

## From Confinement to Freedom: Analysis of Spatiality in *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* and *The Passion of Berenice*

*Del encierro a la libertad: análisis de la  
espacialidad en Las amargas lágrimas  
de Petra von Kant y La pasión según  
Berenice*

MAXIMILIANO MAZA PÉREZ<sup>1</sup>

<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0047-8915>

This article presents the descriptive analysis of the strategies of spatial representation used in *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* by Rainer Werner Fassbinder and *The Passion of Berenice* by Jaime Humberto Hermosillo. The study is developed in two phases: mise-en-scène and framing. The paper analyzes the functions of the cinematographic landscape and explains the spatiality or set of meanings expressed through the spaces shown in each film.

**KEYWORDS:** Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Jaime Humberto Hermosillo, film, scene, spatiality.

*El artículo presenta el análisis descriptivo de las estrategias de representación espacial utilizadas en Las amargas lágrimas de Petra von Kant de Rainer Werner Fassbinder y La pasión según Berenice de Jaime Humberto Hermosillo. El estudio se desarrolla en dos fases: puesta en escena y puesta en cuadro. Se analizan las funciones del paisaje cinematográfico y se explica la espacialidad o conjunto de significados expresados a través de los espacios presentados en cada filme.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Jaime Humberto Hermosillo, cine, escena, espacialidad.

<sup>1</sup> Tecnológico de Monterrey, México.

E-mail: [mmaza@itesm.mx](mailto:mmaza@itesm.mx)

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## GERMAN AND MEXICAN FILMS: BETWEEN CRISIS AND REVIVAL

During the 1960s, German<sup>2</sup> and Mexican film industries underwent transformation as a result of their respective postwar crises. After the powerful industry that thrived during the Nazi regime dismantled, German cinema notably reduced its production and headed for the domestic market, with cheap and escapist films (Knight, 2004). For its part, the Mexican film industry lost its supremacy in the Spanish-speaking markets that it had obtained during the World War II and also reduced the number of annually produced films to an extent that “it would never again produce almost one-hundred films a year” (García Riera, 1998, p. 234).

The crises were reflected in not only film production but also creativity. In February 1962, a group of young filmmakers who were participating in the International Short Film Festival Oberhausen spread a manifesto announcing the death of the old film industry and declaring their “intention to create a new German cinema” (MacKenzie, 2014, p. 153). A year before, in Mexico, some film critics and aspiring film directors gathered around *Nuevo Cine* magazine and declared that their objectives included “improving the depressing state of the Mexican film industry, encouraging production and display the freedom of independent films, and promoting the development of the filmic culture in Mexico” (MacKenzie, 2014, p. 210).

The transformation processes of both film industries went along parallel roads in the following decade, and although they were both trying to stimulate the production of high-quality films, the specific strategies adopted by each one of them were different. While Germany developed a system of public subsidy to produce, distribute, and screen films at a low cost, Mexico’s government intervention was more radical and led to what Emilio García Riera referred to as “something unique in the world: the virtual nationalization of the Mexican film industry in a country that was not governed by communists” (1998, p. 278). Thus, by the early 70s, the economic resources invested by the Mexican

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<sup>2</sup> Officially a German Federal Republic, until the reunification in 1991.

government in the film industry were substantial and, in many occasions, expenses were not spared to produce large-budget films.

The different degrees of state intervention in the film industries of each country contributed to the differentiation of the authorial model that predominated in both German and Mexican cinemas during the 1970s. The way of working in the new German cinema, which was associated to individual artistic work and was distant from industrial patterns, offered filmmakers a greater control over their films and the freedom of creation and expression (Knight, 2004). In Mexico, although the production sponsored by the state neither fostered the independent film industry nor offered much of a creative freedom, it did allow new filmmakers to work under conditions similar to those of the directors from industrial film's golden age, by giving them access to qualified workforce and a completely renewed infrastructure.

#### FASSBINDER AND HERMOSILLO

The film careers of Rainer Werner Fassbinder (Bad Wörishofen, 1945-Munich, 1982) and Jaime Humberto Hermosillo (Aguascalientes, 1942) developed simultaneously until the death of the German filmmaker. Both made their first short films in 1965, released their first important films in 1969, and were completely integrated into the film industries of their countries by 1972. The similarities between their career paths are not just chronological. Some of the factors that allow us to establish a dialogic relationship between their films are the frequency with which they told stories about strong and complex female characters, their tendency to incorporate autobiographical passages in their films, and above all, their huge and subversive capacity to break all kinds of conventionalisms and denounce hypocrisy in the key sectors of their societies. As a self-proclaimed fan of Fassbinder, Hermosillo considers *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* (*Die bitteren Tränen der Petra von Kant*, 1972) one of his favorite films and one of the most influential ones to an extent that one can find their traces in his own films such as *Confidencias* (1982) and *Encuentro inesperado* (1993).

The creation of melodrama constitutes another linking point between Fassbinder and Hermosillo's films. Throughout his career, Fassbinder

mentioned in different occasions that he developed an interest in the genre of melodrama in 1971, after discovering the films produced in Hollywood by his compatriot Douglas Sirk, particularly the melodramas made for Universal Pictures such as *Magnificent Obsession* (1954); *All That Heaven Allows* (1955); *Written on the Wind* (1956); *A Time to Love and a Time to Die* (1958), and *Imitation of Life* (1959). In this regard, Hermosillo's first contact with melodrama goes back to his amateur cinephile years in his hometown Aguascalientes (Mexico), which begun with his admiration for Hollywood and Mexican classics. As Valdés Peña observes, "Hermosillo recognizes himself in the melodramas of Douglas Sirk and George Cukor as well as in the social representation of the Mexican middle class that Alejandro Galindo would depict in *Una familia de tantas*" (2013, s.p.). In any case, both filmmakers turned to melodrama with the intention of restating the conventionalisms of the genre, either by provoking an emotional distance from the audience, as in the case of Fassbinder, or through the introduction of rule-breaking characters in environments familiar to the viewers, which was a typical feature of Hermosillo's films such as *Los nuestros* (1970), *La verdadero vocación de Magdalena* (1972), and *The Passion of Berenice* (*La pasión según Berenice*, 1976).

As a genre that "sets out conflicts between human beings, either at the individual or the community level" (Fernandez Violante, 2000, p. 35), film melodrama allows for a broad range of representations of space although it tends to be connected to those far from realism. That is how Haralovich (1990) observes it in his analysis of color, space, and melodrama in *All That Heaven Allows*. Haralovich states that "in melodrama, the ideological basis of social life is presented by means of the narrative structure and filmic expression, especially in the mise-en-scène details" (p. 57). However, Chanan considers that in terms of space, Latin American film melodrama constitutes one of the realistic genres par excellence. Referring to Latin America as a region marked "by a cinematography that comes with a special feeling for the real social space", (1998, s.p.) Chanan claims the usage of outdoor locations, natural light, and direct sound as three characteristics of the spatial representation mode of Latin American films regardless the genre, including melodrama. For Chanan, realism in Latin American

films, especially in melodrama, is defined by not just the actors' style of interpretation or the roots of the story in everyday life but by the way of spatial representation.

The importance of space in melodramas directed by Fassbinder is highlighted by Segond (1983) when stating that "space is closed thematically... and spatially" (p. 32) and that the stylish way in which he handled space evoked some medieval dramatic genres, such as morality plays, in which rotating scenography and tapestries were used to represent different settings, as well as the German chamber theater (*Kammerspiel*) of the 1920s, especially the one produced by Max Reinhardt's company and its film equivalent denominated as *Kammerspielfilm*, which had complex characters trapped in reduced spaces and was photographed by slender camera movements; these are the two aesthetic devices used by expressionism in films such as *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (*Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari*, 1920) and *The Last Laugh* (*Der letzte Mann*, 1924).

Fassbinder reinstated to the German film industry the tradition of spatial representation that moved to Hollywood from the Weimar Republic and played an important role in *film noir*, Hitchcock and Orson Welles' films and the above mentioned Sirk's melodramas. In the case of Hermosillo's films, the selection and way of representing different spaces in his melodramas correspond more to a naturalistic tradition that was initiated by Luis Buñuel in *Los olvidados* (1950) than to the staging classicism of directors such as Fernando de Fuentes, Julio Bracho, and Roberto Gavaldón. In Hermosillo's films, outdoor and indoor locations characterized down to the last detail abound; in this regard, the spaces represented in his films are perceived as real and contribute to reinforce the authenticity of the story portrayed in the film.

## DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF FILMIC SPATIALITY

Even though, at first, Fassbinder and Hermosillo's strategies of spatial representation seem to point to opposite ends, it is possible to find comparative elements in both filmmakers' use of camera movement and framing. Therefore, in view of the considerations mentioned so far, this research focuses on the descriptive analysis of the main strategies of

spatial representation used by the German filmmaker Fassbinder in *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* and by the Mexican director Hermosillo in *The Passion of Berenice*. A comparison between both filmmakers' approach toward filmic spatiality, i.e., toward the set of meanings expressed through the spaces where the dramatic action is carried out and the way in which this set of meanings is represented in film, will allow for the establishment of parallelisms and the identification of singularities in two films that resort to melodrama with the purpose to explore topics such as loneliness, repression, longing for love and freedom, and power relationships in the female universe.

The descriptive analysis of spatiality in both films is developed from the following research questions:

- 1) What functions does cinematographic landscape play in *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* and *The Passion of Berenice*?
- 2) How does spatiality in each film contribute to exploring the issues that interest both Fassbinder and Hermosillo, especially the lack of freedom and affection among their female characters?

As a methodological tool for analyzing filmic spatiality, a descriptive analysis can be carried out starting from any of the three levels of space representation in a film—*mise-en-scène* or staging, framing, and editing—. Even if, traditionally, this kind of analysis tends to focus on the level of staging, in this study, framing will be equally highlighted on the basis of Edward Soja's consideration that physical space is not more relevant than the way in which it is organized and that it only acquires meaning through "social translation, transformation, and experience" (1996, p. 80). Similarly, the presence of other kinds of spaces in both films will be discussed regardless of them being invisible (such as latent spaces) or visible (such as psychological spaces). All these kinds of spaces contribute to significantly broaden the spatiality of films, according to the film spaces typology developed by Neira Piñeiro (2003).

The descriptive analysis is developed in two phases. In the first one, which is exploratory in nature, the elements of *mise-en-scène* are identified and hierarchically organized, their special meanings are interpreted, and the way in which they are combined under the concept

of cinematographic landscape is described. In the second phase, which is explanatory in nature, the cinematographic techniques used in framing and the way in which framing organizes and transforms the cinematographic landscape are analyzed. Further, the rest of the spaces that are part of film spatiality are identified and debated. Finally, the functions of each cinematographic landscape are established, and the spatiality expressed in both the movies is explained.

#### FIRST PHASE: DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF MISE-EN-SCÈNE IN *PETRA VON KANT* AND *BERENICE*

From the viewpoint of cinematography, mise-en-scène is defined as the combination of significative visual and sound elements present in each scene of a film; these elements “render the world portrayed in the screen consistent and deep” (Casetti & di Chio, 2007, p. 112). In *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant*, the mise-en-scène of the film is presented within only one closed space: Petra’s room, that works as a bedroom, an office, and a meeting place for her. In that microcosm, the plot of love agreements and disagreements develops between Petra, a famous fashion designer, and Karin, a young future model just arrived to Germany. Marlene, who is Petra’s faithful secretary, assistant designer, and servant, is close to Petra and Karin but always one step back and in silence. Marlene represents the main dramatic counterweight of the story and offers a testimonial point of view, with which the audience can feel involved. The group of characters also includes Valerie, Gabriele, and Sidonie –Petra’s mother, daughter, and cousin, respectively–.

On the contrary, mise-en-scène in *The Passion of Berenice* unfolds in different places of a quiet city in the Mexican province: Aguascalientes, hometown of Jaime Humberto Hermosillo. Despite the number and variety of scenarios in which the story unfolds, the group of spaces is represented as a suffocating environment for Berenice, a passionate woman with a temper, who has had to adapt to the customs of a deeply conservative society. Her routine life as a short-hand and typing teacher and lady’s companion for Mrs. Josefina, her old godmother, is shaken by Rodrigo, a young man and son of Mrs. Josefina’s family doctor, who returns to attend his father’s funeral. Rodrigo, who is extroverted

and full of modern ideas, seems to represent the opportunity that Berenice was waiting for to escape from her confinement and finally enjoy freedom. However, the woman ends up discovering that the only freedom that really matters is the one that she can give to herself.

### *Expressive function of mise-en-scène in*

#### *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant*

In this film, Fassbinder's ways of using all audiovisual resources that are within his reach in order to portray different meanings stand out, even when the *mise-en-scène* seems to be limited by the narrow stage dimensions. In the first place, the colorful costume design by Maja Lemcke represents the social environment in which the characters of the story develop (the *haute couture* world). At the same time, the characters' costumes belonging to different periods within the 20th century highlight the atemporality in the story. In terms of expression, the main function of the costume design, particularly that of Petra's clothes, is to enhance the communication of the different moods of the characters in the film. Her dramatic wardrobe and wig changes highlight her emotional instability and at the same time indicate how time goes by. On the contrary, Marlene's austerity and permanent use of black outfits represents the deep loneliness she is suffering from.

In the second place, the scenery and the accessories used in the *mise-en-scène* contribute to enrich the number of meanings expressed in the film and particularly communicate Fassbinder's ideological stand regarding his characters and the dramatic action. The most important element in the scenery is the huge reproduction of the painting *Midas and Bacchus* by Nicolás Poussin, a French painter of the 17th century. The painting occupies an entire wall of Petra's bedroom. The work<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The original (oil on canvas, 98 cm x 130 cm) is located in Alte Pinakothek in Munich. According to a Greek legend, Midas was a king of Frigia to whom Bacchus granted a wish in exchange of a good action that he had done for Silenus, who favored the god. Midas wished that everything he touched turned into gold but he soon realized his mistake when food became uneatable. Bacchus ordered him to wash himself in the Pactolus river in Lidia. In the painting, Midas shows himself as repentant and penitent

portrays the moment in which King Midas shows himself repentant and penitent before god Bacchus, who had previously granted him the wish of turning everything he touches into gold. This element of the scenery serves as a metaphor of the relationship between Petra and Karin –similar to Midas, Petra regrets having desired Karin because by seducing her, she was transformed into a frivolous and cruel woman, the opposite of what she wishes to be–. The omnipresence of the painting represents the unyielding consequence of a relationship based on power imbalance. If, as Fassbinder states in an interview conducted by Grant (1983), *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* is an autobiographical film, the size of Poussin’s painting and its central location in the scenery of the film represent the scale of the damage that the filmmaker seemed to have inflicted in his personal relationships.

Another accessory of the mise-en-scène in *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* is the couple of mannequins at the back of Petra’s bedroom. In contrast with Poussin’s painting, the expressive function of this element in mise-en-scène is modified as the plot of the movie unfolds. In the beginning, the mannequins are nothing but work tools that Marlene uses in her job as a sketcher of Petra’s designs. Later, the mannequins strike poses that represent the stages of Petra and Karin's relationship.

Regarding lighting, Fassbinder seizes the characteristics of the film’s location<sup>4</sup> to achieve interesting effects with the light that enters through the blinds of the large window located in front of Petra’s bed. At times, the reflection of the ajar blinds “imprisons” the characters behind the symbolic bars of their feelings. Finally, regarding diegetic sound, the use of music including songs by Giuseppe Verdi (*La Traviata*), The Platters (*Smoke Gets in your Eyes* and *The Great Pretender*), and The Walker Brothers (*In my Room*) is highlighted in addition to the use of the sound of Marlene’s typewriter, which becomes her only and furious expression.

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before Bacchus, while a drunken man sleeps nearby.

4 The film was shot in an apartment in Bremen, along ten shooting days in January 1972.

### EXPRESSIVE FUNCTION OF MISE-EN-SCÈNE IN *THE PASSION OF BERENICE*

As mentioned previously, *The Passion of Berenice* is filmed in different outdoor and indoor settings in the city of Aguascalientes, Mexico. In contrast to *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant*, the elements of mise-en-scène in Hermosillo's film do not express the same amount of special meanings that one can see in each of the scenic elements of Fassbinder's film. However, this does not imply that Berenice's *mise-en-scène* lacks importance or is absent. The number of elements used in the staging is so large that it is hard to single them out. The film bets on tiny details that can emphasize on the veracity of the spaces and the dramatic action.

In his book honoring the director's career, entitled *Jaime Humberto Hermosillo en el país de las apariencias (Jaime Humberto Hermosillo in the Land of Pretending)*, Villaseñor (2002) puts an anecdote on the lips of the actress Emma Roldán, who embodies Mrs. Josefina's character. This anecdote talks about the pills that she had to take when shooting; these pills were the ones that a doctor would have prescribed for the better health of her character. Such details reinforce the appreciation that the selection of outdoor locations and the detailed characterization of the indoor locations in *Berenice* aim at making the diegetic world of the film to be perceived as real.

By highlighting the realism in the spatial representation of *Berenice*, Hermosillo transmits the loneliness and frustration experimented by the protagonist in an opposite but equally effective way to the loneliness and frustration used by Fassbinder in *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant*. Apparently, Berenice freely walks along the streets of Aguascalientes and goes along the corridors of the house that she shares with her godmother without any obstacles in her way. However, the woman is incapable of escaping from the confinement that means living in a small city of the Mexican province while taking care of an old lady who does not seem to be dying any time soon. This is why the automobile is very important as a potentially rule-breaking element in the mise-en-scène, the only element that can release the protagonist from the confinement to which she is condemned to be held. Thus, when Rodrigo suggests that

Mrs. Josefina needs to breathe “the fresh air of the countryside” to improve her health, Berenice says that she wants to buy a car but does not have enough money. Mrs. Josefina insists on lending her the required money “on usual conditions and an invoice as a guarantee”. Finally, with Rodrigo’s help, she persuades Berenice to buy a new car. Ironically, the car, the only element in the *mise-en-scène* that can free Berenice, becomes her greatest limitation. Later, when Mrs. Josefina is dying, Berenice dreams that she is escaping with Rodrigo by car. A camera movement reveals a coffin with Mrs. Josefina’s corpse inside in the back seat while the old lady’s voice is heard asking Berenice to pray for her and remember who lend her the money to buy the vehicle. Therefore, in the last sequence, when Berenice sets the bed where Mrs. Josefina is dying on fire, the car is left abandoned and sets on fire together with the rest of the house.

#### *Characteristics of the cinematographic landscape in both films*

According to Escher (2006), a cinematographic landscape or a space where the dramatic action takes place constitutes “the (cinematographic) representation of the material, concrete and subjectively organized scenography on a terrestrial surface, which is filled with cultural additions, or the representation of a fictional environment in the everyday dimension” (p. 309). The simultaneous combination of elements that constitute the *mise-en-scène* of such landscape allows us to determine its characteristics: its type or denomination, its class or characterization, its purpose or function as well as its relation to the characters, and its geographical location. The way of determining these characteristics is achieved through the discursive operations of anchoring or name assignation to the described place, aspectualization or enumeration of the parts, functions or qualities of the place, thematization or expansion of the description to more specific characteristics, and the assimilation or comparison with the characteristics or qualities of another space (Maza, 2014). In light of these considerations, the first phase of the descriptive analysis of the filmic spatiality in *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* and *The Passion of Berenice* leads to the following preliminary conclusions:

- In *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant*, the main characteristic of the cinematographic landscape is its purpose, which is constantly being transformed by changes in the mise-en-scène: Petra's bedroom; scenario for the romantic encounter and later breakup between Petra and Karin; and Marlene's working space and the place to celebrate Petra's birthday. The least important characteristic is the geographical location, which is late and incidentally revealed when Petra shows Karin a picture of them that had been published in the newspaper. The masthead belongs to the Bremer Nachrichten, a newspaper published in the city of Bremen.
- In *The Passion of Berenice*, the combination of the kind of landscape (city) and her class (provincial) as well as the relationship that such landscape has with the protagonist (a place to which she does not belong and from which she wants to escape) are highlighted. The geographical location is important because it becomes a referent for determining the possibility or impossibility of reaching the places that Berenice and Rodrigo wish to visit: she dreams of visiting Europe, the Far East and Africa; he wants to travel around Mexico and visit its indigenous communities. Likewise, the contrast between Aguascalientes and the coast of Nayarit, where Berenice was born, is visually and audibly established in the scene where she goes to the movies with her godmother and they watch an advertising film about the touristic development of Bahía de Banderas.

## SECOND PHASE:

### DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF FRAMING

Framing, the second level of spatial representation in a film, is organized around three opposing axes: inside/outside of a frame, static/dynamic, and organic/inorganic (Casetti & di Chio, 2007). The first axis refers to the visibility or invisibility of mise-en-scène elements on the screen; the second one describes the kinetic relationship between the camera and mise-en-scène elements; and the third axis refers to the degree of connection and unity between the elements that constitute the filmic image. These axes are analyzed by Bordwell and Thompson (2003),

who conclude that framing affects the filmic image in four aspects: its size and shape; the way in which the space inside or outside the screen is defined; the way in which the distance, angle and height from where the image is seen is controlled; and how the image moves with respect to the *mise-en-scène*.

In this descriptive analysis of filmic spatiality, it was observed that framing is one of the main strategies of spatial representation, used by both Fassbinder in *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* and Hermsillo in *The Passion of Berenice*. In the former, the inside/outside and the static/dynamic framing axes are found; the latter is found in a combination defined by Casetti and di Chio (2007) as “expressive dynamic space”. This combination is based on the movement of the camera that is “in a dialectic and creative relation” with the movement of the shapes (actors or objects). In this combination, the camera decides what to see and, while doing so, goes beyond space description to comment it.

Fassbinder uses closed frame and traveling to create an *expressive dynamic space* that is perceived as incomplete and fragmented. An example can be found in the second sequence of the film, when Petra calls Marlene to help her get dressed. Fassbinder covers Marlene’s movements with the camera at the level of her feet and leaves the main action out of frame. Due to the positioning of the actresses’ feet, which is the only visible image on screen, the audience can infer that Marlene is pulling up the zipper of Petra’s dress or helping her with her necklace, but the audience cannot be certain of any of these actions. Then, Petra takes a few steps forward, stops as if she is looking at herself in an invisible mirror, goes back to Marlene, and rubs herself against her body. Marlene does the same and Petra repeats the action. Because the audience is partially excluded from the action, they must build the possible meanings of the scene on their own. In the following sequence, Fassbinder again uses a closed frame to “catch” Petra between the bed and the wooden banister that separates the bedroom from the part of the room used as office. The expressivity of the framing reflects the filmmaker’s viewpoint regarding Petra and Karin’s deteriorating relationship. As can be observed in both examples, the framing in *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* goes beyond the space description to comment the events of the story.

In *The Passion of Berenice*, the prevailing axis of opposition is again the static/dynamic one in its two ways of dynamic combination: descriptive and expressive. Unlike *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant*, the inside and outside frame axis is always kept inside (Casetti & di Chio, 2007). On the basis of descriptive dynamic combination, the organic/inorganic axis presents the filmic space as deep, united, centered, and open (Maza, 2014). Two scenes in which Hermosillo uses *traveling* to create dynamic spaces depict the way in which the filmmaker uses the camera to make the spatial dynamism equally descriptive and expressive. The first one occurs during the funeral of Doctor Robles, Rodrigo's father; the second one occurs when Berenice and her godmother have lunch at a restaurant after mass and before going to the movies. In both scenes, it is possible to observe how Hermosillo uses framing to establish a connection between Berenice's emotions and the surrounding environment that oppresses her.

In the funeral scene, the *traveling* makes up a complete circle that traps the protagonist inside the gossiping net caused by the crowd gathered as a result of Rodrigo's arrival. At the same time, the movement of the camera connects Berenice's sight with the leaving of the man who will later become her lover and the main guardian of her desire for freedom. Through the second *traveling*, which is more complex, the filmmaker expresses the repressed passions that Berenice can hardly hide by using a series of carefully thought camera moves and precise movements of the actors. In this scene, Berenice and Mrs. Josefina enter the restaurant and sit at a table before a large window from where they can see one of the corners of the main square. The old lady sits with her back to the window and Berenice sits by the window side. While they are checking the menu, the camera approaches them and frames them in a medium close up.

Between them, the silhouette of a man standing in the corner of the main square can be seen. This man is waiting for the signal of a traffic officer, who does not appear on screen, to cross the street. When the signal is heard, Berenice turns to the window and stares at the young man crossing the street; he looks back at her and leaves the frame from the left of the screen. The camera moves in the same direction and shows the young man entering the restaurant and sitting at the

first table, where a couple of guys are waiting for him. The last frame shows the group of young men on the left of the shot, slightly at the back, while the two women are made to sit on the right –the central part of the filmic space–. At first, the *traveling* establishes a connection between Berenice and the young man as an unconscious act that does not directly represent her viewpoint. Once he has entered the restaurant, the same camera movement turns into the protagonist's look of desire.

Hermosillo uses descriptive *traveling* on two other occasions. First, when Rodrigo accompanies Berenice on her way home and asks her out to dine; this path runs along the gates of the center of the city. The camera movement follows the character's path as it portrays the everyday night life of a typical commercial area of any Mexican city. The descriptive quality of the *traveling* gains expressiveness when the camera stops by a bridal shop's window while Berenice and Rodrigo are out of frame. The second occasion is at the end of the film, when Berenice sets on fire and leaves the house where she lives with her godmother. The scene is made up of two consecutive *travelings*: the first one goes all around the house, from the interior of the second floor to the main gate; the second one follows Berenice when she goes out and moves away from the house on flames. Just as the *traveling* by the city gates, the camera stops by the windows through which the flames can be seen burning down the house, while Berenice exits the frame on her freedom.

#### *Other kind of spaces present in both films*

Neira Piñeiro (2003) asserts that the combination between mise-en-scène, framing, and camera movements constitutes the visible space of representation in a film. Nonetheless, the author notes that in films, other kinds of spaces can also exist, such as narrated space, which is created through verbal narration performed by the characters and can be both visible or invisible. This kind of verbal space can be presented in dialogs, narrations, and texts describing places.

In *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant*, the narrated space significantly amplifies the cinematographic landscape of the film and extends to Bremen, the city where the action takes place; Miami, where Petra's mother is planning to travel; and Australia, where Karin comes from.

It also extends to other places that are mentioned or referred to in the conversations kept among the characters. The extension of the narrated space contributes to the highlighting of the oppressive atmosphere of the only visible space of representation in the film. In *The Passion of Berenice*, the narrated space takes the cinematographic landscape to Mexico and places that Rodrigo and Berenice wish to visit (Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Mexican states of Chiapas and Chihuahua). It also takes the landscape to the coast of Bahía de Banderas, Nayarit, Berenice's hometown. However, the film also presents psychological spaces located in the mind of the character that are visible on three occasions: during the first scene, in which a fire destroys Berenice's previous house; later, in a filmed advertisement showing the idyllic landscape of the place where Berenice was born, watched by Berenice and her godmother at the movies; and in the dream sequence close to the end of the film, in which Berenice sees herself escaping with Rodrigo and taking her godmother's corpse in a coffin in the back seat of the car.

## CONCLUSIONS

From the way in which framing organizes and transforms the cinematographic landscape in the analyzed films, answering the questions that motivated this analysis is considered possible. According to the taxonomy established by Higson (1984, 1987), a cinematographic landscape can serve up to four kinds of functions: dramatic, historic, metaphoric, and spectacular. The dramatic function defines cinematographic landscape as a space for the development of drama; the historic function establishes that landscape as a historically specific place that can provide fiction with veracity. Furthermore, through the metaphoric function, cinematographic landscape works as a rhetoric image of the emotions and thoughts of characters or of larger groups such as the entire population of a country. Finally, through the spectacular function, that landscape is offered as a spectacle to the eye, which allows us to value the aesthetic and ideological aspects of the film discourse by "establishing an affective relationship between the characters, the audience and the space... that contributes to redefining the meanings inherent to the landscape portrayed on screen" (Maza, 2014, p. 112).

The analysis carried out allows us to conclude that the main function of cinematographic landscape in both films is to serve as a metaphor for the protagonists' emotions and thoughts. Likewise, the framing contributes to emphasize the spectacular function by using resources such as closed frames and *travelings*, which enables filmmakers to use space to comment on the themes addressed in their respective films. Two of those themes –the loneliness caused by confinement and the consequent wish to be free– might be the most important.

On the other hand, the analysis allows us to refer back to the contextual aspects mentioned in this article's introduction. It can be concluded that both *mise-en-scène* and the main framing strategy in *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* correspond to the characteristics of a low-budget film, made with only a few resources, where the filmmaker takes advantage of the limitations imposed by the almost handmade production scheme used. In the case of *The Passion of Berenice*, the context of industrial production under which the film was made is revealed by the extensive duration of the shooting that lasted a bit longer than a month (García Riera, 1995, p. 215) as well as by the attention to details in the *mise-en-scène*. Hermosillo addressed the project from the perspective of someone who already had experience on large-budget productions (*El señor de Osanto*, 1972) and used great amount of technical, material, and artistic resources within his reach for the benefit of the film.

Finally, it is important to point out that from *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* and *The Passion of Berenice* onward, the career paths of Fassbinder and Hermosillo developed in opposite ways. By the end of his career, Fassbinder faced big scale projects such as the television miniseries *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1980) or his last film *Querelle* (1982), which was a coproduction with a cast of international stars. On his part, Hermosillo joined the independent film industry of scant resources to give way to projects such as *Clandestino destino* (1987), *El aprendiz de pornógrafo* (1989), *Intimidades en un cuarto de baño* (1991), *eXXXorcismos* (2002), *El malogrado amor de Sebastián* (2006), and, the most recent, *Un buen sabor de boca* (2017), which he made with a GoPro camera and a budget of 15 000 pesos (The last film of Jaime Hermosillo, 2017). However, even with the changes in direction that

they experimented in their career paths, none of them ever abandoned their critical points of view, which are present in their films from the very beginning.

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