. Fernandina's and Lucia's experiences correlate once more after Lucia and her friends celebrate the announcement of her and Rafael's plans to marry. For Lucia, this celebration consists of laughter, singing, a bright image, the camera taking on Lucia's perspective as she stands in the middle of the celebration circle or plays a blind man's bluff, the latter of which is soundtracked by cheerful music even though Lucia is walking blind into Rafael's trap. In the next sequence the film cuts to Fernandina jerking around uncontrollably in the streets, almost as if she feels what's coming next for Lucia or feels the weight of this progress in Rafael's seduction. Someone on the street even says, "She's got a spirit inside her". People in the street then harass her and instead of playing a blind man's bluff or making jokes about marriage, they throw her belongings around and force 'the duke of drunkards' on her as they circle them both singing "Fernandina is a virgin!". Of course, the camera is mobile and not steady to correspond to the movement of its characters but also the intrusion on Fernandina and her body as she's thrown around and confined to the arms of this drunk man. While the communal singing resembles that of Lucia's gathering, the image capturing it all is dark and gray and what's being sung is twisted considering the story about Fernandina we heard earlier. In the next scene when

we hear about Rafael's wife and family in Spain it becomes clear that both "celebrations" of union are soiled.

From here, the experiences of Fernandina and Lucia become less juxtaposed and they start to interact with each other on screen. For example, after Lucia agrees to take Rafael to the coffee plantation of her youth, she is walking through the streets when she is confronted by Fernandina. This time, as their experiences are not juxtaposed or put side by side, they both now occupy the dark image of the streets as foreboding music plays in the background. This, for one, foreshadows the mistake Lucia is about to make in its ominous nature but it also shows how this decision will take her away from the white-washed world she once lived in. In Fernandina's pleas to not take Rafael to the plantation it begs the question, how does she know? They hadn't interacted on screen before, they never saw each other or been in the same space but Fernandina knows Lucia is making a mistake and knows where to find her to tell her so. These questions bring to light an almost spiritual nature present, at least, within this first episode. Fernandina's felt the tension since the beginning with each step of the way in Lucia and Rafael's relationship. We see her rise from the dirt, mock the Spanish soldiers and plead for Cubans to wake up after Lucia meets Rafael. She jerks, shakes, curses 'Frenchified dandies' and is put into fear and uncomfortability as things between Lucia and Rafael are about to get serious and now is trying to warn her. Lucia then of course leads Rafael and the Spanish to a rebel stronghold and witnesses war.

The following sequence cuts between the violence of war and Lucia's sense of horror as she moves throughout the forest, processing not only Rafael's betrayal but her confrontation with the politics of the time mirrors Fernandina's experience with war earlier. She loses a sense

of her humanity and innocence as she witnesses mass death but also the death of her own brother. The world in which she will follow society's plans for her and marry, start a family, live the life of wealth, and backyard orchards comes to an end. As she walks to the same town square we were introduced to Lucia in, an elderly woman of the street, of darker skin, without prompt, points her to the direction of Rafael. Again, another woman is included in this spiritual connection to portray a spiritual connection amongst many. In her black dress, contrasted to the white one she's worn throughout, she storms toward the square. Immediately she is almost stopped by one of her friends from earlier, even though she knows what's to happen next. But Fernandina's shadowing presence provides the energy and will to keep going. In her stride, her hair is unkempt in the wind as the instruments of the religious gathering builds suspense. The camera, once she's in the crowd, swirls around and is mobile, portraying both her sense of disorientation but also urgency as she is desperate to find Rafael. Right before she takes her revenge on Rafael, two women walk behind her, backing her attempt at revenge. After stabbing Rafael, the film cuts immediately to her friends screaming in horror and running away, marking the official death of the Lucia we were introduced to in the beginning of the film. In addition, the screams of those in the town square only are included in the audio when the camera is on them, once the film cuts back to Lucia's attack on Rafael, it only features his screams. By emphasizing his screams and including no music, that in which has normally accompanied violence in the film, Solás emphasizes the violent act in of itself and what these screams of agony, along with Lucia's screams of aggression come to represent. They serve as a release and surrendering of power for Rafael as an agent of colonial oppression losing his life and a claim of power and

autonomy for Lucia who has yet to have real control up until this moment but has avenged her brother and the revolution.

As Lucia is pulled away from Rafael, Fernandina caresses her emotionless face with an empathetic sensibility and showing concern on her face. She seems to feel for Lucia like a concerned parent might and might even be sad that this had to happen to Lucia. This is marked especially by the score in this scene which takes on a more somber character; the same arrangement used to score the scenes after Lucia finds out about Rafael's family in Spain. As this vengeful act represents power being claimed it also represents innocence or humanity lost. Overall, considering what may be true about her experience with colonial violence and the connection Solás makes clear is present between the two, it makes one wonder if Fernandina, in a way, is the Lucia before Lucia. A succession of characters in tune with one another despite a lack of interaction as well as characters with similar experiences would fuel the idea that Lucia represents more than just a female protagonist in a tragic story but also Cubans as a whole in their colonial and imperial positionalities.

Lucia and her struggles are representative of something deeper, something communal, and something Cuban in a colonial context. While everyone isn't coming from wealth and then propelled into the physical implications of colonialism, in the colonial context there's questions of bodily autonomy as seen with Fernandina but also with Lucia when she is with Rafael in the warehouse. There's questions of commodification as she takes on identification with nature pleasant to his Spanish gaze, puts onto display the products of Cuba and allows him and soldiers access to where coffee is grown. In that same sense there's also the question of independence as

Lucia is conscious of the war and there being a revolution to work for but also instigates unknowingly, a battle for that revolution and the death of its revolutionaries.

Lucia and her mother in 1932 also show signs of their class when her and her mother are sent to 'the keys' by her father because of the riots and protests going on where they live. The ability to be removed from sites of political action is a sign of their economic privilege in of itself, despite the tension bubbling, they can be safe and live elsewhere peacefully. This time, instead of ignoring those around them, we see Lucia's mom express her distaste for others. For example, on the boat we see her dressed in the style of a white North American or European woman, holding her cigarette with her ornate filter. Even as the camera maintains focus on Lucia and her mother, again the hats, smaller and representing the attire of different classes take up a portion of the image. So the people of other classes are there but again not of focus, Lucia looks off into the distance pondering her situation and her mom is in her own world or looking at her. As the camera zooms out other people on the boat come into view and at the same time, Lucia's mom then looks condescendingly up and down at a woman of darker skin. Race is then again made clear to be important to the mother, who revels at her North American appearance in the mirror, when she talks about her husband's alleged girlfriend who is, "ugly as sin" and is a "mulatto who can pass for white...except for her hair!". The hierarchy through features is put on display again in Cuba, maintaining life forty years later than when we first were made aware of it and under a different oppressor. Going back to the boat scenes, after they get off the boat, we see them walk towards their property with young men of lower class, partially clothed, walking with their luggage. Aside from the fact they walk without their luggage as if it's routine, the mother says to the boys, "Follow us, please. Don't fall behind," flippant and dismissive. Once again, our

focus is on Lucia and her mother, the others maintaining their position behind the subjects of our focus and so remain in the background, just as they do to our protagonists. Other than that, in the keys, people of lower class continue to appear as subjects walking by Lucia rather than people to interact with. These scenes, similarly present within the first episode, show that while they are there, and as viewers you can see them if you look hard enough, they aren't important to the perspective of our wealthy characters. They are only as the viewer notices them and then as our protagonist's story continues, they are out of sight.

However, this changes when the political comes to Lucia and she sees Aldo carried to safety by the docks. The product of revolutionary violence, injury but also in the same token, a sign of potential death arrives to the safety and peace of 'the keys'. When she meets him for the first time, she meets him in a shack filled with the trappings of fishermen and dock workers, as opposed to a large ornate church or being seduced in a warehouse with large mirrors and paintings, abandoned horse carriages, European-styled furniture and other symbols of wealth as Lucia from 1895 was. Even before joining the movement herself, through hearing Aldo's tales of his struggle and the symbolism of the surrounding objects, Lucia from 1932 is introduced to a different world. One that doesn't bore her, keep her attached to the mirror, one that has her dancing Tango and not to American music, and one that separates her from the overbearing presence of her mother.

Despite Aldo representing a sort of escape from a life she was unsatisfied with her participation in the protest at work and in the street represents resistance on multiple levels. For one, the job she takes up, presumably dealing with tobacco, in accordance with historical fact was most likely owned by American imperialists. Not only does that situate her bosses, who look

like her mother, into an overseer-like position but it makes her restroom vandalism an act much more layered. It also brings about a tension similar to the one present in Lucia of 1895 having a former slave plantation as a rebel hideout to fight against colonial forces. This time, Lucia of 1932 is most likely working for her imperialists as she uses the money to help those trying to take down the regime it propped up. However, as she writes “Down with Machado” she is defacing American property, and in a minute way, fighting against imperialism. The camera maintains one position panning back and forth between Lucia and Flora as they write on the walls, the sense of space is restricted. In the end it could just be a small bathroom afforded to the workers but combined with the cuts to their coworker keeping look out, yet again in a small space, the pressure to get this done quickly is highlighted as they could get caught at any moment. In the same token, this brings to mind earlier scenes of her mother, Lucia in 1895 and her friend in the mirror, posing and imitating. This political act then marks Lucia contributing to the workplace as a political battleground. Politics not only has shaped their relationship, her social circle, and everyday experience but even now has a presence at work. In conjunction with her participation in the following protest and the violence she endures, she is now truly with the people, locked in arms. As the police violently repress the women from the factory, including Lucia, they also repress other Cubans at the protest. Violence passed down from that of the colonial powers in 1895. She has traded in a house and safety in the keys for a one bedroom apartment and the potential for danger to herself and loved ones.

Chapter 2: *Amores Perros*

Amores Perros by Alejandro González Iñárritu is a film set in three chapters following three sets of characters and their interaction with a destructive car crash in Mexico City as they choose their desires over morals tainting the sanctity of love and marriage, family, and life itself. *Lucia* and *Amores Perros* utilize the structure of the triptych similarly in how they divide their respective stories among three chapters. On a surface level both films use the triptych to examine characters of different social classes within their specific contexts. In *Lucia*, of course, there is the Lucia of 1895 who is part of a land-owning family who dons European-style dress, lives in European-decorated homes, and owns a plantation. Lucia of 1932 is also relatively wealthy to start off as they have a house in the city and in the 'keys' but not to the same extent as the first Lucia especially after giving all of it up to be a revolutionary. The third Lucia, of 196..., then provides us with the experience of the working-class Cuban living in the countryside. *Amores Perros*, on the other hand, provides a look, first, at the working class as we follow Octavio and his family who live in a cluttered two story apartment. We then live with the rich as we follow Daniel, chief magazine editor, first in his interior decorated house and then later with Valeria, a supermodel, in their luxury apartment. The film then ends with Chivo who is poor but not homeless and rather lives on the outskirts of society. All spectrums of class are covered in both movies as each film provides a sociological portrait of its respective society, contributing a sense of realism and truth. The chapters in each film are introduced by title cards indicating the start of a new chapter. In *Lucia* these titles feature specific years as the film deals explicitly with history and the passage of time and *Amores Perros* uses names as it focuses on characters living in one time period.

Each chapter in both films is, essentially, its own short film with its own story, protagonists and, in *Lucia*, arguably its own style, too. As a result, both films encourage the viewer to reflect on why these stories should be compiled together in this particular order. It primes viewers to be scanning each new “chapter” for similarities and differences to what came before.

Despite the disparate contexts, the two films share an overall structure. For example, the first chapter in both films, namely “Lucia 1895” and “Octavio y Susana”, both provide a grand introduction to their respective films as they outline the violence, fatal mistakes, and betrayal that will affect and/or shape each film as a whole. The first chapter of *Lucia* follows what seems to be a dreamy love story until Lucia is betrayed by her lover, Rafael, as he turns out to not only have a wife and family in Spain but also to be a Spanish spy. And so as her attraction to him contains political implications considering her and her family’s role in the war for independence, her attempts to then run away with him lead to the climax battle scene. The grand nature of this event is highlighted by time it takes up in the film as it constitutes an almost 10 minute sequence. Additionally, the movement the camera takes on in these scenes: an energetic mix of tracking shots, shaky camera movement, pov shots and quick cutting on action as well as wide shots that showcase both the breadth of the battlefield and the intensity of the violence. The sequence continuously cuts back to Lucia’s reaction, emphasizing the impact this traumatic moment is having on her. This is the first time Lucia witnesses such violence—and she loses her beloved brother in the process. The choreography of the fights and the smoke that encapsulates and backgrounds it contributes to its theatrical nature. In the end it helps to make for the most violent scene in not only the first chapter but the whole film. Despite being deceived and paying the

consequences she then uses violence as an act of reclamation of freedom and authority when she kills Rafael in the town square. This then introduces to the viewer themes that will play out in the rest of the film such as the varying degrees of violence each Lucia will have to deal stemming from either the colonial/imperial powers or their lovers, Rafael of the first chapter setting the standard and representing a portrayal of both. At the same time, and on a more hopeful note, Lucia's act of rebellion then sets the precedent for the defiant nature both Lucias of 1932 and 196... take on in search for their freedom. Stylistically, the "1895" chapter also sets the example for the rest of film as the cinematography continues to change in relation to the class of people captured or as it aligns with first chapter's expression of violence.

Something similar happens in the first chapter of *Amores Perros*. While from the beginning the flawed nature of this love story (if that's what it can be called) is understood, at one point the viewer is led to believe that Octavio will in fact succeed in running away with his brother's wife. The violence that then disrupts that dream is instigated by Octavio as he hires Mauricio, the man he has been dogfighting with, to beat up his brother, Ramiro. Octavio is ignorant to the fact that Ramiro is already planning to leave their neighborhood and so his successful hit on Ramiro leads to the demise of his love story. As Ramiro ends his work day and leaves the store, the film cuts back and forth between him and Octavio with Susana. Herein lies one of the many moments where the Iñárritu makes a parallel between the positions both brothers occupy at this point in the film. After being disrespected by his brother, Jarocho, and being rejected by Susana this moment represents a moment where things are working out in Octavio's favor. He is winning dogfights against his rival, Jarocho, and is seducing Susana with the money he is earning. Inversely Ramiro is somewhat facing the consequences of how he treats

people. Ramiro getting jumped, in one sense serves as retribution for the violence he's inflicted on people. On one end, we witness intimacy as the camera is positioned up close and personal to Octavio and Susana as they take up the whole frame. Our attention is drawn to their facial expressions, their hands as they caress each other, and how their bodies almost join together in their embrace of each other. Mixed in with this intimacy, on the other hand, is the process of Ramiro getting kidnapped, the camera jerking to match the force and movement of the men throwing Ramiro in the car. Which is then followed by the camera's position maintained lower towards the ground emulating Ramiro's position as Iñárritu cuts between angles at different distances to Ramiro while he's getting beaten up. With these perspectives as well as low angle shots looking up at Ramiro's attackers, the viewer becomes both a witness from afar and someone right there with Ramiro as he doesn't even get the chance to get up. These events, however, are scored with somber pleading vocals and somber guitar strumming, denoting the opposite sense of victory Octavio might be feeling and instead serves to foreshadow this exercise of power as a tragic mistake. This will motivate Ramiro to get a head start on his plans to leave town sooner than he even originally planned. Aside from Susanna cheating on her husband with his brother or rather Octavio seducing his brother's wife, the second romantic portrayal comes when Ramiro gathers up Susanna and their kid and they escape the neighborhood Susanna takes the money Octavio had been saving up for them all this time. In an act of desperation this, in a sense, forces Octavio to follow through with his big battle with Jarocho despite the lack of protections usually afforded to dogfights through Mauricio.

Through this dogfight comes the violent grand finale to the chapter also present within *Lucia's* first chapter. When Jarocho, frustrated with losing dogs to fights with Octavio,

understands the same might happen here, the camera focuses on his expression as he reaches for something which becomes motivation for the camera to pan down as he takes his pistol from his pants. The anticipation builds as the film cuts and takes on Jarocho's point of view with his gun aimed at the dogs. The anticipation for what's to come reaches a peak as the viewer is led to wince for the dog with firing of the gun and the simultaneous cut to everyone's reaction. As Lucia of 1895 reached her breaking point with the death of her brother, Octavio, after being betrayed (in his eyes) by Susanna reaches his breaking point with Cofi, his dog, being shot. The camera follows from behind as Octavio and Jorge carry a fatally injured Cofi to the car, the handheld, shaky nature of the camera along with the sole sounds of their footsteps (aside from outside noise) serving as expression for the debilitating and shocking effect of Jarocho's actions. All of which is exacerbated further with the camera staying on Octavio, refusing to cut as he turns around and walks back towards the scene of the crime, the movement of the handheld camera now reflecting Octavio's disassociation and anger with what just happened as the camera then pans down to Octavio's hand holding a knife. With the stabbing of Jarocho then sparks the speed chase and resulting violent car crash.

In parallel with *Lucia*, the first chapter of *Amores Perros*, in content and form, introduces us to how the rest of the film may look. As the car chase and accident are shown twice within the first chapter, its significance is not only made clear but as there is a focus on another character involved in the crash, room is made for the crash to appear again later. More notably with the events of the first chapter serving as a flashback in order to bring us back to and explain the car crash sets the precedent of the importance of the car crash in the other chapters. The first chapter additionally sets the example for what motivates the characters; personal desire. Stylistically the

energy and varying degrees of instability of the cinematography in “Octavio y Susanna” will follow in the next chapters even in intimate moments of solitude. Within the context of these two films it is clear that as an introduction or topic sentence introduces what will come in a piece of writing, so does the first chapter of a triptych.

The second chapters of both films, namely, “1932...” in *Lucia* and “Daniel y Valeria” in *Amores Perros*, while maintaining certain themes of violence and uniquely expressing an emphasis on protagonists in the interior, deviate in form and content as compared to the other chapters. In *Lucia*’s second chapter following a Lucia of the middle class who gives up her status to be a revolutionary under American imperialism, we are introduced to violence from the beginning of the chapter. This occurs at night when Lucia watches a group of men carry an injured man off the docks. We come to learn that this is Aldo, a revolutionary who becomes her lover, being hidden away after an altercation with the oppressive regime. It is all the way in the quiet of ‘the keys’ that violence reaches Lucia but it will not be the last time as she falls in love with Aldo and vows to stay by him through the struggles of this rebellion. For example, there is another time in which violence reaches her home as Aldo’s comrade, Antonio, also comes to her home injured from fighting. As with the first chapter of *Lucia* we then actually see violence with the sequences of Aldo and the other revolutionaries’ armed attacks on police or government officials. Violence is then done to Lucia when she takes to the street to protest with her coworkers as she endures police brutality. In all of the actual violence shown we see a continuation of the same fast-paced montage, a mix of shaky and stable camera movement as well as a negotiation of wide shots offering the breadth of the spectacle as well as close ups reflecting the intensity of these moments of violence. From the very beginning also is consistent

capturing of Lucia in an interior space whether that be one of the homes she lives in in the film or at her workplace. This is first introduced when her and her mother move to the keys, that same night she is captured in her bed, her nightgown matching both the white of her bedding and the wall, creating one monochromatic image; she is blending in with the wall. Her expression as she looks towards her mom sleeping peacefully is one of discontent and boredom as she is far from home and in unfamiliar territory. We see something similar later after moving in with Aldo, Lucia sits up in bed looking out the window, deep in thought. Her perspective revealed by the establishing shot looking out the window. The camera pans around the room shaping the rest of the interior before arriving at Lucia's look of discontent; this time only her bedding resembling the wall as her nightgown matches the bed frame, she is confined to her bed. Even in the workplace, most of our perspective of her comes from above, almost like a security camera, as if we're watching her like her strict bosses are, as she blankly and somberly does her job. All of these scenes together, represent a subtle element to her sense of feeling trapped within interior spaces. They represent an internal feeling of resistance to what had been traditionally laid out for women at the time and was even experienced by Lucia of the chapter, "196...".

A coinciding sense of the interior and isolation is brought to the forefront in the second chapter of *Amores Perros*. This chapter follows Daniel, a chief magazine editor, as he leaves his wife and children for his mistress, Valeria, who is also a supermodel at the prime of her career. The violence she faces however, lies in the fateful car crash and how it physically affects her, damaging parts of her body, severely limiting her mobility, and stripping her of her livelihood. This confines her to her new apartment for the majority of film, the only other space we see her in is that of the hospital. Through this chapter a relationship to the interior is so entrenched the

state of the home comes to serve as a representation of Valeria's character development. When Valeria is first surprised by Daniel with the apartment she runs to him in excitement but before she falls into his embrace, the floor crumples beneath her and for a second stops her short. An abrupt disruption to the enjoyment of the fruits of adultery. Iñárritu is also making clear visually that as their home is broken so is the very foundation to their relationship. As this relationship has broken up a family, the new home commemorating this new relationship is bound to deteriorate. Daniel and Valeria then embrace with a painting of a lone figure somberly encapsulated in some sort of red pod. With a lack of background details in the painting outside of the shadow of the red pod, ultimately calling focus to the lone figure, the painting foreshadows the sense of loneliness, isolation, and entrapment Valeria will be facing. Which is then portrayed through the observation of Valeria alone in her apartment during the day. For instance, even as she becomes occupied with finding Richie, who has fallen in the hole mentioned earlier, and we see her struggle with her mobility, we can also see the emptiness of the apartment in the periphery. This is specifically manifested through the long hallways, their sense of space exacerbated by the lack of decoration and the presence of moving boxes. The space, which isn't even fully made a home, becomes an allegory for their deteriorating relationship. Celebratory and affirming balloons deflate, flowers slowly get removed from their vase and eventually Valeria attempts to mentally remove herself from the space despite her confinement to it. In particular, as seen in *Lucia* there is a consistent viewing of the outside world from the window, specifically the billboard of her last modeling campaign. At another point, Valeria takes out her childhood photos. While this can be explained as the nostalgia taking over, it first can be viewed simply as her trying to escape, mentally, from the present moment and space. The camera for the

most part in this chapter is relatively stable to reflect the mundane aspect of being confined to the house. The camera only becomes more expressive during arguments with Daniel and attempts to save Richie. As a result of her progressing injuries, her lost dog, increased conflict with Daniel, and even financial problems, the apartment's floorboard continues to decay, so that even when they find Richie and she makes her last trip from the hospital we understand we are now witnessing a character that is also broken.

The second chapters of both films serve as a space for a disruption in certain elements of the narrative and the style in which they're shot. The cinematography of the second chapter of *Lucia* is markedly different from what came before (or what will follow). The standard manipulation of light exposure causes the viewer to rely on gesture and motion to delineate internal character development. The frequent over- and under-exposure of the image in the first chapter visually clued us in to and dramatized the hope and tragedy experienced in this part of the film. On the other hand, the continuation of a bright frame in *Lucia*'s third part emphasizes the energy visually afforded to the heat of Lucia's relationship with Tomas, the heat of the countryside, and intensity of the revolutionary moment. In terms of content, the second chapter deviates from the other two in terms of its love story. The love story between Aldo and Lucia in "1932" seems to be one of actual love. She meets him in a shack in the 'keys' through the romantic element of chance and they share a connection from the start. They stick by each other until the very end. This contrasts heavily with the tale of seduction and betrayal in "1895" and the account of possession and need for change in "196...".

In "Daniel y Valeria", the camera, as mentioned before, is relatively stable in comparison to the frantic energy displayed throughout the film but this comes with the new perspective

within the film we are seeing: that of the upper class. Instead of the crowded two story apartment seen in the first chapter, or the remnants of a factory seen in the last chapter, we see both a spacious, modern, and tastefully decorated apartment. In a presentation of different characters in Mexico City, this chapter allows us to see a character receive medical attention easily as opposed to the attention necessary for Susanna's son in the first chapter. We get to witness the privilege of tailored suits, dresses, and kept up appearances as opposed to baggy or the tattered clothes of El Chivo, our third protagonist. While Valeria doesn't necessarily escape the crime in Mexico City considering crime motivated the car crash, Daniel and Valeria don't commit crimes and don't need to in order to make money. In providing this divergence from other patterns of the film, the second chapter in both films opens the inclusion of deviating storylines and techniques to cover the spectrum of experience within the societies being put on display.

The third chapter of each film is then more aligned with certain themes present in the first chapter as they both hold significant weight in each film. In the third chapter of *Lucia*, "196..." there is a continuation of certain themes of community and ill-fated love present in the first chapter. As with the first chapter where people pay attention to and gossip about the status of others, who they marry, and who they're seen in public with, the same happens in "196...". They gossip about Lucia and Tomas in their new marriage and how much they're attached to each other. In the first scene of the chapter, the truck going to pick women up to go to work wait for Lucy and with a hint of jealousy or judgement comment on how now that she's with Tomas it takes her longer to leave the house. Other comments are made by older women as they reminisce about the beginning days of their marriages while also judging Lucia during hers. As in chapter 1

where, without prompt, Fernandina warns Lucia about her plans and then later the elderly lady tells Lucia where Rafael is in order to take revenge, Lucia's whereabouts are also noted in the third chapter. When Lucia has Gloria over to complain to her about her marriage, Tomas hears about it from his mother and when Lucia leaves him later on, as he's looking for her he is able to just ask one of his friends who then successfully leads Tomas in the right direction. Despite the fact that Tomas needs his truck to get around or Lucia's family in "1895" uses horse and carriage to travel, there is still a sense that the community is small enough so that people know each other's names, business, and whereabouts. The first and third chapter also share examples of ill-fated love, as mentioned previously, where Lucia's love in "1895" tricks her into falling in and turns out to be a Spanish spy who leaves her in the mountains and is the reason for the death of many Cuban rebels, including her brother. In the third chapter, Lucia's husband, while starting out as affectionate turns out to be controlling, jealous, and temperamental as he prohibits her from working and even makes it hard for her to learn how to read and write. The weight of third chapter

In *Amores Perros*, there is a continuation of the presence of crime and violence as well as conflicts related to family dynamics in the third chapter, "el chivo y maru". Whereas Octavio and Ramiro engage in either dogfighting or robbery, El Chivo engages in robbery and kidnapping. The presence of crime, in this context, also being an indicator to the need for money and therefore class the third chapter brings back into focus. Whereas Chivo is more on the outskirts of society than the characters in the first chapter, the rich as the focus is left behind in the second chapter. In addition, Octavio's crimes in chapter one directly link to chapter three through his dog Cofi. Octavio dogfights Cofi numerous times in the first chapter which in a scene mentioned

before, is the reason he is shot and bloodied when Chivo gets him from the car crash. But through the dogfights Cofi is brutalized, especially in his relationship to other dogs and so when this is brought to light as he kills Chivo's dogs when Chivo leaves to stalk who he was hired to kill, the events of chapter one have a direct effect on the events of chapter three. As the death of his pack affects him (which will be discussed more later) it then changes Chivo's entire plan and even though he still goes about his hitman job, he instead kidnaps his target, and then robs and kidnaps the man who hired him.

As the final installment in both films, the third chapters also carry a different potential for change within the protagonists as well as the open endings they contribute to the overall film. The title of the third chapter, "196...", and its refusal to specify the time it is covering in a film about history allows for the audience to reflect on how this chapter could relate to their current moment in 1968. As this is situated in the concluding chapter of the film, it also works to represent as a conclusion would in a piece of writing. In alignment with an actual conclusion in a piece of writing, the chapter reiterates some of the recurring themes of the film such as the ill-fated nature and the political implications of love, the physical and social position of vulnerability our Lucia's inhabit as well as the process of revolution. Partly through the ellipsis in the title of the chapter it also provokes thought about the future of our characters and Cuban society. This particularly apparent in the potential for change within our final Lucia that shows a departure from our previous Lucias. Lucia in "196..." while initially being trapped by Tomas, eventually takes a stand against him and chooses to leave him since he won't let her participate in the programs brought by the revolution. Eventually there becomes no negotiation between her freedom and her love, she has to have both or there can't be love. This differs from the Lucias of

the past where, for example, our Lucia of “1895” falls into a trap, inadvertently compromising her revolutionary responsibilities to which her act of revenge while representing a stand against colonialism also situates her alone at the mercy of the colonial guards around Raphael. Lucia of “1932” gives her all to her husband and even though he was a revolutionary so she was also contributing to the revolution, the ending of the chapter highlights her solitude and almost helplessness after his death. But the ending of “196...” also instigates further reflection during the scene on the beach where both Tomas and Lucia want to be together again but aren’t budging on their wants and needs. As a result their tussling on the beach represents a continued struggle for Lucia’s freedom despite the fact she made a stand against his control and left him earlier; there is still work to be done to maintain her freedom. All of which goes on as a little girl, as mentioned before, representing the next generation’s version of Lucia in all of her youth, watches on. As viewers you understand there is more fighting to secure freedom and whether or not we know if Tomas and Lucia are going to be able to get back together or who actually this little girl is, this Lucia is still fighting in the end.

On the other side in *Amores Perros*, Chivo, in his presence throughout the movie as well as the actions he takes to change himself also provide for reflection about the future in the film’s concluding chapter. The sketching out of Chivo, his character and what motivates him, takes place throughout the whole film. We are introduced to him, without name, in the first chapter as he murders the business man in the restaurant and we see what pulls at his heart and the family he is disconnected from as he attends the funeral of his ex-wife. Throughout the rest of the first and second chapter we then see him with his dogs, even as he takes on Cofi and begins nurturing him back to health but also we see how he is stalking his new hired hit. While all the storylines

come together at the car crash, the storyline of the first chapter makes it way through to the third chapter, the second chapter's story dips into the first but for the most part doesn't infiltrate the third. While we operate without knowing Chivo's backstory up until the third chapter, his presence in the world of *Amores Perros* indicates a sort of weight he holds over the film. And so even with the inclusion of the other storylines we follow it makes one wonder how much the movie is really about him. As he shows up differently in the film, compared to the other protagonists, he also eventually acts differently from them too. Octavio and the three main characters of the first chapter; Ramiro and Susanna, indulge in crime and behavior that poisons them and leaves them dead or alone. In "daniel y valeria" with Daniel's decision to leave his family and also indulge in each other at the expense of their own lives and so in many ways are then stuck with each other outlines the process of their demise. In the third chapter, however, while Chivo does take on a new hitman job, robs Octavio at the car crash while also still preparing to kill this new target, he doesn't continue to indulge in the vices as the characters of the previous chapter do. His potential for change is at first instigated by the death of his ex-wife as his propels him to go to her funeral where he sees his daughter, presumably for the first time in a long time, and then feels the pushback of his presence from her aunt. It is after this that we see Chivo "visit" his daughter's apartment and at least look her in the eye, even if from afar. In addition to the big framed picture of her in his room we again see how this familial love, despite his abandonment of her in the past, is something that can take him away from the life of crime or reclusion he normally inhabits. This then is exacerbated when Cofi, as mentioned before, kills his other dogs. For Chivo, his pack of dogs that followed him around on the streets and layed with him in his bed were his family. Throughout the film he doesn't interact with many people

except in the execution of crimes, and as he moves through the streets almost unnoticed his dogs are always with him. We see how he cares for them as he requested Gustavo and the corrupt cop to bring forty tortas, one being for him and the rest being for the dogs. He gets excited when there aren't certain condiments on the sandwiches as he knows those condiments weren't good for his dogs. And so after he comes home to Cofi's bloodied coat as well as his dogs lying dead, it changes him, and for one, makes him reconsider taking another human life. As a result he kidnaps Gustavo, makes him confront his brother and makes him confront what it is he was trying to do; have him murdered. Chivo forces the gun into Gustavo's hand, making him feel the weight of his request as he looks at his brother tied up. Gustavo freezes and stammers, realizing the what it means to have his brother killed, what it would look like. In this way Chivo, who we saw earlier kill a man, his blood from the gunshot sizzling over the hibachi grill, attempts to teach the lesson he learned about taking life to Gustavo before eventually tying him up too. He then proceeds to take Gustavo's clothes and change his look completely from the unkempt flow of hair and beard to a clean shaven face, a messy but shorter and neater haircut. A change of appearance representing a change in character. He then leaves them to their own devices, going to his daughter's apartment where he leaves money and a photo of his new appearance, leaving behind evidence of a new man. And with an emotional voicemail he confesses to Maru the reason why he left and how he will come back to her once he has the courage to look her in her eyes. As he later walks off into the landscape with Cofi, the ending is a complicated and inconclusive one. The barren, cracked landscape he walks towards is a visual indicator to what makes this ending both open ended and complicated. The landscape, the wide space denoting all the possible things that could happen next in this storyline but the look of the space itself a

representation of the dirtiness of both how he got to this point and the effect of his actions. As he has confronted his past and it is safe to assume he might not kill again, he has come to this point by committing crimes and still leaving his daughter behind. His last words to her were on the phone, speaking rather to her voice messaging system, while sitting on her bed in her apartment while she was not home. In some ways its an empty confrontation as, in this universe, she will come home to this message with no way to contact him about it, if she even wanted to. However despite the slight emptiness of his actions, they represent a sense of empathy and change that didn't seem possible for the other characters in the film. As Chivo has something to look forward to, Daniel and Valeria seem to be stuck in a broken apartment together with financial struggles and waning infatuation for each other. Octavio is left alone, injured, and without money, his best friend, and his brother. At the same time, this ending isn't definite as it still provokes questions: Will Maru even welcome her father back into her life? When will Chivo be able to safely return to Mexico City? Will Octavio be in danger from Jarocho now that he has survived the crash? Will Daniel go back to his family? In the end, the third chapter takes the chaos of the rest of the film and provides an example for change to keep the hope in humanity alive.

The open ending of each film then puts into perspective the endings of each chapter of both films as they all in some way or another represent an open ending. In the context of the structure of a triptych, this use of the open ending indicates the space for more to happen, for the story to continue. In *Lucia*, the ending of "1895" leaves us wondering what will happen to Lucia? What will happen to Cuba? The transition into "1932" then shows how Cuba is then put under another system of oppression and so without knowing exactly what happened to the Lucia of 1895, we know that despite her revenge against colonial forces more work had to be done for

their freedom. In “1932” as Lucia stands by the pier, alone and in emotional pain our questions revolve around her and her child’s future now that she has left her mother and are no longer friends with the people she had befriended before. With the story ending on the pain of her face as she looks into the camera, as if to say, “help me” it can be assumed that she struggles after the movie ends. Questions also come to mind about what happens to Cuba now that its revolutionaries are either dead, unmotivated, or without support. However, ushering into “196...” post-revolution of 1959 we are introduced to sun and camaraderie until the ending then provides us with both hope and fear of a repeated past for Lucia and Cuba. In a chronological telling of a country’s history, the open endedness of each chapter suggests a continuing history, a history that is consistently developing and experiencing varying degrees of progress. It portrays an understanding of history and progress as something that is dependent on the work of its people.

In *Amores Perros*, the string of open-ended endings serve a different purpose. Despite the fact that the characters occupy the same world and occasionally cross paths, the chapters are devoted to the events leading up to and the events proceeding the characters’ experiences with the car crash. The chapters take a look at how this car crash was either a punishment or agent for positive change. The open endings then provoke reflection about how they will continue to live their lives despite the mistakes they have made or physical trauma they have been through. With the beginning of the film starting off with the car chase sequence that leads to the violent crash the viewer is only made to be curious about what happened to result in this chase and crash. At the end of the first chapter we witness the end of Octavio’s journey up until the car crash but we also see what events led up to Valeria being in the crash. Upon the car crash through Valeria’s

perspective the film then transitions to the title card for the next chapter “daniel y valeria” which will take on the life of Valeria and her lover after the crash. However, ending the first chapter on both experiences of the crash and then following into a new story temporarily puts an end to Octavio’s story both answering our curiosities up until this point but also provoking curiosity about what happens to him, his best friend and Cofi after. It temporarily confines his story to the events leading up to the car crash as we now begin to wonder what’s going to happen to other characters involved. There are two stories with blanks to be filled in with the ending of the first chapter, but transitioning into the second chapter, only certain curiosities are answered. By the end of the next chapter, the viewer is led to question: what will happen to Daniel and Valeria? Will they stay together or will Daniel go back to his wife and kids? Now that her modeling career is most likely over, what will Valeria do with her life? The story of Daniel and Valeria ends with chapter two but after seeing Chivo throughout the chapters move about in the city and the title card, “el chivo y maru” come up on the screen we are left wondering about Chivo’s story. The third chapter then answers this curiosity and as mentioned before, the ending of this chapter and the film, we are then curious about the rest of Chivo’s story but also the story of the other characters. The open ended nature of the chapters in *Amores Perros* makes for questions about the film regarding timeline and chronology as the viewer tries to situate the order of events amidst flashbacks, jumps forward, and the presence and interaction of characters outside of the chapter focused on them. Through this lens the film becomes a collage of experiences, motivations, and consequences revolving around characters within the same environment but connected by the violence of a car crash.

Therein lies the root for the differences between the two films despite their structural similarities: their purpose. *Lucia*, as mentioned before and in the previous chapter revolves around a configuring of a nation's history. The focus being on select characters named Lucia in each period in history to establish continuity and the perspective of various experiences under oppression in Cuba leading up to their present moment after the 1959 revolution. While *Lucia* trumps together love and the personal with politics, *Amores Perros* is more about the amorality within the, then current moment, in Mexico City. As Iñárritu says himself in the pressbook for the Cannes Festival, "Mexico City is an anthropological experiment...such rates of population, violence and corruption...incredible and paradoxical as it may seem – it is a beautiful, fascinating city, and that is precisely what *Amores Perros* is to me," (Hart 188). It focuses on characters of different social classes using the symbols of the car crash, violence in different forms, dogs, and the importance of photos in order to show the role that ego, nostalgia, regret and consequences play in these attempts to fulfill personal desire. Therefore, it also differs technically from *Lucia*. While *Lucia* picks and chooses when to provide still and calm cinematography, *Amores Perros* lives within the handheld, shaky camera. It lives within cuts on action to emphasize the intensity and speed in the moment. The cinematography emulates the chaos of the story and its characters.

In the first chapter, Iñárritu shows us the ego involved in the chasing of desire with Octavio in the chapter "octavio y susanna". It starts in the beginning of the film when Susanna comes to him confessing that she is pregnant once again and worried about what Ramiro will do. In this intimate sequence of the camera up close with over the shoulder pov shots and their reversal, we come to understand the safe space this moment is for Susanna as she tells this secret

in a living situation barely spacious enough to keep secrets. All of which is kept intact until Octavio suggests she run away with him and to her confusion at this proposal, he forces a kiss on her and as she walks away angrily, the desire on his face ringing true almost into a smile. Here presents our first example of amorality within the film: Octavio trying to run away with his brother's wife. While it represents a betrayal against his brother he is also defiling the safe friendly space that was there between him and Susanna. Even as he confesses his plan to a skeptical Jorge, he washes his face, signaling a transformation, and looks into a makeshift mirror, determined to go through with his plan. To do so he begins dogfighting and even in the introductory meeting and tryout dogfight with Gordo we see Octavio's face light up at the exchanging of money, amounts he hasn't seen before, and the pride felt after Cofi's victory, and in other words, his first victory. He rides the high of this victory in his visit to his brother's job where he has bought groceries for Susanna and the baby. In a flash of arrogance Octavio says that he couldn't find condoms big enough for his penis, brashly and still subtly confiding in Ramiro that he wants to have sex with his wife. Buying those groceries at Ramiro's place of work provides additional insult to injury as he undermines Ramiro's ability to provide for his family. Ramiro pulls Octavio in by the neck demanding he leave and in this moment, the power dynamics of space in the frame come into play as Ramiro takes up more space; showing his power. However, the counter shot cut to Octavio flips those power dynamics as he then takes up most of the frame before assuring his lack of fear for Ramiro, headbutting him. He then grabs his groceries and leaves as his brother bleeds. With the money gained from his first experience with dogfighting he then feels confident enough to physically confront his biggest obstacle to running away with Susanna: his brother. Despite the fact that later that day Ramiro gets his payback by

beating Octavio with a pipe while he's in the shower and in effect humbles him, Octavio continues with dogfighting riding the high of his victories. This is especially shown in the following montage of both Octavio and Ramiro committing their crimes. In the course of one robbery by Ramiro and his friend, multiple dogfights are won by Octavio and Cofi. As Ramiro and his friend try to get the cash from the register, Octavio is winning lump sums, continuing to store away cash with Susanna, counting it first with Gordo, and all the while being able to buy a new slick car. As he enjoys the spoils of his crimes, he again comes on to Susanna, this time she reciprocates the affection, ultimately providing Octavio a reward for his efforts thus far and pulling him deeper into his delusion that this all will make Susanna choose him over Ramiro. After the confidence gained from both winning his fights but also successfully seducing Susanna, he makes two mistakes: setting up a high reward dogfight without the 'proper' protections and calls a non-lethal hit on his brother. As mentioned earlier these decisions, while made under the influence of power and money will cost him everything as Susanna takes his money to run away with Ramiro, Cofi gets shot, and through the central car crash he will also total his self-defining car. Even later when Ramiro dies from a robbery, Octavio persists at the funeral, insisting Susanna run away with him. His demise then becomes finalized as he gets stood up at the bus stop waiting for Susanna and at that moment when he is tearing up and limping does he realize that all his efforts and everything he has been through has lead to nothing. In this chapter, the dog becomes a manifestation of pride and dominance. As Cofi easily defeated Jarocho's dogs it instilled in Octavio a sense of dominance not only over Jarocho but as mentioned, Ramiro too. He moved throughout his house and the neighborhood with a certain confidence as Cofi was by his side. As a result when Cofi gets shot by Jarocho it marks the breaking point for Octavio and

leads to him being uncharacteristically violent and losing the rest of the money he had, his best friend and his car. In this first chapter we see the process of chasing desire in which Octavio flies too close to the sun and faces dire consequences for his attempts to break up a family and indulge in violence and crime.

In the second chapter and parts of the third we see how both the dogs present and images of the past contribute to the sense of nostalgia and regret in the process of the blind indulgence of desire. After successfully getting with a married man and having him leave his family for her, she doesn't even get to get champagne to complete the celebration. The car crash and the resulting injuries become an immediate consequence for her actions. Something she's aware of as she implores Daniel not to tell her father, "He'd say I deserved it". As a result of her injuries she then loses her modeling contract with Enchant and "[most beautiful woman in iberian america] is removed from the spotlight. As mentioned earlier this then restricts her to the interior and as Richie falls beneath floorboards marks the beginning of the end of the affectionate relationship we're first introduced to. The mark of this end first being noted to when Daniel comes home from work and we are met with a close up of a tea kettle boiling. The boiling water being a representation of the tension building within Valeria in the midst of being heavily injured and losing her self-proclaimed 'child'. She has had hours to sit with the fact that she can't get to him, as a result of her new immobility she doesn't have the same sense of control she might've had before. Now Richie's importance in the story despite his physical lack of presence is brought to light after his cries from below get Daniel and Valeria out of bed at night to look for him. The next day she's told her Enchant contract is finished and she ends up looking through modeling campaigns in magazines. Flipping through frivolously, we see from an over the shoulder shot

images that remind her what was, things she used to be able to do. The camera even tilts down slightly to one of the model's legs before there is a cut and she moves from the table. With anger, she moves to the hole where Richie fell and looks for him again, the camera positioned on the ground, right with her as she struggles out of the wheelchair. The emphasis on images, representing a subtle or subconscious dealing with their choices comes right after the previous scene when Daniel's assistant tells him his wife is calling but before he picks up the phone, the camera pans over a framed picture on his desk of him and his family. This image in of itself represents the fact that he is keeping up the story of his marriage in public but at the same time his decision to leave them weighs in the background of his conscious as he is reminded of it everyday. After he answers as if his wife is on the phone, Valeria takes offense despite the miscommunication from his assistant. They get into a mini-argument before Valeria mentions that she thinks the rats ate Richie and in this moment the discussion of Richie takes them away from their conflict. In these instances before and after the phone call Richie distracts the both of them from the underlying problems present in both scenes. In the very next scene their frustrations manifest as Daniel yells about their lack of options to getting Richie and Valeria yells after Daniel tries to distract her sexually from her worries about her leg. But as they're staring at each other in frustration, they begin to hear shuffling from beneath, a sign of Richie, and the camera begins to shake as their excitement at his presence builds. They smile and are joyous that this may be the time they can get him from beneath the floorboards but they don't. However their instant happiness at hearing him despite the fact they can't see him goes to show how they're latching on to the idea of him. They're latching onto the idea of what it was like when he was around, when things were still romantic and titilating. Later that night, Daniel walks out into the

living room to see Valeria staring at her Enchant billboard, something they both do at certain points in the chapter. They do it for the same reason that they jump at the sound of Richie's cries, it reminds them of the past. This time it is a visual reminder as to what Valeria looked like. For Valeria it reminds her of her beauty, a beauty that got her paid, in front of television cameras and on a billboard in the first place. For Daniel, it reminds him of the model girlfriend he had when there were no arguments, no yelling matches, but rather his little secret he could sneak away to whisper to. It is a reminder for both of them that things have changed for the worse since getting together. As the apartment was bought because of its location to the billboard, so that it could be admired by the both of them, the car accident has now made it so that it is a reminder of their mistakes. There's further reflection for Valeria when she's home alone looking at old family photos. The camera maintains views of an old picture from her perspective followed by a cut to a close up of her face as she tears up, her modeling pictures behind her. There is a cut back to the picture as she caresses it slightly and puts it away. She then looks at an old letter and another picture, presumably of herself when she was younger. What comes to light is the pile of pictures behind it noting to the fact that she looked and reflected over other pictures of the past. Images are used here to, again, reflect on a better time, and as mentioned earlier, to escape from the current reality in which her career is finished, her love life is scarred and she is without her dog. So when Daniel comes back home after finding out they had to amputate Valeria's leg, he is again captured looking at her billboard, this time understanding that she won't ever look like that again. It is in this moment he is distracted by Richie from beneath the floor and, again, the observational still camera then gains energy as he frantically tears up the floor. All concerns about finances go out the window as he eventually finds Richie and holds onto him like he

himself lost a child. He holds on dearly to a token of a better past. In the end, when Valeria returns home and they stare out the window at what is now empty space it is now clear that the past is no longer in reach. They are stuck in their circumstances and all that comes with it.

In the chapter titled, “el chivo y maru” photos and dogs are used similarly to come to terms with mistakes of the past as Chivo uses both to rewrite history. We see how he uses images for his personal memory as he defaces a photo with Maru, his daughter, posed with her mom and step-dad. He takes a photo of himself as he is currently and places it over the head of her step-dad. In this act he is trying to deny the importance of her stepdad to her life by asserting that he is her biological father. However this assertion of ownership fails to rewrite history as there is a reason he is not in this picture since he hasn’t been in her life and it is made clear throughout the film that he is dead to her. It works with the motif of his eyesight being shot; he says, “If god wants me to see blurry, I’ll see blurry” and so he chooses to not see life fully and clearly. Therefore he will defile the remembrance of a moment like his daughter’s graduation in order to make the claim of being her father despite not acting like one all these years. And so when he puts on his glasses while laying in bed, a baby picture of Maru hanging over him, the frame goes from blurry to clear in the moment. He then looks up at the baby picture and begins to tear up. By looking at the picture with clear sight, he is confronted with the mistake of leaving his daughter in the past and partly feels the weight of it, especially after the death of his dogs. Which brings to light the other use of photos, similarly employed in Daniel and Valeria’s chapter; the use of photos to look back at memories and indulge in nostalgia. We see this at two key moments in Chivo and Maru’s chapter. Once when Chivo breaks into Maru’s apartment and is drawn to photos on her wall of her growing up, her at different ages, and posed with her mother. It is then

afterwords that he takes the graduation photo for himself to deface it later. Before he defaces it though, in the comfort of his home, comes the second key moment in which photos serve to induce nostalgia and recall of memories. He is sat at his the kitchen table, looking through his photo album. We see pictures of him when he was much younger as he is either posed by himself or with his daughter and ex-wife. Here we see the transformation, or transgression rather, of Chivo's physical look from that time till the moment we are witnessing, especially as a picture of both stages in his life are put side by side. But we also get a peak into a reality in which Chivo was a present father. A father who was there for her birth, took her to the beach with her mom, etc. All of which is accompanied by the light strums of a guitar, the score of the film really driving home the sense of sadness present within this peak into the past. It is in the end of the chapter, that the photo is then utilized to represent a sense of personal redemption and resolve. After kidnapping both the man that hired him and the target of the hit, he changes his look completely, shaving his beard and cutting his hair as well as wearing his glasses, embracing seeing life clearly. He then goes to the photo booth again to capture this new self and he replaces the headshot on the graduation photo previously with this new one before putting the picture back onto Maru's bedside desk. After calling her to confess why he left all those years ago, that he has confronted this fact, and that he will come back for her, this new photo replacing the head of her stepdad is supposed to represent Chivo reinforcing to his daughter that he is a changed man. In the universe of the film, when she gets back home and sees the photo, Chivo hopes she will see a different man than the rough-looking one that's been outside her apartment throughout the film. Even though by still resorting to replacing the image of her stepdad his act of photographic redemption is still tainted as he is still denying the importance of the man who was

there for her when Chivo himself wasn't. And in this act of redemption, he is not able to face his daughter as his crimes would possibly soon catch up to him before he could. However, he confesses to her on the phone, in her apartment while she isn't there, he only partially confronts his past through this phone call. He then says to her that he will be back to find her, once he has the courage to look her in her eyes just as the voice message device beeps. Which still represents the same sense of avoidance that has led to him not facing his daughter after getting out of jail all those years ago. When Maru comes across that phone call he will be gone and who knows how long it will take for him to be able to come back safely and speak with her, will she even entertain it?

For Chivo, his pack of dogs that followed him around on the streets and layed with him in his bed were his family. This is made clear especially when his ex-sister in law tells him to leave her and her niece alone and reminds him that he is dead to her. And so as Chivo, throughout the film, doesn't interact with many people except in the execution of crimes, and he moves through the streets almost unnoticed his dogs are always with him. We see how he cares for them when before he is hired by Gustavo to kill his business partner and brother, he requested they bring 40 tortas which were for his dogs to eat. He gets excited when there aren't certain condiments on the sandwiches as those condiments aren't good for dogs. It is, at the same time, this very reason that when they die at the doing of Cofi, who he brought back to health from the pivotal, yet devastating, car accident, that it is revealed that they were a sort of crutch for a man who abandoned his real, human, family. It is after they die that he then puts the glasses on, as mentioned before, and sees things clearly which through this last job he then is able to confront his mistakes. According to Iñárritu, in an interview with Pawel Pawlikowski, he says that Chivo

saw himself in Cofi, that as Cofi killed the other dogs, Chivo was able to come to terms with the violence of murder and how, as a hitman, he was doing the same (cinematographers on cinematography, 2022). As Chivo talks to the man he was hired to kill he also says that if it weren't for Cofi, that man would have been dead already, "the dog redeemed him" (cinematographers on cinematography, 2022). As a result, making the brothers in conflict confront each other he, "realized that the most important bond is within the family unit" and he becomes a twisted, criminal family therapist (Hart 192). However, the pack of dogs served as surrogate children, beings to care for and protect as if they were his daughter to. They provided a false sense of parental fulfillment as Maru is still without her biological father and Chivo wasn't there for his ex wife before she passed and has yet to speak to his daughter face to face as an adult. A similar sense of justice as seen in the first and second chapter is then exacted in the third, what has also allowed him to turn away from his mistakes is taken from him so he is forced to come to terms with his past and himself. And as Chivo eventually changes in his ways, in a way unlike the other characters within the film, he becomes, "the message-bearer of the film", and in other words, the beauty Iñárritu sees in Mexico City despite its violence and corruption (Hart 192). When Chivo walks away into the cracked landscape it is an ending full of positive possibilities for the future amidst ugly circumstances. In the end, all of the characters are punished in some way for their amoral pursuits, which of course is intentional as Iñárritu says, in an interview referenced earlier, that he doesn't like violence that doesn't have any consequences as he lived in a country that was very violent which was painful to watch (cinematographers on cinematography, 2022).

Chapter 3: *La Ciénaga*

The differences between *La Ciénaga* and the previous films studied, rests primarily on the structure of each film. As with the first two films studied there is tripartite structure that consists of three chapters focusing on different sets of characters as their stories contribute to the portrayal of that film's themes. Within the chapters certain techniques and narrative elements persist despite the shifting focus of perspective to create a cohesive and interconnected display of experience. This structure, usually lending itself to longer films, allows for the inclusion of so much information that each chapter, in effect, serves as its own short film. It makes way for themes to be expanded upon and communicated in various ways as it offers up a grander display of a visual narrative. As a result of a singular film with different chapters and their varying literal focal points, the viewership experience is made to be somewhat like the process of piecing a puzzle. The viewer, either during or after watching the film, is forced to make sense of why the chapters and their characters are made separate but still included together as one piece.

Otherwise the three chapters will be taken as three short films which I think would especially take place in a film like *Lucia* where each chapter is in a whole different time, consisting of different characters. However it would be a little harder to disassociate the sections of the film for a movie like *Amores Perros* where the characters of the different chapters occupy the same timeline and even come across each other at different points in the story. *La Ciénaga*, on the contrary, departs from this structure instead providing a single feature length film focused on a set group of characters. Yet, as other films might still prioritize the perspective of one or two characters marking them as the main protagonists, Martel refuses to do so in her debut feature. Subsequently, some characters and their viewpoints, with the exception of a few, are shown less

individually and more in relation to their interactions with the collective. The characters who are captured alone then provide an outlier to how the story is told and brings the viewer closer to potential meanings and messages of the film. Especially as utilized in *La Ciénaga*, this doesn't lend to a grand depiction of society but rather causes the filmmaker and viewer to slow down in their assessment of the film and, to a different degree, focus on the details within the mise en scene, dialogue, and even the score, for example. It may present a different, increased challenge to analyze but embodies the concept of 'less is more.

Martel, with this film, provides a very specific demographic as the center. This demographic highlights the distinct autobiographical lens *La Ciénaga* takes on as our characters belong to a declining wealthy class of people in a specific part of Argentina. This focus is then supported by the dissociative structure of the film and the cinematic techniques it employs as compared to both *Lucia* and *Amores Perros*. To provide context to the focus of the film, Lucrecia Martel herself was born in Salta, Argentina where the film takes place. The family within the film, "works as a mirror against a broader social group well known to the director, whose background is firmly steeped in the routines of this bourgeois community," (Elena & Lopez 233). While the autobiographical aspect isn't alien to what's been discussed before as elements of both *Lucia* and *Amores Perros* maintain personal links to the lives of the filmmakers, the main focus on the wealthy for the whole film provides a departure from the other titles. In *Lucia* the perspective of the upper class in the first two chapters of the film represents a realistic portrayal of how class connected to political rebellions and movements of the respective times. In *Amores Perros* our journey to the upper middle class reaffirms the presence of amorality despite what class someone occupies as the other characters were poor.

La Ciénaga, in straying away from classic hollywood narrative structure, contributes to the sense of disassociation in the viewing of the film. As stated by David Bordwell in *Narration in the Fiction Film*, “in opposition to Hollywood’s emphasis on linearity, on character causality, conditioned by individual motivations, goals and drives, and on a three-act structure leading towards a pronounced denouement, the characters in art cinema...are typically without clear-cut traits, motives and narrative goals, wandering as passive observers through a certain social milieu,” (Gutierrez-Albilla 215). In *Lucia* and *Amores Perros* it is very clear what the goals and motivations are for the characters in each chapter. In *Lucia*, our protagonists prioritize love and political freedom as Lucias of the first two chapters contribute to the revolutions of their time yet end up alone due to the conflicts around sticking by love. Lucia of the third chapter also deals with this conflict of love as it relates to politics and fights for it until the very end. In *Amores Perros* the characters strived for desire as Octavio sought to seduce his brother’s wife, Daniel started a new life with his mistress, and Chivo was a hitman who was moved by seeing his daughter for the first time in years and eventually vowed to change his life around. Both films also establish clear causality among the characters and the events within the story. We understand the chain of events that lead to Lucia of “1895” killing the man she once loved, Lucia of “1932” ending up alone with a baby on the way, and Lucia of “196...” fighting with Tomas on a beach for her right to work. It is why in the same breath we understand how the characters in *Amores Perros* become involved or nearby a fatal car crash: we know what lead to them being in or around a car crash and how that affected their stories going forward.

La Ciénaga challenges these conventions a little. The characters within the film, to varying degrees, lack narrative goals and lack control of their narrative. Kids most of all but with

exceptions, Gregorio lacking goals and control as he moves throughout the house slowly and silently, not taken serious by anyone, and eventually further distanced from everyone when Mecha kicks him out of the room they shared. We don't know much about his upbringing nor do we know what he wants out of life as the most determined we see him is with a glass of wine in his hand. Neither do we know what Mecha wants out of life especially as the injury to her chest forces her to stay at home. We know that she wants plastic surgery for Joaquin's eye but at the same time has waited twice as long as recommended to even think about setting up the operation. We are also introduced to her as a drunkard and so her past is not clear either but we do come to understand that she does regret marrying Gregorio. As discussed we are shown their lack of connection in the introductory sequence but on multiple occasions Mecha vocalizes her disdain for Gregorio. At one time disgusted saying, "What a pig you turned out to be," after seeing him passed out drunk in the middle of the day. When talking to Tali about Mercedes, an old lover of Gregorio's, visiting, Tali says, "it was always a bunch of bums," referring to the lovers Mercedes took on and to which Mecha replies, "She's always had a weakness for losers," while the camera maintains a close up, with a shallow depth of field, emphasizing the piercing anger in her words, she then completes her thought, "Too bad I realized too late,". Later on in the movie, while Tali tells Mecha that her husband bought school supplies for the kids, Mecha says, looking at Gregorio, "Your husband is extraordinary...while I'm here with—" before being cut off by Gregorio himself. This of course implying she understands the person she's stuck with is far from an extraordinary husband. And this time instead of anger we hear a sigh as she recognizes Gregorio's faults quietly, putting more energy into fanning herself from the heat. This somewhat representing a relinquishing of resentment and rather accepting her current situation as her

chance to leave is stopped in its tracks. Other than that we just see her temperamental and angry side as she implores her maids to answer the phone and is always looking for ice for her wine. Neither do we know what Tali or Rafael want out of life besides their everyday responsibilities. We see them enthralled with caring for the kids and co parenting, Tali's only long term goal being the trip to Bolivia and getting the kids their school supplies. We only know that Rafael works and eventually buys the school supplies for Tali. Outside of that, we don't get a great sense of their past besides Tali's connection to the upper class. Jose as well is only shown to be a party-loving, youthful yet juvenile man who has taken on his dad's former lover. Despite taking on the family business, we don't see him work and don't know about his goals nor his past. The children however are suspended within the narrative as they are on summer vacation and so the passage through school is not relevant, they are only looking for fun with each other. They are also explicitly passive observers as they watch the adults of the family interact, Mariana engaging with her mother's conversation and eventually even contributing to her mother's reasoning for not going to Bolivia as Momi becomes a voice of contradiction and critique for Mecha's reasoning of reality. We only come to understand that Momi loves and is attached to Isabel, the boys enjoy exploring and using guns in the mountains, and Vero maintains an almost incestuous relationship with Jose. As children however, while they exhibit the standard themes of attraction present in stories of coming of age, their stories develop in relationship to the adults around them. Causality is additionally challenged as per the filmmaker's choice, in an interview with the Criterion Channel, Lucrecia Martel says, "The structure of *La Ciénaga* is just like a phone conversation with my mom. It's an absurd attempt to find a cause-and-effect relationship between a painful event and the facts that explain that event" (Criterion 2014). This is made clear

with the first major event, Mecha falling, and the techniques used to make for a dissociative viewing experiencing. Which is brought to light by the editing of the first scene by the pool, we don't know how these people got here, who they are in relation to the story. But specifically when Mecha is cleaning up and taking all the glasses, the film cuts so that we don't see how she gets to exactly every person and as she keeps cleaning up we are surprised about the amount of people. The camera moves up and down, slowly wobbling, the frame cutting off and then revealing parts of bodies, ultimately replicating the perspective of a drunk person, all the way until she falls off screen. While we understand she is drunk we don't know if she tripped on something specifically or simply slipped. A fact that is made up for debate throughout the film as she tells Mercedes on the phone that her fall was a result of her blood pressure dropping but then yells at Momi saying she slipped on a towel and then uses this to reiterate her prejudice for Isabel. We understand that her fall motivates Jose's trip back home and even Tali's visit but we don't know how it may have thrown a wrench in the plans of Mecha's character going forward. What goals did it prevent her or even the family from achieving? We know they sell peppers but we don't see anyone harvest or sell any. As viewers we are just plopped right into this world where these people have all this land and act as they do but without a lot of context.

The challenges to the causality of events and their aftermath are present in other parts of the story as well. For example, the kids and their scars. We don't see how Joaquin damaged his eye, how Martin got scratches all over his face, how Vero got that scar on her chin nor do we see how Luciano cuts his leg at home. We get introduced to these kids with their scars as fact, without explanation. At the same time we do see how Jose gets hurt. As stated in *The Cinema of Latin America*, these scars serve as "a sign of pain" within this world but with the demarcation of

characters by age, they more specifically serve as a sign of passed down generational pain, which will be discussed more later (Elena & Lopez 233). What becomes unclear at the end of the story is the presence of all of these kids in Mecha's house. What ignites this confusion is her reaction to Isabel announcing she will have to leave, Mecha says, "You give them everything: a family, lodging, food... They're all the same... Then you have to look after their kids,". As she mentions looking after kids, there is a cut from Isabel's sad face to half of Joaquin's as the other half is covered by his leg. Within that beat, by association, makes one wonder when did Mecha have to deal with "looking after their kids". Considering Mecha's age and habit of drinking it becomes questionable that all of the children younger than Jose are biologically hers despite the fact that their presence in the film sets up their place within the family as fact. They are always together and comfortable around each other. As they all are of fairer skin it is less clear who has indigenous ethnic roots. In the moment where Mecha makes the above statement, one assumption could put Joaquin in that category and as Momi's name seems to be a shorter version of Momina one begins to question their true relationship. Mecha also repeatedly calls Momi a savage in frustration, the same adjective she uses for Momina and Isabel when they don't answer the phone. We are then continuously left to wonder as it pertains to the sighting of the Virgin Mary in town. Our characters hardly show "signs of belief in what they see, but also fail to look astonished; such claims are accepted as commonplace," (Elena & Lopez 234). As a result, we are then being shown the excitement of characters outside of the story, an element the viewer can't engage with. The brief moments we are brought to the news broadcast of the sighting of the Virgin Mary, there isn't a clear association between what witnesses present are reporting and the events of our characters' stories. As the news is made up to take up the whole frame from time to

time in the film, it is something the viewer is consistently reminded of. However, as Momi visits the site herself with nothing to report it frames this news as hearsay and so the purpose of its presence in the film is questioned further. Our understanding of the world is then left in doubt with other facets of the ending of the film. As Luciano falls off the ladder and barking ensues, the following shots portray a house that's empty, emphasizing the lack of witnesses to Luci's fall but also contrasting with the scene prior in which he was around Tali and his siblings in another room. We then only see a part of Vero's reaction and Jose's but not that of the rest of the family. We are left to wonder how this changes the lives of the other characters.

The focus on the perspective and character of the children in the film is uncharacteristic within *Lucia* and *Amores Perros*. In *La Ciénaga* their inclusion becomes both a symbol of the look towards the future and provides a different outlook on the behavior of the adult characters. Neither of the films before prioritize the perspective of children. This seems to possibly have something to do with the fact that adults are more likely to fit within a story about love and contributing to revolution as in *Lucia*. They wouldn't even necessarily fit as a subject to explore the dynamics of amoralism in modern society as in *Amores Perros*. However, in that film, specifically in the scenes at the dogfighting events, there are children captured watching along as bets take place and dogs fight. In this instance, they are shown as observers as will be discussed in regards to *La Ciénaga*. Other than that children are exempt from study. As a result the other films also use other devices to address the future. In *Lucia* this is realized with each succeeding chapter and with open endings. *Amores Perros* also relies on the use of open endings but also reconfigures time throughout the film so that we are given information and left with questions as the chapters then provide answers to those questions and context to the events in the story. With

the glimpse into a week in this family's life we see the children grouped together in various combinations for most of the time, the outliers being Momi and Luciano. While this can be attributed to the nature of cousins hanging out it sets an example of camaraderie that differs from one set by the adults of the film. Adults who in one instant are talking about each other behind their backs or are in disagreement. Whereas except for the moments in which Mariana and Veronica are scaring Luciano or Joaquin subtly threatens to shoot him in the mountains or when the girls correct Joaquin for eating ravenously; the children are shown hanging out, exploring together, and even affectionate. They are also shown specifically as observers within many scenes especially around adults. This is specifically the case as Tali and Rafael take the kids up to Mecha's house. The camera is placed in the backseat, providing an intimate perspective as if we're there with the family but also recalling documentary style cinematography as it seems to be hand held and with the shaking of the car on the terrain, the camera shakes, it is clear another person is there holding the camera. As Tali starts talking about Mecha, "Poor Mecha. Where will it all end?" we see Luciano avert his gaze on the road to turn to her, the camera on his right capturing Mariana and Tali too. She then goes on, "I say she knew about Mercedes but pretended she didn't" and there is then a cut on dialogue and we see the rest of the car from her perspective as Rafael warns, "Not in front of the kids". With Luciano and Mariana close to her it continuous with the previous shot but what we're reminded of is Martin's presence next to the younger kids. As a result, the initial point of view of Tali as she talks about Mecha's drama is from Martin's perspective. As with this new shot from Tali's perspective we also see Mariana paying attention and so in effect all of the younger kids are taking in what is being said about another family member. Mariana even says, "Gregorio's married to Mecha and he's going out

with another girl?” to which Tali answers with reserve now understanding how her words are being comprehended to which even Agustina butts in for clarification. This is reflected again in Mariana’s response to Tali’s anxiety about cancelling the trip to Bolivia with Mecha. The camera takes Tali at a close up as she sucks her cheeks in to take drags from her cigarette, a shallow depth of field forcing us to focus on her face as she reasons what to say to Mecha, expecting disappointment and disappointed herself. She then walks back and forth in and out of frame, the camera trying to catch up with her in this moment of angst. Eventually with more reasoning, Mariana contributes, “It’s throwing money away,” the concept of budgeting she picked up from hearing Rafael and Tali go back and forth on the subject.

We see how this observance begins to really shape perspectives on the world they live in with the older kids. In the beginning of the film Vero tells Momi that Mecha is going to fire Isabel because she is allegedly stealing towels, an idea to which Momi resists. Even when Isabel is getting clothes for Mecha to take her to the hospital, amidst his check for aging, Gregorio tells Momi to see what Isabel took, vocalizing his mistrust for her too. This leads up to another point in the film when Momi sees Isabel rummaging through the closet and cabinets and says to her, “What are you taking” implying she believes Isabel would be stealing something. It is then revealed she’s looking for something Momi hid from her which she is then made to feel ashamed for. Joaquin is also shown to harbor anti-indigenous sentiment synonymous to Mecha’s. After the visit to the dam, one of Perro’s friends hands Joaquin catfish they caught at the dam and when Martin asks if he’ll eat them, Joaquin replies with disgust, “This crap? It’s all mud. Indians will eat any shit,”. Ironically enough he devours that same fish when Isabel cooks it for the family later. However, later on we see Martin and Joaquin in the mountains with their rifles of another

century. As they hear the cries of a dog they run down and to the indigenous children presents Joaquin says, "Let it go, stupid Indian!". Martin then shoots something else out of tree Joaquin orders them to fetch it. As they run away the camera gets low and we see them leave the frame but we also see clearly the butt of Joaquin's gun, he's ready to use it if he feels the need, especially against them. Later when its just him and Martin, Joaquin goes on a rant saying that the indigenous children had sex with the dog, they, as a people, are attracted to dogs, they can't be trusted, and they all live in the jungle, trying to make them seem inhumane. He comments on their features saying their hair is always in knots, a critique of Momi's hair repeatedly stated by Mecha. In relation to the ideas he holds of indigenous people, clearly from Mecha, the image of his possession of an older gun, his fair skin and the fact that they run throughout nature not afraid to shoot their gun likens him almost to a modern day colonist. A colonial image of dominance is subtly replicated earlier when the girls, including Isabel go out to buy Jose some clothes. To figure out how a shirt would fit Jose, Momi suggests they fetch Perro, who Momi had watched, jealously, laughing with Isabel. Before he walks up to them, we see Vero look at Agustina with a sly look implying something devious going on. As Vero gets him to take off his shirt to try on the other one, all the girls watch him, Isabel looks away in embarrassment, and his friends watch intently from outside. Its an event in itself. The camera then gets closer to Perro as he puts the other shirt on with a brief cut to a close up of Isabel's face as she looks away, she can't stand to see him being partially unclothed for their entertainment. Vero even notices Isabel's disdain for a moment. Before he walks away we even see visible anger from Isabel. Again, considering these children have European roots and the fact they're putting Perro on display in front of everyone for their entertainment and to embarrass Isabel (in Momi's case out of possessiveness towards

Isabel), it takes on racial implications that outlines one type of person as a subject and the others as those in control. Vero then sniffs the shirt Perro tried on, waits a second and then throws the shirt towards Agustina in disgust, obviously implying he stinks despite the fact that its a shirt straight off the rack and couldn't necessarily be affected in so little time.

Despite what is observed or how the kids are influenced, Momi's interactions with Mecha show an understanding of what is wrong with the some of the adults in their family. Namely, after Tali and her family make it to Mecha's house and Momi as well as others congregate in Mecha's room. Tali suggests the kids visit her to give Mecha some rest and as Mecha says, "I hardly hear them", Momi replies, "Because you're in bed all day". Later as Tali tends to Mecha's wounds and they talk about her scars, Mecha blames the kids, looking at Momi, for leaving things around for her to trip on. Momi then sarcastically replies, "What did you trip over the other day, Mom?". As she states she tripped over a towel using it to spew her theories about Isabel thieving, Momi interjects, "She doesn't steal towels", eventually saying, "You were all drunk". When leavin the room after Mecha kicks her out she says, "I know how this will end. You'll take to your bed like grandma" which brings out the most animated reaction from Mecha yet. This shows Momi's understanding of Mecha's and even Gregorio's habits, how it impairs them and disables them from functioning properly around the house. She understands that Mecha's injuries are a result of these habits as opposed to how Mecha will try to reason the event to herself and others, making it someone else's fault. In this moment Momi becomes the voice of reason and critique. She also repeats a sentiment about Mecha ending up like her mom made earlier by Tali. Something she wasn't around to hear and possibly couldn't have known by herself and must have been told to her by another one of the kids. In the end Lucrecia Martel

makes a point to show how the kids observe, are influenced by, and even reject sometimes, their elders.

The focus on the perspective of children in *La Ciénaga* recalls the depiction of generations within each of the films studied in this paper. In *Lucia* this is manifested by the separate chapters representing time lapses of over thirty years. Considering the film was made to promote revolutionary culture as it was produced by the Cuban Institute of Cinematographic Art and Industry (ICAIC), a film production company established after the revolution. As the viewer is immersed in different time periods, the viewer is supposed to see, through the character Lucia, what it was like being a Cuban under periods of oppression throughout history and how the Lucia of each generation responded and what the consequences were. In effect, the Cuban story is told and by looking at three generations of political movement the viewer is, in part, supposed to gather that it is a history of fighting independence and autonomy that will continue even in “196...”. In *Amores Perros* the focus on amorality and violence is done across generations as well. The first chapter revolves around Octavio and Susana’s situation as young teens. The second chapter takes a look at adults a little younger than middle age while the third takes on the perspective of an old man. We are shown three different generations of people and their wrongdoings. In this sense the film localizes its message to show that in this specific society the violence and immorality not only grips different groups of people but can manifest itself differently for people despite how old they are and their background. The look at generations then allows the film to serve as a diagnosis of Mexico City at the time as it doesn’t refer much to Mexico’s past nor much to its future, especially with an ending emphasizing potential for change and repetition of history. In *La Ciénaga* the depiction of generations fits with the film’s focus on

one family in a specific part of Argentina. Familial relationships and dynamics are some of the main examples of generations and their differences that one could see. Through the gaps in the ages of the characters the outline of the different generations is clear: there's Mecha and Gregorio's generation, followed by Tali and Rafael's, Jose's and then followed by the generation of the kids. We are introduced to Mecha and Gregorio's generation within the first sequence of the film and as a whole they are shown to be slow, unaware, and uncaring for what goes on around them. They are drunk and while it's not specified as to why they drink like they do, with Mecha it seems to be fueled by anger and stress of her current situation post-fall. With Gregorio, we understand he is insecure about physically aging but he also moves around slow, unaware and very numb to emotion. As the older people in the first sequence don't address each other whatsoever and Mecha and Gregorio are at odds, this generation is also shown to be divided or, rather, definitely not united. Showing the older people in this way provides Martel's perspective of this generation as they are in Salta.

The next generation made clear with Tali and Rafael shows a people more aware and active as they handle the business of looking after their family and providing a healthier example of parenting and a relationship than Mecha and Gregorio. Rafael is shown many times attending to the kids whether it's giving Mariana a bath or tucking Luciano in or teaching Agustina how to drive. At the same time he works a lot and so there are gaps in the film where we do not see him. Tali is also much more active than the previous generation however it is made very clear that she is very busy minded and you see how that distracts her in her interactions with her kids. The fact that the kids are usually out and about on their own represents a result of their business but isn't as bad as Mecha and Gregorio's complete lack of care and supervision. Tali and Rafael also show

a more united front than the older generation in the fact that they are together but at the same time also spend a good amount of the film in disagreement, both about the trip to Bolivia (in which Tali breaks a light fixture out of anger) and about bringing the kids to Mecha's house for too long. They are both also critical of the older generation as made apparent in the car ride to Mecha's where Tali critiques Mecha's love life but also Rafael berates Gregorio as he delays stepping out the car to greet him. Despite their critiques, Tali in certain ways resembles the attitudes and mannerisms of the generation prior. This is evidenced by her gossiping about the business of others and in a phrase she repeats consisting of 'poor' followed by the name of the person she's talking about. It is a way of looking down on and talking about others and away from herself. On a couple occasions she also, with judgment, tells Rafael that his house is too small despite the fact that she lives there too. In this way she emulates Mecha and it makes sense for why they have longer conversations together than other people in the film. In terms of mannerisms there are a couple scenes in which they recall the mannerisms of the previous generation. For example when they reach a closed gate on the way to Mecha's house and everyone gets out of the car, the movement of the camera as it tracks Tali getting out, along with her accessories that become pronounced as the camera momentarily just includes her, resembles slightly how the older generation were captured in the introductory sequence. She seems to be in her own world, with her sunglasses and watch as the older people also had, and she's moving slower like they did. The accessories also connect her to the class she comes from. Instead of drinking a glass of wine, she lights her cigarette as the rest of the family initially try to figure out how to proceed. She's unresponsive like they were until she gets a rock to break the lock and as she speaks, it is softly like Mecha and Gregorio spoke in the introduction as well. Later on we

also come to realize that her vice is cigarettes as she does it to cope with the anger after Rafael says no to her trip to Bolivia, when coping with the anxiety of letting Mecha down about Bolivia but also coping with own her disappointment about the scrapped trip.

In regards to the children, as mentioned before, their camaraderie is well established as well as the influence the older generations have on them. As also mentioned earlier, their scars can also be seen in light of their relationship with the older generations. While their scars can literally be a result of them having too much time to themselves without supervision, when looking at the film through the lens of the generational picture depicted, these scars can be emblematic of the previous generation's mistakes or pain. The same pain that causes the elders to drink or Tali to smoke her cigarettes can effect the children as they interact the adults and also manifest as physical signs of pain. Signs of pain that could be considered genetic since they aren't always explained and its not like something political is going on in the world of the film that could mark them all with scars. One instance that helps bring this point into consideration is in the beginning of the film after Isabel runs out the house announcing that Mecha has taken a fall, Momi follows her as Vero repeats with fear, "I don't want to see blood, I don't want to see blood,". While this could just be a part of her character; that she's squeamish around blood, no other context is given as to why she would be afraid of the sight of blood. Otherwise, the fear of anything would come from experience with it and as one pays attention to generations in each film, certain qualities or circumstances pass on to the next generation and so one conclusion about this moment is that it represents a fear of signs of violence. Considering Argentina's violent history in the 1980s Vero's fear of blood could be representative of what that history has entailed and the effect it had on the generations who lived through it. Even if this fear of blood

came from dealing with her sibling's accidents, the above explanation regarding scars and their connections to older generations would still stand. Additionally, gender roles are highlighted through the generations present within the film. This applies to Mecha and Gregorio first Jose prepares to head back home he tells Mercedes he will talk to Gregorio about their concerns with the business. Later on Mecha recalls a message from Mercedes to Jose since she needed information about customs, looking at Gregorio with expectation. She then passive aggressively expresses her thankfulness for Mercedes as, "she sells our peppers, which no one here will do," with the next shot being of Gregorio as he eats with no care in the world. Considering that Mecha later talks about looking after children even if they're not hers it is apparent that Gregorio worked while Mecha looked after the family. The same is replicated in Tali and Rafael's example. While he had more hands on relationship with the kids than Gregorio he does work to support the family and it is his house, as he is reminded by Tali. On the other hand she takes care of the children and the home. While we don't see any of the girls cooking more is expected of them and they are mostly in interior spaces as Mecha and Tali are. In the beginning, while Joaquin is in the mountain playing colonist and hunter unsupervised, Mecha falls and the responsibility to take care of it then falls on the girls. As Gregorio is too drunk to drive her to the hospital, that responsibility falls on Vero who is without a license. Later, Momi is ordered by Gregorio to take the car to pick up a package that delivered for Mecha even though she doesn't have her license either and Jose, who most likely had one, was still home. Again, when Luciano gets cut on his leg, Tali tells Mariana and Veronica to care for him as she tells Agustina to check on the meat in the pressure but didn't seriously contest Martin's statement that he was going to the parade. At another point in the film, Mecha orders Momi to get the boys from the mountain

for dinner and during that dinner, the girls take on the satellite-parent role when they correct Joaquin for eating without manners. This happens at the same time we see the boys running around with guns in nature or as Jose sleeps at home without actually helping much and going to what looks like Carnival. He isn't even pressured about the business and most of the time he is shown laying down or being a juvenile older brother. However as we are introduced to this world with elders, the film takes us from that world with the kids given the last scene is with Vero and Momi. In their pessimism and repetition of moments of the introductory sequence it seems like they may grow up to be the same as their elders.

As a result of the class the characters occupy in *La Ciénaga* their behavior as well as aspects of mise en scene in line with the second chapter of *Amores Perros*, provides a critique of them as people and showcases them as wealthy people falling from grace. This is made clear in the first sequence at the pool. Our first introduction to anyone in the film is to older people on the pool deck who are awoken from their stillness by the clinks of a wine glass. One woman in particular wakes up and looks around first checking on her own wine glass, making sure there's still wine in it. We then see old bodies scrape their lawn chairs against the tile and as the camera captures their bodies in motion they look almost like zombies. With certain angles it is as if they are swaying rather than moving forward. This then contrasts with the absolute stillness of Momi and the maids laying down and the initially frantic camera movement follow the boys and dogs in the hills. It is in the hills that we also see a large cow stuck in mud trying to escape. As the dogs bite at him and the boys watch in awe, all the cow can do is groan. A symbol of the stagnant nature of the characters we will be introduced with and follow along. We eventually begin to see more faces but specifically of Mecha and Gregorio as they continue to drink and

maintain relative silence. They face away from each other, their bodies layered in the frame as if they're back to back; a visual indicator of their opposition to each other. Especially when before we see the boys up in the hills Mecha asks him, "Who's Joaquin up in the hills with?" and he doesn't even care to respond. We then get a look at the pool itself, cluttered with leaves and taking on a muddy green color. The color of the film itself emphasizing the grey skies; if it wasn't for people in swim trunks and bikinis, viewers wouldn't know it was summer. Eventually as Mecha falls we are met with an image from above showing more of the space these people occupy. The muddy green water given more space in the frame as it shares it with the non reactive drunken people looking off into the distance. From this scene alone we get the sense of a lack of progress through slow, unmotivated movement. With the wine present we understand that they are drunk and so this movement isn't just slow by itself but rather a product of intentional impairment. They don't even flinch when Mecha falls and lies there bleeding, they aren't aware and don't care for their surroundings. This lack of awareness and zombie-like nature is specifically echoed through Gregorio's character throughout the film. After Mecha falls, he bends over to warn her that she should get up before it starts raining, as she lies there bleeding. Stepping over her he then re-fills his glass and walks into the house where he then dresses himself and we see him blow drying his hair in the mirror. We come to find out later that he dies his hair and so in this scene as he checks his hands, most likely for marks of aging, it becomes clear that despite how he lives drinking his life away he is worried about exhibiting signs of aging and choosing to invest in this worry in an emergency situation regarding his wife. He then comes outside lightly jogging in the rain groaning to be allowed to drive despite his drunkenness to which even his own kids have to disobey and prevent him from driving. Later on after seeing

Momi and Isabel watch the news about the Virgin Mary sighting we see Gregorio move about almost in a daze as the lights flicker behind him, echoing his own wavering spirit. We then see him check himself out in the mirror, again checking for signs of aging as he eventually tells Momi to take the car herself to go see her mother. After she reminds him that she doesn't have a license to do so, he says, "I told you you should get one," making it her fault that she can't check on her mother. In this scene the camera stands at the doorway of the bathroom focused on Momi. As Gregorio moves through the space, in and out of the frame, focusing his energy on looking at himself in the mirror and changing his clothes, energy he doesn't give to his family, the business apparently, nor the house. A sense of decline becomes present again when Momi, later on in the film, jumps in the pool. The low angle shot from the surface of the pool reveals the decaying roof of Mecha's house. An indicator of time passed and temporality. The sense of deterioration and time is then exacerbated by the the murky pool seen within the shot. The pool itself revealing an additional sense of a lack of care. This all then is also made clear in the overgrown presence of nature shown on the property. This is first shown in the introductory sequence after Mecha falls, the grass behind the pool area tall against the trees around them. The trees themselves, while being sign of nature itself rather than something to be maintained, also standing tall among the characters in the story, taking up substantial space in the background of certain frames. The final scene of the film back at the pool also exhibits overgrown nature. The lack of care shown for the upkeep of the house and the nature around them resembles the lack of care shown for themselves as they drink away their life.

La Ciénaga also continues the pattern of open endings utilized by *Lucia* and *Amores Perros*. As discussed before the previous films studied ended on notes in which the viewer must

use their imagination to consider what might happen next for the characters of the movie. *La Ciénaga* continues this trend but to a different degree since instead of providing hope for change as the other films do, Lucrecia Martel's film diagnoses a future of no change for the characters involved. In *La Ciénaga* this is made apparent with the almost identical start and finish to the movie. As the credits roll in the beginning where there's information on which companies helped with production or funded the movie, the audio of the crickets and nature we hear so vividly throughout the film cues. We are then met with the sound of thunder but also the canopy of still trees against the grey sky. The film then cuts to a shot of red peppers with more still trees in the background as a gun shot goes off. Another sound that makes its way throughout the film. Which then takes us to more credits but most importantly the first sequence at the deck of the pool which provides a grim introduction to the world of the film as it's marked by an injurious fall. However, this fall, while not immediately acted on in a quick manner as Isabel and Momi rush to Mecha's side. After an hour and thirty five minutes in which the days pass on and no real progress or evolution occurs within the characters, the ending of the film starts with a fall. This time it is fatal as Luciano dies upon impact with the table and tile floor. This time however, there is no action following his fall, there is no rain, no one to run to his side. We are shown an empty house and with still camera shots the barking of the dog next door and the noise of traffic fill up the audio track. The dog that's been haunting Luciano throughout the film has now finally caught up to him. As we're shown Vero's and Jose's reaction we then return poolside with a high angle shot capturing Momi walk towards the pool, gun shots going off in the distance. She then drags the lawn chair along the tiled floors as Mecha and her friends did in the introductory sequence, creating the same sound. She then sits next to Vero, neither of them looking at each other as the

adults in the beginning lived in their own heads barely addressing one another. Upon being asked about her whereabouts she says she went to where the Virgin Mary was seen and she “didn’t see a thing”. The silence between the two characters making way for the crickets and sounds of nature to fill up the soundscape. The film then cuts to a shot of the canopy of trees with a foggy mountain in the background and as another gun shot goes off the movie fades to black. Even in the credits, another gun shot goes off before the sound of nature continues and eventually the sound of getting out of a vehicle and footsteps. The almost identical beginning and ending to the film emphasizes the lack of change for our characters. In a literal and metaphorical sense the world looks the same from beginning to end. Our characters are in the same place in many senses and the environment around them continues as it did in the beginning. As a result, the motif of the Virgin Mary is then framed as a sign of hope which isn’t enthusiastically engaged with by our characters throughout but after a full engagement with it in the form of Momi going to the site, her disbelief sends us to the credits. Momi and Vero lay next to the grey pool as they normally might, expecting life to go on as usual. However, despite the loss of hope we’re left with, one still wonders about characters in the story. As we only see how Luciano’s death immediately effects Vero and Jose, we wonder how this will effect other members of the family, especially Tali and Luciano’s siblings. How will this effect the dynamic of the kids when they’re all together? What happens to Isabel and Perro? We see one scene of Momi moping in the shower but how else does she handle Isabel’s absence over time?

The frequent open endings of these films about society signals the filmmakers’ understanding of the continuous process that is dealing with the troubles of the past and their marks of pain on the present. No story discussed ends on a happy ending or contains a

completely satisfying ending as there is no happy ending for a society whose people are affected by those in power as shown in *Lucia*, poverty as shown in *Amores Perros*, and those recovering from violence as shown in *La Ciénaga*.

With the open endings in each film with no complete ending also comes a sense of doom in each film. In *Lucia*, the sense of doom appears at the beginning of each chapter. In “1895” it appears in the scene when Rafael attends lunch at Lucia’s house, as we see him at the dining table and he talks about his upbringing in Spain church bells go off in the background seemingly like a warning of intrusion as is now in the home of those supporting the rebellion. The ringing stops as the conversation continues and he repeatedly assures them that he is not into politics and is neutral about the current war, the camera set up close to emphasize his stern attitude about the nature of his politics. This along with Fernandina’s warnings and evolution in relation to Lucia analyzed before work together to hint at the betrayal and violence that comes later at the hands of Rafael’s manipulation. In “1932” the sense of doom comes in the form of Lucia’s first sighting of Aldo which is in the darkness of the night as his comrades carry him in his injured state onto land. The injury coming from his participation in the resistance. The fact that she is initially introduced to him in this state, is warned of the violence that will come with being Aldo’s wife, and then on different occasions has to care for someone coming home injured marks her journey getting closer to the solitude she is burdened with at the end of the chapter. In the chapter, “196...” the sense of doom comes from Lucia’s intuition after marrying Tomas. The first thing she says when getting into the truck with other women, “You know, he says when we get married, I can’t work anymore”. As they tease her about her newfound attachment to her husband she announces what will be the motivating challenge for the rest of the chapter. She then

goes on to say, “I don’t feel well...No, I’m just nervous. You’ve been there, right? ... Everyone here has a sweetheart or a husband. You all know how it is”. She feels apprehension about the relationship from the beginning and knows what will be a conflict between them. However their relationship continues and as Tomas becomes more abusive, her uneasiness in the beginning of the chapter becomes realized as he takes possession of her and they fight until the very end. In *Amores Perros*, the sense of doom in the first chapter with the sequence preceding it in which our main protagonist at the time ends up in an intense car accident. As the title screen for the first chapter comes up and we then introduced to the world of the first chapter, we know what’s to come. Even before the second chapter when we see how our second protagonist is involved in the crash, the first scenes of the second chapter being in the hospital spells doom for the couple. As quoted by Stephen M. Hart in his piece on *Amores Perros*, “The circularity or looping nature of the narrative infuses the spectator with an ongoing sense of dread...the film conditions the spectator to be wary, to assume that another encounter with violence is just around the corner,” (Hart 193). This is realized as Octavio and Valeria are seriously injured from the accident and even when Chivo engages with violence and has to leave his daughter behind because of it.

In *La Ciénaga*, this sense of doom is also evident in the beginning of the film with that first sequence by the pool. The sense of doom coming from the fact that within the first five minutes of the film there’s some sort of violence. We don’t know the names of more than two characters and someone is bleeding. The camera gets up close to this violence too as Momi and Isabel pick Mecha up from off the ground. We watch up close as we see the hand of Momi pick shards of glass from Mecha’s chest, one by one and we are then met with a countershot of Momi’s face as she assesses Mecha’s reaction to it. This slows down the scene from the frantic

nature it had when she initially fell and they scrambled to get to her side. When Isabel comes back with a towel to wipe the blood, we eventually see Mecha and the gashes across her chest and the blood down her arm, the first time we are shown directly the damages of her fall. This sets the precedent for the other clues of doom and the ending. Which comes through Luciano's perspective. When we first enter Tali's house, we see Martin with a dead hare and after placing it on the kitchen counter he makes Luciano aware of it. Like a moth to a flame he approaches the dead animal, get up close to it and even blows on it, assessing what dead actually looks like. He lifts up its ear with a toy gun upon inspection until he is distracted the barking dog next door. The bark which will haunt him every time he hears it after, especially after Vero tells the story of the 'African rat'. The barking itself, in its auditory quality, seeming vicious but also seeming to represent a background tension in the film, similar to the gunshots we hear. Later, when in the mountains with Joaquin and Martin they come across the cow stuck in mud, now dead. As they all watch from a distance, one boy even covering his nose from the smell, Luciano gets up close to the dead animal, taking on the mud. At one point the camera get close over his shoulder as he gets closer to the animal, highlighting Luciano's mindset in this moment, he is just focused on the dead animal as if no one else is there. Even as the boys get ready to shoot it and tell him to get out of the way he doesn't move until he hears the click of the rifle ready to fire. The film cuts away to the mountains as they take their shots, not showing if they waited for Luciano to move first or not. In this moment the viewer is made unsure if they did shoot him until later on when Tali gathers him from the pool. In addition, there are many times when he chooses to stop breathing, holding his breath for an extended period of time as his sisters and even Tali have to hit him a little just to get him to breathe again. This all leads up to and somewhat foreshadows the

ending of the film when Luciano hears the barking yet again, this time his fear turning into curiosity as he finds his way up the ladder, possibly catching a glimpse over the wall before the step of the ladder gives out and he falls. This time, there is no one for his fall and he dies upon impact with the floor, waiting to be found.

Finally, each film also makes sure to show a fall from class or loss of riches revealing the fragility of having some sort of power in these societies. For example, in *Lucia* we see with the first Lucia of “1895” in her act of redemption with the murder of Rafael she gets smothered, dragged away, and taken to the ground by other officers. A literal fall but as discussed in the first chapter the violence she engages in marks a departure from the world she once inhabited as her friends run away screaming in horror. The killing of a colonial officer of course wouldn’t come without consequences which may result in the form of jail time or execution, she wouldn’t be able to live the same life of wealth she had been living so far. In her act of rebellion she puts everything on the line to provide justice for her brother and Cuba. In the second chapter, Lucia chooses to leave behind her mother and the life of the upper class to follow Aldo and take part in political resistance. In this sense she loses any allure given by the life that affords her a house in the keys and in the city. Even when Aldo and the other revolutionaries obtain well-paying jobs after the take down of Machado, Aldo’s determination to keep fighting and his eventual death leaves Lucia alone. With her rejection of the same friends she fought with, we are left with her alone in the sense she’s without her lover but also without her family, friends, and physically alone as she paces at an empty dock. In *Lucia*, the fall from class is shown as something that seems to be a choice that comes from the reality of being a revolutionary from the higher classes. A part of the revolutionary process in this case is losing your status so that as we get to the third

chapter which is supposed to represent the modern day, at the time of the release of the film, we settle on being of the working class and working together as a community to keep up the tenets of the revolution. In *Amores Perros* with Octavio and Chivo that even as they earn a lot of money it doesn't stay with them for long. In a form of due justice as a result of how he acquired so much money and the reason he did so, Octavio loses his money in the fateful car crash. Chivo, on the other hand, get money through the crimes he committed but then gives it away to his daughter, seemingly in vain. In Daniel and Valeria's story the car crash becomes an act of justice that begins the decline of their relationship which also takes Valeria's means of income away from her and chips away at the money Daniel already has and the money he earns. While he lived in a nice house and was able to support his family his foray into the relationship with his mistress takes his money away from him to the point its a new reality he lives with. Albeit for different reasons as a result of personal choices and as a consequence for not living right, characters in this world lose the status they have or what they gain as a punishment for the engagement in their vices. In *La Ciénaga*, the reality we are introduced to is that of a family who is on the decline, especially made apparent by the literal falls that mark the beginning and end of the film. While they still maintain their property and move with relative freedom, as mentioned before there are signs of decay and lack of care seen on the property that marks a downturn from the life they may hav enjoyed before the film. In addition, the older characters such as Gregorio who have been one of the main contributors to their wealth as a result of the pepper business, is now slow and numb. Any reference to a Gregorio with life comes from stories about the past, it is all behind him. There are challenges to the proper functioning of the business as hinted by Mecha at dinner later on in the film but even in the beginning Mercedes raises points about things that

need to be addressed with the business. Points that we don't see addressed as the future of *La Ciénaga* is made uncertain. With the literal falls marking the beginning and end of the film, taking into account the ages of the characters falling the diagnosis of the past and future are exhibited. Mecha's fall being a recognition of the failure of the previous generation and Luciano's fall being a damning of the future. We also hear Mecha says things pointing to the fact that money is needed for the kids, for Joaquin's plastic surgery, and in the case of Tali, for school supplies of the kids.

Conclusion

The triptych structure isn't exclusive to Latin American film nor is it exclusive to film. Its origins revolve around triptych panels of art on altar pieces in church, "Relaying stories of the bible and functioning to aid prayer, triptychs were an important way of visualising Christianity and showing devotion," (Martin 2024). Similar to how it is analyzed in this paper, the power of the triptych is its ability to "work as a coherent piece, as well as three separate works of art," (Martin 2024). Even in film history, filmmakers have taken on forms similar to triptychs or otherwise known as 'omnibus' structures. These structures, different from the triptychs assessed in this paper, "to refer to any multi-director feature in which several self-contained episodes are presented to the viewer one after the other" or "denote feature-length motion pictures show-casing the contributions of two or more directors (or, more accurately, two or more teams of filmmakers, including screenwriters, cinematographers, and other creative artists responsible for the content and form of their individual episodes)". These considerations on structure allow *Lucia* and *Amores Perros* to stand out in their secularized (with still obvious connections to religion) and in their auteur nature. As well as the fact that these films, including *La Ciénaga*, use this structure to serve as expression of their own history and culture, its a more personal use of this framework to provide representation in the film medium, an industry in which favors the American or European perspective.

While this frame hasn't been used much of recently in the film industry, this can be attributed to declining attention spans of consumers as these structures tend to allow for longer films. The long film, commercially, seems to be reserved for the major commercial directors. An up-and-coming filmmaker may not have the leniency to make such a grand story or it may be

harder to procure funds to support a grand telling resulting from the structure of the triptych. In a culture as concerned with the self as the American, a film may relate more to certain parts of the masses if the story is driven from one main protagonist. With the popularity of remakes, there aren't many beloved films that utilized such a grand structure and so through this yearn for nostalgia, triptychs might have a hard time fitting in.

Lastly, to reiterate, the films, *Lucia* by Humberto Solás, *Amorres Perros* by Alejandro Alejandro González Iñárritu and *La Cienaga* by Lucrecia Martel provide a sociological look into the societies they stem from. They meticulously apply the triptych structure as well as the use of the ensemble cast to explore the various dynamics that dictate their characters' relationships to each other, their environment, the past, and looks towards the future. In spite of the differing national and historical contexts these films and filmmakers derive from they somehow seem to settle on certain narrative and cinematic techniques to tell their stories, hinting at a faint throughline of the Latin American experience and of how film is used to communicate that in Latin America.

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