

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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TO EACH THEIR OWN LIFE / Cada Quien Su Vida (1960)

Julio Bracho

Mexico (Spanish)

Archived video on YouTube:

<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL0BEDDB95F6444766&si=t318jt-tq6ten9oW>

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=343969540441952>

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OVERVIEW

Auteur By the time that Mexican director Julio Bracho directed *Cada Quien Su Vida* in 1960, he had established a solid reputation as a director willing to explore the psychological realities of individuals with obsessions, dreams, shame, and secrets. Julio Bracho's collaboration with cinematographer Jack Draper (who also collaborated with director Emilio Fernández in *Rosenda* (1948)), resulted in a film that is highly naturalistic in its gritty depiction of the Red Light District, with film noir touches of chiaroscuro and extreme close-up point of view shots that add layers of symbolism and emotion. Further adding to the impact was his use of actual musicians in a realistic set depicting an old cabaret, El Paraíso.

Film The screenplay, *Cada Quien Su Vida* (To Each Their Own Life) written by Mexican writer Luis Basurto, was made into a gritty naturalist / realist film in 1960. It is an important film in the "urban realism" genre that emerged from the late 1940s through early 1960s which not only showed the poverty and despair of people trapped in a noisy, dark, and dangerous city, but also who found ways to rise above their situation and to find hope and life.

Background Other films in the genre included Juan Bustillo Oro's *Del Brazo y Por La Calle* (1956), Emilio Fernández's *Salón México* (1949) and Julio Bracho's own *Another Dawn* (1943). What all of them have in common is a deep psychological component that involves shattered dreams, deep shame, self-destructive behavior, and finally, a transformation and a hopeful future – the bedraggled phoenix, slowly lifting up from its gritty ashes. In *To Each their Own Life*, the characters are society's outsiders, who live in the shadows of the respectable world. As such, they represent the "Other" and are the obverse of mainstream culture. It is also about way that a rigidly macho culture harms both men and women, and the stratagems used for survival. Within this genre, the characters which might seem to be caricatures, are humanized and made deeply sympathetic.

SYNOPSIS

The story takes place from the evening of New Year's Eve to New Year's morning in a gritty cabaret-cantina in Mexico City called El Paraíso. During the space of a few hours, the patrons who have come for New Year's Eve dancing, drinking, and debauchery at a low-rent cabaret in the red light district, have encounters with the bartender, waiters, and above all, the taxi dancers (who also work as prostitutes). The encounters reveal psychological truths about each of the individuals, and reveal them to be more complex than public conceptions of people working in a red light district. They reveal universal truths about human nature, and also the way that individuals are able to improve and rehabilitate their lives in spite of low birth, adversity, poverty, internalized self-abnegation and shame.

El Paraíso is a place where patrons can drink at tables or dance on a rather tight dance floor, with music provided by a live band. Most of the women in the film are "taxi-dancers" which is to say that they are

there to dance with men in exchange for “fichas” or coupons that are purchased, often in conjunction with drinks. The “taxi dancers” are prostitutes, a reality that is discussed openly by the women. Some are independent workers but others are controlled by a “husband” who is, in reality, a pimp.

The film follows the stories of the people in El Paraíso, and a kind of “Ship of Fools” structure, which illustrates people of different walks of life and backgrounds are thrust together in a *mélange* of humanity. The journey is to the new year, which could portend either change or an affirmation of the status quo. The screenplay structure is a bit more complex than that, which is satisfying in certain ways, but frustrating in others, because there are so many characters engaged in revelatory interactions that it’s impossible to gain much of sense of who they are and their backstory. The exception is the smoking, drinking, weathered “SiempreViva” (always alive... echoes of “undead”), who regales us with stories of her life, all of which contradict each other. In one telling, she grew up as a part of the privileged elite in a mansion with servants and elegant soirees, but in another, she was a pitiful foundling, who grew up as an abused, neglected ward of a Dickensian orphanage.

Don Pepe, the owner / bartender, and Chucho, the waiter, are in many of the scenes, and if it were a novel, it would not be surprising to see it play out through their eyes. The movie starts out with a woman getting dressed in a grim, dark apartment on one of the floors above the bar and dance floor of El Paraíso (a very ironic name for the place). As Don Pepe, Chucho, and workers prepare the club for New Year’s Eve, Rosa opens her eyes, puts on a robe over her slip and then walks downstairs in high heeled mules to see what is going on. She approaches a man playing a high-top piano, drinking alcohol. The piano player’s name is Mundito, and Rosa tells him, “Mundito, stop drinking—you’re killing yourself.” So, that kicks off the story, which involves the relationships between the women who work in the club, the clientele, and the people who happen to come in. As the midnight approaches, as does the new year, it is clear that the story centers on concepts of “Otherness” – society’s underclass, where dreams, delusions, pride, and shame intertwine. Rosa (also called by her nickname, La Tacon Dorado), loves Mundito, but he is on the verge of death. He dies, and she spends part of New Year’s Eve at the funeral home. She, and the other women are prostitutes, and there is nothing euphemistic or veiling about it – and, although they seem to accept their lives, there seems to be little future, little hope, and a tremendous amount of shame.

MAJOR CHARACTERS

<i>Rosa “La Tacon Dorado”</i>	Taxi dancer / sex worker
<i>Dorita</i>	Taxi dancer / sex worker who spends New Year’s Eve with the Professor
<i>Siempre Viva</i>	Old prostitute and a regular
<i>Bridge</i>	Gangster who wants to marry Raquel and leave his life of crime
<i>Raquel “Las Penas”</i>	In love with Bridge – wants to leave her life as a taxi dancer
<i>La Jarocha</i>	Prostitute managed by her “husband” pimp Bobby
<i>Bobby</i>	Gangster and pimp
<i>La Pepsi-Cola</i>	Raucous taxi dancer / prostitute
<i>Diputado / Congressman</i>	Patron of the cabaret and the taxi dancers
<i>Profe / Professor</i>	Visits each New Year’s Eve, spends his time dancing
<i>Don Pepe</i>	Owner of the bar and cabaret

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

LA SIEMPRE VIVA (ALWAYS ALIVE)

The anchoring character is Siempre Viva (Always Alive), who is larger-than-life, effusive, whose face and body show the ravages of her profession and her vices. She interacts with all the characters and extolls them with her advice and insight. She is terrifying in her pancake makeup and dark lipstick, too much mascara, and blonde curls. Men shudder at her and make comments about her age and ugliness. Patriarchy is vicious to old women, especially those who fall outside the lines of maternal virtue. No one seems to know what her name is, except for her unkind nickname, “La Siempre Viva,” which means

“Always Alive” in English. Her nickname suggests a kind of undead quality to her which is certainly reinforced by her pancake makeup, dress from the 1920s or 30s, and dark, charcoal eye makeup.

Pragmatic: As a survivor of many years working in cabarets, Siempre Viva is very pragmatic and she deals with the things that occur in a way that exposes what is really going on, rather than clinging to illusions. For example, when a fight breaks out on the dance floor, she stays aloof from it and points out the futility of getting involved, particularly since it would resolve itself.

Self-inventing: At various times, Siempre Viva describes herself as having been a foundling orphan raised in abject poverty or the daughter of a diplomat and his high-society wife. When Raquel calls her out on it, Siempre Viva is unperturbed. Her work of self-invention is something that allows her to stay, if not forever young, at least forever alive.

Generous: When Raquel and Bridge make the commitment to marry and break away from the louche life of the seedy demi-monde, Siempre Viva makes a remarkably generous gift of very valuable pearls so that they can leave and have a fresh start away from the world they are currently in.

ROSA (LA TACON DORADO)

Rosa lives in a shabby set of rooms above the cabaret, and she makes her living as a taxi dancer and prostitute. Her best friend, the piano player Mundito, has just died a terrible death due to alcohol abuse, and she is in love with a man who does not reciprocate her love. Instead, he simply uses her for his own entertainment, and then ignores her. She is not sure what to do and is facing a crossroads as she is pregnant and not sure what to do.

Idealistic: When she speaks with Siempre Viva, Rosa expresses the desire that the man she is infatuated with divorce his wife and marry her, so they could live together in harmony and joy. Siempre Viva then asks Rosa why she thinks she has to live life like other women. She does have a point, because if Rosa starts to think that the only legitimate way to live life is to be like the cultural ideal, then she is devaluing her own life, and the years she has spent. It is better to be pragmatic than idealistic, suggests Siempre Viva.

Decision-Point Rosa is pregnant. She must make a decision quickly in order to decide what to do. There is a suggestion that is implied rather than stated that she may consider terminating the pregnancy. The other implication is that she might actually keep the baby, but if she does, it will require her to make a tremendous change in her life. What that change might be is not explored, but is a reality. At the end, Rosa decides to keep the baby, in large part because of the kindness and regard shown to her by Siempre Viva.

DORITA

If a viewer thinks that they are going to find a film that celebrates the “sisterhood” of taxi dancers who are unified by a sense of pride and self-worth, they need to look no further than at Dorita in order to see that is resolutely and resoundingly NOT the case. Dorita is a beautiful blonde taxi dancer, sex worker and she embodies the complex reality of what the work does to women.

Kind-hearted Dorita is kind and generous to the Professor, and she is patient with his obvious infatuation. She gives him permission to take off her silk stockings and she does so because she wants him to feel happy about himself and self-accepting, although she is doing it essentially as an empty gesture. He is upset with his inability to perform and filled with shame for not living up to the hyper-macho cultural ideal.

Broken: As the night goes on and Dorita continues to drink shots of alcohol, she is increasingly sad. She contemplates love and in so many words explains that the work she does apes and mocks love in the sense that she shares her body, but nothing about it has anything to do with love. In fact, she does not consider that to be love – love, for her, means intensity ... if a man truly loves her, he will hit her. At least

this is what she thinks. But, such mistreatment is absolutely anathema to self-respect, and she has internalized the cruel mistreatment as a kind of truth-speaking to her value as a human being. In other words, she has none.

Commodified: Dorita is not the only woman in the cabaret who has been commodified in an ultra-macho patriarchy. In fact, all of them have been thus degraded and dehumanized. What Dorita poignantly illustrates is how the commodification of sexual desire and human beings involves a terrible stripping away of the ability to be truly intimate and forge a connection with another human being. Not only can she not feel anything for the people she is intimate with, the same holds true for the customer. For example, the Professor cannot perform sexually, and although he is infatuated with Dorita, there is a gulf between them, and they cannot connect on a spiritual level. In the meantime, Dorita recognizes that the reason she responds to a man who beats her and says he feels something for her is because it is preferable to being simply a convenient commodity.

THEMES

SOCIETY:

The core themes in *Cada Quien Su Vida* involve a deep plunge into the people who live, work, and dream in the Red Light district, who are also judged, exploited, and even shunned.

Social Class: The prostitutes, gangsters, taxi dancers, and saloonkeepers who live and work in the Red Light district are considered to be outsiders, and not a part of polite society. They work under the cover of darkness, after hours and into the early pre-dawn hours. In a conservative culture such as that of Mexico, they are the feared and abject "Other." However, in *Each Person Their Life*, as opposed to other works in Mexican film and literature which tend to create stereotypes or caricatures, their inner lives and the dimensions of their thinking are exposed, which is deeply re-humanizing. For example, the film begins with Rosa who awakens from a deep afternoon siesta. She is already wearing the dramatic makeup for work, and as she awakens, the viewer is aware of her deep sadness. First, she interacts with Mundito, her friend the piano player. It is not clear if they are lovers, but she does love him and it pains her to see how his self-destructive habit has harmed him. She then prepares for the evening, taking a shower, donning a dress, all the while exuding a deep sadness. Her life, lived in a shabby apartment upstairs from the cabaret, is likewise shabby and seems to offer no escape, and such conditions foment impossible dreams, but then at the same time, self-loathing as the impossibility of the dreams becomes increasingly apparent.

Macho Culture: The world of El Paraíso is one dominated by patriarchy and toxic masculinity: Men have to demonstrate themselves to be ultra-masculine; by demonstrating their power by carrying guns, womanizing, drinking to excess, bragging and brawling. The cabaret would not exist outside macho culture. The customers are men who use the dance hall and the tawdry rooms upstairs to telegraph to other men that they are powerful heterosexual men whose worth revolves around power, influence, strength, and virility. Julio Bracho shows that such notions of masculinity are truly toxic, and they result in an "all or nothing" thinking that trap men in cycles of repetition, with no real escape. For example, El Boby is a loathsome pimp who demands that his "wife," nicknamed "La Jarocho" spend time to have drinks (and by implication, sex) with the Congressman who is visiting the bar. When she demurs and tells him that she does not want to do so, he hits her.

Gender: One can see a wide range of gender roles in the world of the cabaret. For example, while most of the women in the film are prostitutes, Doña Conchita, the wife of the professor, is viewed as a typical "respectable" wife and mother. Another woman enters, and while she is dressed as a nun, she is actually a religious zealot and reformer who warns the prostitutes that they are sinners. Similarly, most of the men in the cabaret are part of the "underworld," which is to say that they are outside the bounds of polite society. Bridge is a low-level gangster / thief, while El Boby is a violent pimp. Don Pepe owns the cabaret, which makes its money by having the taxi dancers require their dance partners to purchase overpriced drinks. He seems to own the building, so the women who live and work in the tawdry quarters above, also benefit him. The men who come to the cabaret for entertainment are often those in highly

respected professions, such as the Professor, and also the Diputado (Congressman), and the men he works with.

Women's Roles: The women in the cabaret enact the "whore" part of the Madonna / whore duality, wherein women are considered to be a commodity to be consumed for pleasure, or a woman to put on a pedestal to be the mother of one's children. The wife and mother of one's children is abandoned and betrayed while the "girlfriend" is a prostitute to be used, mocked, insulted, and abandoned. If she becomes pregnant, she will feel pressure to terminate the pregnancy; the paternity would never be acknowledged. On the other hand, the wife will be encouraged to have children and to focus on caretaking not only the children, but also the husband, even though he feels no physical attraction, and insults both wife and girlfriend through his lack of respect for women.

RELATIONSHIP

The film encompasses a number of relationships and in doing so, reveals something about the nature of reality and how people get to understand the world and themselves through those relationships.

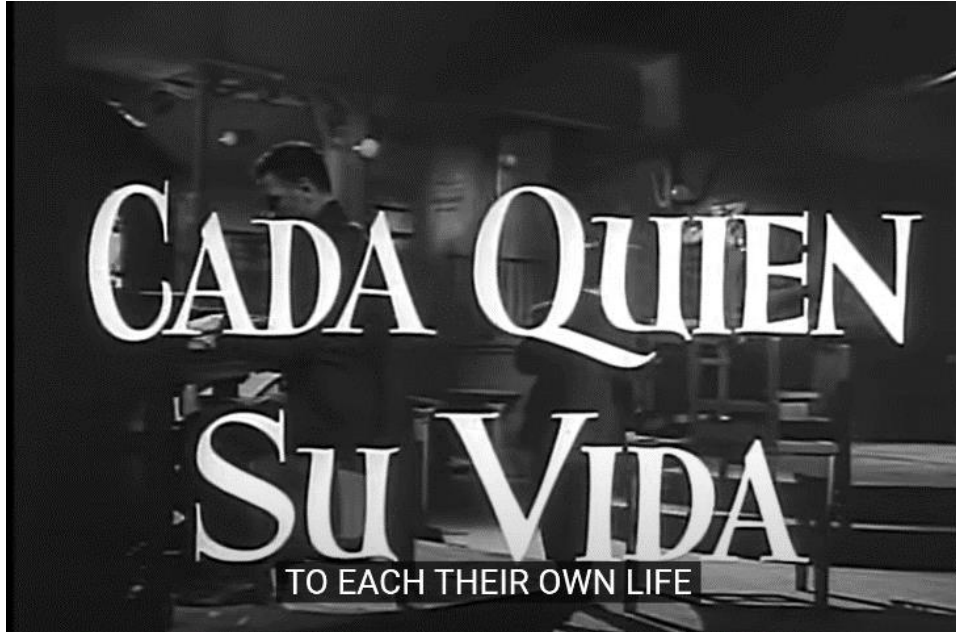
Sexuality: The men who come to the cabaret are there to dance, drink and flirt with women, and then, in some cases, to retreat to the rooms for sex. Sex and sexuality have little to do with love, however, and when Dorita describe to the Professor that she will not deny her body to anyone, she will always withhold love. She is, she explains, in love with one person, and the physical abuse he metes out to her is one of her ways of knowing that it is a real love. Love for her must involve passion and intense physical experiences. And yet, neither the sexuality or the way that she evaluates love bring her anything but sadness and self-hatred. When Rosa wears a dress that is designed so that it looks like the back is unzipped all the way to her derriere, and that she is in the process of baring herself for sexual availability, and when she wears exaggerated makeup to accentuate her eyes, and to communicate that she is "for sale," sexuality becomes simply part of a commodification process, and becomes decoupled from love or a true union of souls. If anything, it is a parody of that, and such exaggerated sexuality mocks bourgeois notions of sexuality being something polite people do not talk about.

Friendship: Siempre Viva sits at a table, orders drinks, and talks to all who come into the bar. Her goal is to get them to purchase her a drink. At least that's the official goal. The reality is that she functions as an anchor – she offers friendship and in doing so, her view of life and living is expressed. For example, when she goes to the funeral parlor to attend the vigil / wake for Mundito, she describes how seeing his dead body somehow comforted her. It made her aware of how she was still alive, and that life itself, no matter what form it comes in, is to be treasured and celebrated. Later, when she is speaking with Raquel and spinning yarns about her own forebears and life, she gives Raquel very sage advice while also offering a deep friendship that includes acceptance. Other examples of friendship in the cabaret are exemplified in the world of the Professor. Dorita considers him a friend (as well as client), and she looks forward to his annual visit. Oddly, his wife, Doña Concha, is a friend as well, as she is not resentful of female attention, but in contrast, appreciates their taking care of him, and infusing him with vigor and joie de vivre for at least a half of the incoming year.

Exploiter / Exploited: The relationships of El Paraíso have a framework of exploitation, which is both psychologically and physically abusive. The women work as taxi dancers, which is to say that men pay them to dance by buying "fichas" and by buying them overpriced drinks, both of which benefit the owner of the cabaret. There is also often prostitution, and some of the women are trapped with their "manager" or "husband," which are tantamount to pimps, and who require the women to turn over the money as well as to accept dangerous or humiliating situations just to maximize the amount of money they receive. For example, when the wealthy Congressman appears, Bobby insisted on having La Jarocha dance, drink, and consort with him. To say "no" would result in Bobby beating her.

SCENES:

The film opens to long panning shots of Mexico City at night – the lights shine, and the viewer sees the neon of the red light district. The soundtrack is that of raucous, cacophonous jazz, appropriate to New Year's Eve, and also the idea of a breakdown of social order.



In this extreme close-up, Rosa awakens from a siesta to rest before she works all night in the cabaret, El Paraiso (Paradise), located in the heart of the red light district of Mexico City. She wears dramatic eye makeup, which communicates in an instant what her role is.



This extreme close-up point of view shot communicates in a single image the experience and world of the story. Rosa, La Tacon Dorado (Golden Heel) wakes up in the evening to prepare for working all night as a taxi dancer. She slides her feet into mules with shiny stiletto heels, and then prepares to go downstairs to the cabaret that contains a dance floor, a bar, tables and booths for dining, and a place for the musicians.



Rosa speaks to Mundito and asks him to stop drinking because it is killing him. He pays no attention, but continues to drink more than ever, causing him to collapse.



Rosa returns to her cramped and dingy rooms above the cabaret, where she takes a shower and prepares for the festivities of New Year's Eve.



Outside El Paraiso (Paradise), Don Pepe, the owner, walks in anticipation of the New Year. The neighborhood in the red light district is dingy, of need paint, and rather tawdry, reflecting the fact it is part of the "demi monde" and a dark obverse of the polite, daytime world of work, industry, and family, in other parts of Mexico City.



La Siempre Viva has a nickname in Spanish that means “always alive.” However, the way it is used, a better translation in English would be “Never Dies.” She sits in her favorite spot in the hotel and survives by getting people to buy drinks for themselves and for herself. She receives a commission. In the past, she has worked as a prostitute, but there does not seem to be much enthusiasm for what she offers now.



Chucho talks to Pepsi-Cola about New Year’s Eve and speculates if the Congressman will be in attendance. The women in the story are taxi-dancers and prostitutes, and seemingly cut from the same cloth, but each has her own challenges, dreams, and complex psychology. In the demimonde, they are pitted against each other and rated by their sexual allure (as determined by men and the male gaze), their youth, and availability (and so the loser ones paradoxically could be perceived as more “fun”).



Pepsi-Cola tells La Jarocha to cheer up and to not worry too much about Bobby, and that he will be there for New Year's Eve. The way that La Jarocha shapes her entire notion of self and identity and also her value as a person around Bobby's (her pimp's) conception of her is clear and it is an indictment of machismo.



La Jarocha looks to Bobby for validation and acceptance. He is indifferent and cares primarily about how much money she can earn for him. His drinking companion is a small-time gangster and looks at women as objects and commodities.



The Congressman arrives with his assistant to participate in New Year's Eve festivities. They are regular clients of El Paraiso.



Boby and his gangster friend mock La Jarocha and the other women, and brag about their exploits, including gambling and other illegal activities. Rather than being anti-heroes, they are revolting examples of ultra-macho society and the way it degrades all who become involved in it.



La Siempre Viva invites Raquel for a drink and asks her questions to get to know her. She spins a tale of how her mother used to take her to the opera when she was a child. Raquel seems to have something that sets her apart, too. In that moment, Always Alive points out that everyone has their own life, and that they are all unique; appearances always deceive. She emphasizes that life is all, above all.



The taxi-dancer / prostitute who works at El Paraiso, Pepsi-Cola, is specially favored by El Diputado (The Congressman). The Congressman is a frequent client of El Paraiso, and he regularly visits it with his assistants.



The despicable pimp, Bobby, mocks and menaces La Jarocha, a taxi dancer and prostitute at El Paraiso, who refers to him as her husband. Others mock her for it, since he seems to have more than one prostitute who turns over her money to him. Further, he pits the prostitutes against each other.



Don Pepe greets the Professor, who enjoys the festivities every New Year's Eve. He echoes what La Siempre Viva has said earlier – that the point of life is not to make it too complicated, but simply to live. And, life requires love.



This point of view shot helps the viewer capture the environment of the club, El Paraiso. The music has started again after a brief pause, to which Dorita, La Jarocha, Pepsi-Cola, and others urge the patrons do dance in un “bailazco” – indicating over-the-top enjoyment in it.



Rosa makes her way down the cold, wet streets to go to the funeral home where a wake is being held for Mundito. Both Rosa and La Siempreviva (Always-Alive) spend time there.



Rosa is devastated by the death of Mundito, and it is clear that she loved him, although he was self-destructive and often abusive to her. Don Pepe comforts her as does Pepsi-Cola.



As the night proceeds, the guests drink more as Pepsi-Cola and Rosa smile and continue to provide company and entertainment to the men. The smiles and laughter are brave gestures against the darkness of their world.



The dance floor starts to clear as the band takes a break. In the dark lighting and cigarette smoke, one can see the sculptures of nudes on the walls, which contribute to the louche and sordid atmosphere.



The Professor makes his annual visit to El Paraiso so that he can spend time with the platinum blonde, Dorita, who is a taxi dancer and prostitute, who seeks love but can't imagine it is "real" unless accompanied by intensity, often translated to violence and jealousy. The Professor is infatuated with her, and his annual visits give him vitality for many of the subsequent months.



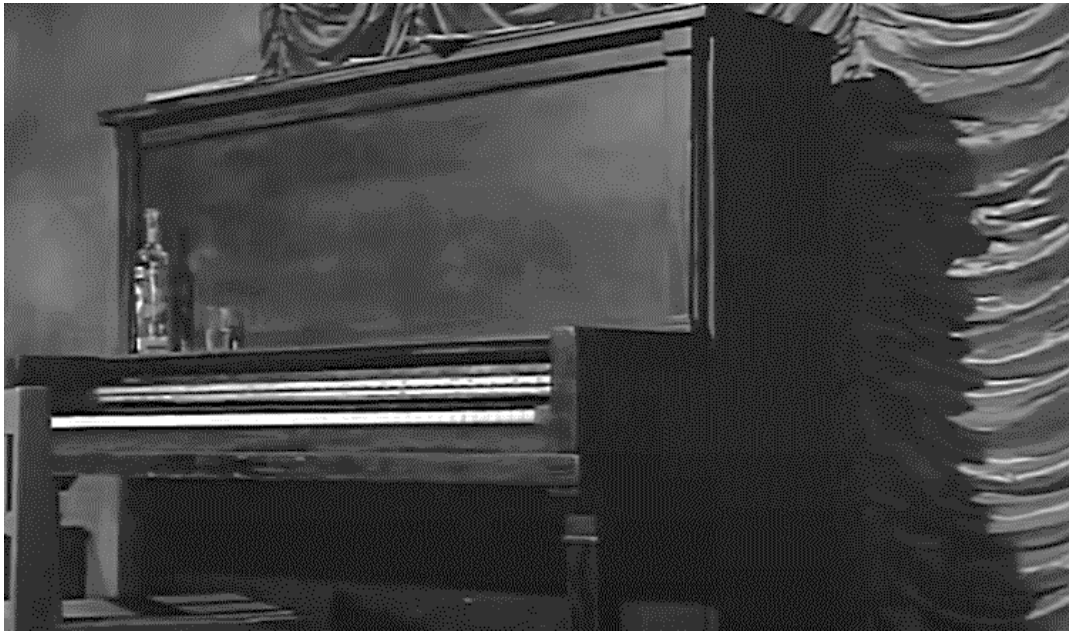
La Jarocha, a taxi dancer and prostitute, approaches the table occupied by Bobby, Jarocha's pimp. La Jarocha refers to herself as being "married" to him. He derides her for not having enough "dates" – in other words, not earning enough money to turn over to him.



Illustrating the chaos of the "old year" and the impending new year, a down and out drunk stumbles into El Paraiso, and he is promptly ejected by Don Pepe, who considers him bad for business, and Rosa, who feels sorry for him.



Mundito is absent from his piano. Nothing is left but a bottle of alcohol and a glass. He was killed by his own alcoholism and self-destructive behavior, which was fueled by self-pity. Siempreviva is at a vigil at the funeral parlor, along with Rosa.



Raquel explains to a man who visits her that love makes her feel ashamed. She discusses her remorse for her life and the fact she is in love with a man who will always keep her in the shadows, and the fact that he wants to use her, but is also ashamed of her, translated into her own sense of inner shame.



Bridge declares his love to Raquel, who returns his love. It is possible for them to escape the world they are in if they work together, but neither has any resources.



Dorita, who has been drinking alcohol with the Professor, describes the love she has for a man who regularly beats her. "Perhaps he hits me because he knows what I am," and in that moment it is clear that she is not the carefree, free-wheeling lady of the night who is happy to share her body with everyone. The deep truth is that such a life has done deep damage to her sense of self-worth. She measures love by the intensity of the gestures – but hitting her is more a gesture of hatred than love.



The conversation between Dorita and the Profe: And you let him hit you? I want him to! Because the minute he stops hitting me is the when he as stopped loving me. And then the professor describes how he had intense love one time in the past – for his wife... but it dissipated over the years.



Profe loves Dorita, but she admits she's only in love with the guy who hits her... she says they can be intimate anyway ... he starts to take off one of her stockings, but she holds his head and says, "it's useless..." he physically and emotionally can't perform.



Returning from the funeral home, Siempreviva explains that she saw him... and that she feels gratified ... "I've always liked seeing the dead because afterwards, I feel more alive – as though I'd been reborn – but this time it was different. There he was in his coffin with a sad smile and a terrible loneliness, and I felt that loneliness, too."



Rosa does not like the way that one of the other taxi dancers, Pepsi-Cola, is behaving, and she calls her out for dancing in a suggestive manner with Jarocha's "husband" (actually pimp). Jarocha intercedes to ostensibly smooth the conflict. "This is actually my issue – so stay out of it"



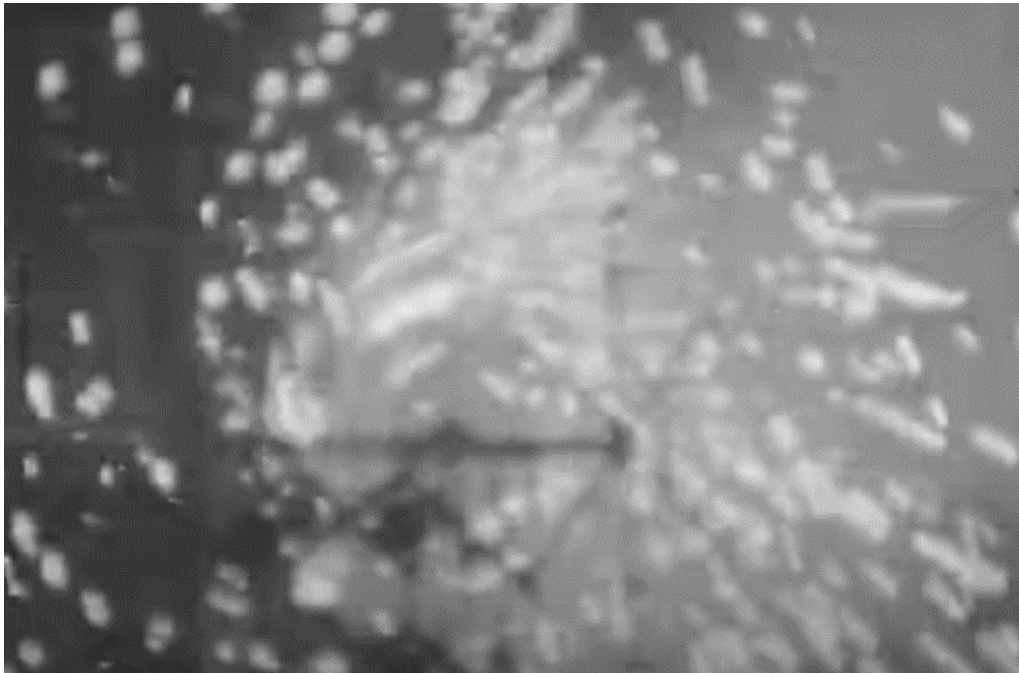
The calls for calm have the opposite effect and actually instigate more conflicts which quickly escalates to blows. The congressman swings and hits Dany. The entire dance floor is quickly engulfed by the melee.



In the middle of a melee, where people fight on the dance floor, a deranged nun figure enters the cabaret and shrieks, "You are going to hell – all you drunkards, prostitutes, pimps, and homosexuals!" However, the response of the workers and the patrons is to pstart laughing and carousing again as though they had never been fighting.



The new year begins and the scene turns to the artisanal fireworks that typify Mexican holidays. This scene portends a raucous, chaotic beginning of the new year and the cacophonous jazz with its caterwauling horns, invokes notions of Dionysian abandon.



Congressman and Fatso (friend) talk about leaving. They first ask a taxi dancer if they can “go upstairs.” She him down... “I want to start this year differently.” He does not take it as a rebuff. He responds, “Okay – see you Saturday.”



Siempreviva telling the story of her life... Tacon says "which one? I've heard three. Which one is true?" Siempreviva says, "I no longer know... and I no longer think it matters." She asks Tacon if she loves the person she is sad about



After seeing the man she loves running around and hearing the haunting, discordant tune of the organ grinder, she reunites with him and they embrace and dance alone on the dance floor... Bridge says he will take her away with him and they'll leave... she says, "no" it's not possible .. then runs down a deserted hallway in the dingy club



Through the entrance, the dawn can be perceived. The light of day makes the cabaret even more tawdry than before, utterly devoid of any potential for nocturnal magic or enchantment. The light of day, instead of reassuring the residents of the demimonde that there is always a new tomorrow or a fresh start, exposes the dirt, the poverty, the cheap clothing, the wrinkles of age, and stains on one's dreams.



Bridge and Raquel on the roof at dawn – she has decided not to leap to her death – Bridge begs her to run away with him... she says she only has 5 or 6 months left due to a tumor in her brain ... he says he's sick as well – morally sick ... but together they can transform... in the time they have left



“Look how the new day is born – our day” says Raquel to Bridge as they look at the city from the roof. The cityscape is a dingy panorama and yet a new dawn suggests new beginnings, as does the sound of a train that could potentially bear them away.



Siempreviva gives Bridge and Raquel pearls worth \$10,000 pesos and a receipt demonstrating their authenticity. It is notable that she has been holding onto them for so much time as a safety net. In giving them her pearls she is, in essence, giving away her future so that they can have a future, and psychological freedom.



Dona Concha picking up her husband, the Professor. "Did he have a nice time?" she asks. Siempre Viva, of course, has no idea. When Dona Concha thanks her for staying up with him to make sure he was safe, Siempre Viva says nothing, but does smile a bit at the error.



The Professor and his wife, Dona Concha, leave for home. Dona Concha frets that they will not have time to stop by Mass, but can do that later. Siempre Viva wishes them a happy New Year.



The world and life are like a broken game, mourns Rosa. It is like a roulette wheel that spins and spins and spins (echoing Boethius here). Siempreviva asks Rosa, “so you think you have to be like other women ... get married, be faithful, have children? Talk to me as though I were your mother.” Rosa weeps... Siempreviva intuits that Rosa is pregnant and desperately sad. “I shouldn’t have it – I don’t even know who the father is..”



Rosa is touched by Siempre Viva’s words. “You’re so good, Siempre Viva.” There is a frank acknowledgement of the physical and psychological toll that working as a taxi dancer / prostitute takes, and that in the empty enactment of the physical expression of love, the absence of real love is made all the more evident.



After robbing the cash register, Siempreviva leaves and entrusts minding the cash register to “Alka Seltzer,” a blind street peddler, who will undoubtedly be blamed for the theft.



With her decision to keep her baby, Rosa stops on her way and decides to attend New Year’s Day Mass at the church she passes on the street. It is a powerful metaphor of turning a new leaf as she pulls her jacket over her shoulders to cover the dress she wore all night at the cabaret. The dress, which has a flesh-colored insert, gives the impression that it is unzipped. To cover it is a gesture of modesty and also a motion toward self-respect and self-care, something that has been stripped from her in her life as a taxi dancer, who has so many sexual partners in order to survive she does not even know the father of her child. Nevertheless, she has decided to keep the baby, and in doing so, regains self-respect and dignity.



QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW:

1. From the beginning of the film, we see Rosa at a crisis point. She is losing her best friend, Mundito, to a death that came from the environment where he worked. At the same time, she is also living the consequences of where she works and what she does for a living: she is pregnant. Describe her state of mind, her personal crossroads and decision point, and the implications.
2. There is both violence and death in this film that has to do with the beginning of a New Year, and notions of continuity. Please describe incidences of violence and death in this film, and then relate them to Nietzsche's notion of the Dionysian in literature.
3. The microcosm within the cabaret involves people who work in the club, and those who come from outside to visit and patronize the club. Describe how and why this "demi-monde" that more or less comes alive at night and closes down by light of day is an inverse of the world of polite society.
4. Describe the men who come to the cabaret to dance and consort with the women. What animates each of them? How are they perceived? Which ones are struggling with self-doubt? Why? Which ones seem to have a confident hand on the reins of their lives? How and why?
5. Siempre Viva is a woman of contradictions. First, she is very old, but she relates well to the young women. Second, she seems to be very straightforward, but the more she talks, the more enigmatic she becomes. Describe the final scene where she robs the cash register and explain how she might explain her actions, not only in the taking of money from Don Pepe, but also in framing the poor, blind street vendor.