

# TREN DE SOMBRAS: AN AESTHETIC OF MEMORY

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## INTRODUCTION

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The purpose of this article is to define the concept of memory and its presence in the work of José Luis Guerín. The objective will be to analyse a sequence from his film *Tren de sombras* [Train of Shadows] (José Luis Guerín, 1977) with the aim of demonstrating the relationship between the concept of memory introduced by Bergson (2006) and developed by Deleuze (1987), and Guerín's use of montage. This analysis will reveal how *Tren de sombras* is confined to an audiovisual discourse in which memory is the expression of the duration of human experience. Memory is defined here as a concept considered within the theoretical framework of postmodernity, and therefore the sequential analysis will focus strictly on contributions by authors writing in the context of the postmodern crisis of narrative. Based on Gilles Deleuze's (2002) refutation of Bergson's (2006) idea of filmmaking, we will try to demonstrate the

need for a dialectic of memory in order to understand how the Spanish director's film aims to offer a meta-cinematic reflection through its experimental use of montage. In his films, José Luis Guerín establishes very precise coordinates in which metafictional reflection on cinematic language and techniques, especially in the use of montage, play a prominent role that defines his work and his personal style. Both ideas are indelibly associated with the concept of memory as the organiser of the lexicon of images and as the extension of the director's creative consciousness, expressed through montage, time and space. Memory is a key functional element for understanding how Guerín aims to locate *Tren de sombras* in a fictional space where the conception of the characters and their life journeys are subordinated to the subjectivity of recollection and the experience of memory, as described in the montage.

Through the analysis of style and technique expressed in the sequence analysed, a dialogue

will be established from the inside out, with the aim of avoiding abstraction and drawing conclusions based on the realisation of image and technique expressed by José Luis Guerín. The ultimate objective will be to identify parallels and possible correlations that may clarify the role of memory and facilitate the hybridisation between the abstract theory of postmodernism and the Spanish director's filmic practice.

### **TREN DE SOMBRAS: THE MONTAGE OF MEMORY**

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Two objectives guide Guerín's work. The first is to freeze the present moment through the embalming power of the image as described by Bazin (1990). The second is his interest in extending the limits of what we understand as cinema through a practical questioning of the origins of the medium. One aspect that is worthy of further examination in Guerín's work is his treatment of memory, and this article will therefore attempt to explore how this concept is represented with reference to his film *Tren de sombras*. In his films the Spanish director's main interest is in reflecting on reality, while the fictional character of the work is relegated to the background. The passage of time and his concern with capturing the fleeting moment constitute the focus of his attention.

Thus, for Guerín the film is a process in which reality and experience clash with the artifice of cinema, thereby establishing a double dialogue: "one with the surrounding reality you are filming, and the other with your own medium, although implicitly" (Arroba, 2002: 71). *Tren de sombras* operates on a different level, masking its reflexive character and metafictional discourse by means of the lawyer Fleury's fictional recreation of fragments of household stories. Guerín's film turns Fleury's "diary films" into a kind of fictionalisation through the theme of "found footage", with these recordings of the past being played in the first part of the film. After this, there is a leap into

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### **FOR GUERÍN THE FILM IS A PROCESS IN WHICH REALITY AND EXPERIENCE CLASH WITH THE ARTIFICE OF CINEMA**

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the present, and from there Guerín weaves a network of shadows, of present locations that evoke the past of the diary films. Finally, he plays with montage and with his role as director to fragment the linear order of this found footage and give it a significance that transcends the fiction of a family story. In this way, Guerín's film uses audiovisual language to vest the innocent past with a polysemy of interpretations lost in hidden details. *Tren de sombras* privileges moments of life with the objective of using montage as a means of assembling those moments and reorganising their meaning. The Spanish director represents these scenes of daily life so that he may subsequently strip them of their apparent innocence. Through montage, he shows how this organising element is able to add meaning to any ordinary day-to-day life. Consequently, memory for Guerín is the organising principle and ultimate purpose in *Tren de sombras*.

### **EXPLORING BERGSON'S AND DELEUZE'S CONCEPT OF MEMORY IN GUERÍN'S FILMMAKING**

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The examination of memory in *Tren de sombras* appears to be linked to Bergson's idea of movement (Bergson, 2006: 95), which refers to the internal development of things, to the evolution of fragments of reality that surround us and how we try to perceive that change in our surroundings. Bergson's theses, reinterpreted by Deleuze (2002: 227) in his study of immanence to construct a new ontology of the image, raise questions about subjectivity and perception. Our own memory works in a manner similar to filmmaking: we select some fragments or realities from among a myriad of

possibilities, we choose to perceive and remember those moments that we can use to build a personal narrative adapted to our understanding, and we automatically believe that this way of viewing reality reflects the actual movement, the internal development of all things. According to Bergson, this process exposes a problem: the effective *spatialisation* of movement (Bergson, 2006: 21). Instead of being considered in abstract terms, as pure transformation and durative change, movement is fixed in a temporal space. This space is divided and measured by specific events underpinned by time, giving an excessively dominant role to the perception and subjectivity (Álvarez Asiáin, 2011: 97). However, for Deleuze cinema has the ability to express movement as constant change on the basis of those privileged moments (Álvarez Asiáin, 2011: 98). The fixing and *spatialisation* of movement in images makes it possible to observe this process of change. Memory, being anchored in particular points on a spatial and chronological axis, and being represented in images, makes it possible to observe the change between two points: movement.

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### MEMORY FOR GUERÍN IS THE ORGANISING PRINCIPLE AND ULTIMATE PURPOSE IN *TREN DE SOMBRAS*

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Deleuze (2002: 220-250) would use Bergson's propositions about movement and duration because despite Bergson's condemnation of cinema, his third thesis gave the image a major role in understanding change in things. Deleuze would take this idea to defend the cinema in relation to his postulates on immanence, fields of immanence and mobile cuts. For the French author, immanence is, above all, a life. It is a pre-reflexive phenomenon that extends over subjectivity and consciousness, as both these phenomena need an object to be projected onto, while life is a pure projection onto everything that surrounds it (Deleuze, 2002: 234).

The field would be a plane of immanence, its materialisation. Immanence as life, although it does not require consciousness to exist, can be perceived through such consciousness. However, it cannot be perceived through privileged moments by our subjectivity or memory, but in the transition between those moments, in the *entretemps*, in that which is unique though not necessarily individual (Deleuze, 2002: 235), because the immanent is a life in perpetual movement, and Bergson's movement (2006: 99) would manifest itself in the duration between any two events selected by the memory. For Deleuze, Bergson's image of cinema is a perfect way to understand how a film is able to capture those *entretemps* where the transformation from one moment into another takes place, privileging not the moment but the transition (Deleuze, 1987). The chosen instants or moments would mark the so-called immobile cuts, and the mobile cut would be the time that transpires between those moments, which serve as references for observing the change, the development of the field of immanence (Álvarez Asiáin, 2011: 100). Through the image, cinema would express movement, the transformation of immanent life by expressing through the moving image the duration between two random events, as Álvarez Asiáin concludes (2011: 02).

It is worth noting that Bergson structured his essay into three differentiated theses, and it was in the third that he would assert that movement is a mobile cut of duration (Maltas i Mercader, 2014: 22), and that this movement is the common connection between a perception-image and a memory-image, the latter being a movement comparable to actual perception (Maltas i Mercader, 2014: 28). Deleuze would equate the image with movement, associating it with a pure plane of immanence immersed in a universe called cinema (Maltas i Mercader, 2014: 91).

Guerín traces the coordinates of a map of memory with the aim of finding a creative principle in his work, which is none other than memory expressed in movement. In this sense, Guerín would

use memory as a tool, an axiom, for the selection of those privileged moments in memories, which Deleuze refers to as immobile cuts. At the same time, his images, evoking an apparently lifeless past, operate as the mobile cut capable of expressing the movement contained in their duration. All of this reveals the potential of cinema to express the transformation of a life through apparently trivial events, through peculiarities. Guerín adopts montage as an extension of his memory, focusing on the flashes of life, on the peculiarities that comprise an immanence of different lives. Far from attempting to render it invisible or even repudiating it, a tactic employed by filmmakers like Erich von Stroheim in *Greed* (1924), relegating it to a simple instrument of temporal transition, or adopting the shot-reverse shot approach characteristic of Eisenstein, Guerín uses montage with the aim of capturing time, encapsulating it. *Tren de sombras* alternates sequences of images whose objective is to freeze the memory in a succession of shots of unique memories—and here the shot acts as the filmmaker’s consciousness, guiding what he considers relevant—to offer “an indirect image of time” (Deleuze, 1987: 55). The temporal montage described by Deleuze is used by Guerín in an attempt to capture the movement of memory. This movement evokes the transformation that memory carries out on the plane of immanence, on life, and he thus uses montage with the aim of reflecting the duration of time, the motor of movement, albeit indirectly. Returning to Bazin (1990: 60), montage necessarily had to represent the spatial dimension of reality. Notwithstanding Bergson’s (2006) argument that reducing the multiplicity of movement to the singularity of space effectively subordinated human experience to the privilege of subjectivity, montage must combine the density of reality with the lightness of the imagination. In this way, Guerín advocates a temporal montage that reflects the transformative effect of memory, and thus crystallises movement by means of real spaces. In these spaces, hu-

man experience is splashed by the imagination of a director who transforms it into something more: into pure movement.

## ANALYSIS OF THE SEQUENCE

Guerín seeks to pay tribute to cinema, affirming its potential for developing a discourse that goes beyond the mere objectivity captured by the camera, playing constantly with the subtext that lies behind the filmed shadow. The sequence chosen for analysis (00:58:34-01:02:06 in the version selected) contains a series of snapshots of apparently sweet and trivial moments that reflect a family’s happiness. The amateur filmmaker captures group portraits in still pictures, with wide shots and neutral angles that contribute to this idea of an amateur movie. The audiovisual discourse contained in this found footage reveals the filmmaker’s concern not only with making the montage process visible but also with bringing to light the expressive potential of a new medium, a medium that by freezing memory is able to reinterpret it and give it a new form. With these still frames of improvised compositions and wide group shots, Guerín takes the trouble in his editing work to direct the attention of the spectator towards those little flashes that break the expressive motionlessness of the household scenes. A slight zoom-in shows one of the characters in the scene making a gesture of filming a movie (image 1). After this, the montage process is made visible through the presentation of fragments of restored negatives in poor condition.

The sequence contains a series of images from the family footage in which the visibility of any dramatic gesture will be deliberately enhanced by Guerín. The matriarch of the family is dancing in a strangely captured image that frames her in a medium shot while the man in the scene is cut out. We hear a click, and the development of these images is interrupted when the splicer freezes the still frame with the scene of the dancing ma-

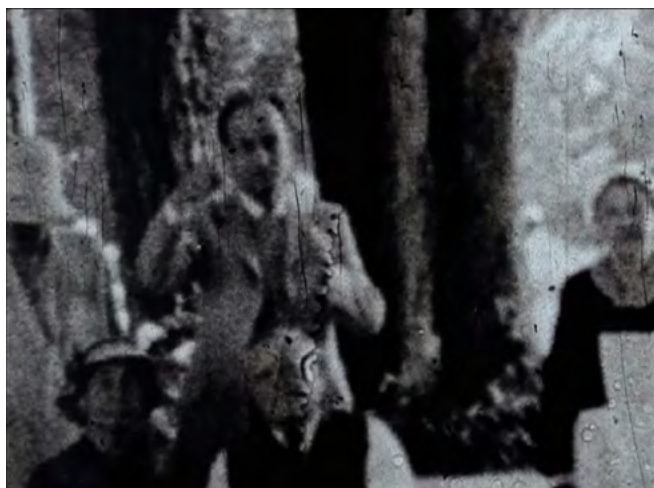


Image 1. The dramatic gesture

triarch. The next cut zooms in on a window pane that reveals the filmmaker himself shooting the scene through the reflection as an indirect shot (image 2). There appears here for the first time the leitmotiv that drives Guerín's metafictional reflection: the tribute to cinema's role since its birth as a developer of meanings and a bridge between time and memory. Guerín reveals the immobile cuts contained in time and space in the Fleury family's memories. He decides to show them to reflect on the mobile cut, the slice of duration, which expresses the movement contained in the transformation that a life undergoes between those cuts (Álvarez Asiáin, 2011: 100). These immobile cuts are apparently insignificant gestures that go unnoticed by the spectator until the filmmaker/editor pauses to show them (image 2). Thus, *Tren de sombras* functions not only as a veiled tribute to cinema, but also as the vindicator of its potential to reconcile memory, time and space when it makes a connection between the Fleurys' memories and their shadows in the present. For Gabriel Cabello (2005), the potential of *Tren de sombras* lies more in the way its characters play with gazes and perceptions than in its eminently photographic quality. The intimate nature of the family relationships is expressed through a cryptic human experience, concealed behind the trivial qua-



Image 2. Authoral conscience: the observer and the observed

lity of the image. Guerín unravels it through the montage and the revelation of the micro-gesture. Stripping the image and playing with the perspective of the observer (in this case Fleury), Guerín creates a way of playing with light and shadow whereby the plasticity of the image serves as an axis that marks the differences between trivial memory and reinterpreted memory.

A succession of still frames reflects apparently idyllic family scenes, but only because the creator thus presents it implicitly through the montage. New still frames, the family dancing, spontaneous frames show the characters in short medium shots, the angle always neutral or frontal, an objective point of view, outlined by the camera lens and the director's eye, which the characters themselves wave to. Immediately thereafter the negative shows a few seconds in black while it runs through the editing machine, as "La Barcarolle" begins to play. Offenbach's music acts as an extra-diegetic sound source, contributing a dramatic and expressive significance that reinforces the montage that follows. In the same way that the spectator begins to understand the veiled leitmotiv in this mock-documentary, Guerín reinforces the idea of the narrative climax by accompanying the epiphany presented (the revelation of the secret relationship between the patriarch and the

domestic servant) with a musical thread. Those seconds of film negative with music *in crescendo* suggest a pause, a break, the creator is thinking. Until that moment, Guerín used parallel editing to alternate the idyllic scenes of the family's found footage with snippets of the present, beginning with the world around the French villa—capturing the life and surroundings of the local village—exploring the abandoned family house, from the outside in, from the superficial to the significant. For the first time, Guerín brings the present and the past together through the alternation of fragments of footage with dramatisations of those fragments in colour.

Fleury is filming something that the spectator is unable to see. A medium-long shot and a side angle show Fleury at all times from an objective or neutral point of view. This angle is created by the camera itself and not by any subjective element or object: the only instrument of Guerín's reflection is the camera. A subtle, progressive tracking shot moves around Fleury until it stops behind his back, showing what he is filming. The observer is being observed once again. From this moment the montage takes off, alternating between dramatised fragments and snippets of false footage: a wide shot of a child approaching on his bicycle; then a jump to a medium frontal shot in which we

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**TREN DE SOMBRAS IS AN UNDENIABLY ORIGINAL PIECE DUE TO ITS AIM TO RECONSTRUCT THE IMAGE THROUGH MONTAGE IN ORDER TO REVEAL A HIDDEN MEANING BASED ON APPEARANCE AND SUPERFICIALITY**

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see Fleury once again, filming something with his camera. The framing of the dramatisations responds now to a more academic and orthodox composition. This is no longer spontaneous household footage, taken with scant attention to the rules of framing and management of space. Guerín creates this artificiality, expressed in an inexpressive, formal composition framed so that the character is always in the central position of the image. He allows the spectator to trace a line of interpretative legitimacy between the dramatisation (which will reveal what the footage concealed) and the footage (which is appearance, family snippets, in which the detail must be captured to guess the subtext). According to Villota (1998: 23), this hyper-presence of the camera, shown constantly in Fleury's hands, emphasizes an expressive need to underscore the lack of reliability of the medium, which Guerín also questions by introducing the revitalisation of the editing process. *Tren de sombras* is an undeniably original piece due to its aim to reconstruct the image through montage in order to reveal a hidden meaning based on appearance and superficiality. From the surroundings of a village in the present or the fragments of family life in the past to intimacy and meaningfulness (inside the house, capturing the shadows hidden in the footage). Only cinema is able to combine past and present and to order the images in such a way that our linear perception of reality can be altered according to the consciousness of the photographer and the observer (García, 1998: 37).

Fleury turns the camera in another direction, exacerbating our uncertainty about what he mi-

**Image 3. The editing process unveils the intrigue**







Images 4, 5 and 6. "Innocent" editing

ght be filming. The framing expands, constructing a medium-long shot of Fleury, and the extra-diegetic sound continues. The physicality of the editing is still present with the visual introduction of the idea of a cinematographic cut, an agent of meaning vested with the utmost significance. A tracking shot pulls the frame away from the lawyer to show us the patriarch greeting someone. Another visible cut is followed by a wide shot where the regressive camera movement continues, showing Mrs Fleury on a bicycle giving a fleeting farewell to her husband.

But another cut will show us that there is another meaning concealed here. Guerín breaks down the same sequence and inserts archive footage, like a detective playing with the limits of meta-cinema (Lomillos, 1998: 29). The characters' point of view and the use of off-camera spaces take on such great importance that the music is replaced by the mechanical sound of the splicer. The archive footage shows us what Fleury was filming: the previously shown woman on the bicycle saying goodbye. The image is frozen and followed by a dramatisation of Fleury filming. The dramatised scene is frozen as well in a shot where the woman is in the foreground while her husband and the lawyer are in the background. The visibility of the editing process is now extended to the dramatisation, freezing those frames. A frontal medium shot of the woman looking at the camera, with her

gaze as the focus and the vanishing point of the image. Another medium shot from the servant hiding behind the bushes, her back to the camera, viewed from an angle that prevents us from seeing where she is looking because the background is blurred. The still frames of the dramatisation are interspersed in the quest for the hidden meaning. The archive footage of the woman on the bicycle, the lawyer filming, the servant hiding. The woman's goodbye was directed at the servant hiding behind the bushes. The woman on the bicycle is a mere spectator. The mystery of the film is revealed through the realisation of the montage.

### INTERPRETING THE SEQUENCE: META-CINEMA

Guerín adopts montage as an instrument for assembling cuts of memory to reveal the true duration between those cuts. *Tren de sombras* operates as a meta-reflection on the capabilities of cinema. If it were not for the *auteur's* ability to combine different pieces in alternative orders, the mere images would have failed to reveal the subtext. Montage acts as a means of searching, which Canet (2013: 155) suggests inexorably leads to a meaning concealed in the image that Guerín extracts with the combination of the frame and the space outside it, transcending the superficial gaze to show us what the characters are really seeing. Memory is

## THE IMMANENT FIELD REFLECTED IN *TREN DE SOMBRAS* BELONGS TO A FAMILY; IT IS A LIFE IN PURE BECOMING AND TRANSFORMATION

reconstructed in the film out of immobile cuts, i.e., out of a specific time and space delimited in this sequence. But Bergson's duration, that movement that is pure change and becoming (Bergson, 2006), and that for Deleuze (1987) finds in cinema a medium for its expression through images in pure movement (Álvarez Asiáin 2011: 100), is arranged in the wrong order. Guerín ties in with Bergson and Deleuze in his reflection of an immanent field, a life, and his attempt to express the duration between spatio-temporal cuts, reflecting on how this movement—transformation—is subordinated to the perception that one has of that memory. For Guerín, memory as an immanent fragment, as a container of pure duration and becoming, has to be reorganised, and like Deleuze he believes that cinema is the legitimate medium for this task (Deleuze, 1987). However, the Spanish film director does not conceive of immanence as a pre-reflexive phenomenon that can exist apart from subjectivity and consciousness. Memory as an immanent fragment requires an organisation offered by montage, by a consciousness that can give it a meaning. The way of perceiving that memory will change the way of understanding the duration, the transformation that occurs (Deleuze, 2002: 222). Pure immanence cannot exist without a self or a subjectivity to interpret the image, because for there to be life there must be actors who are revealed in their subjectivity. Cinema is a medium of creation and perception in which *what* is reflected is as important as *how* it is reflected. The immanent field reflected in *Tren de sombras* belongs to a family; it is a life in pure becoming and transformation. Deleuze would dismiss the key event of the film: the supposed infidelity reconstructed and discovered



From top to bottom. Image 7. Editing: a matter of physicality. Image 8. New montage, new frame. Image 9. Different meaning: editing and meaning negotiation



through the montage in the sequence analysed. It would be nothing more than another factor occurring between the cuts, a mere transformation during the duration (Álvarez Asiáin, 2011: 105). For Guerín, a memory has no value of its own; it is empty, dead. The way the memory is perceived assigns it a value that will determine it if that memory, that slight movement between any two cuts, can be considered an agent that transforms the duration. Pure immanence cannot exist without the perception that dictates what can transform a life. Cinema does not reconstruct the motionlessness of a life, but its internal movement. The mansion in *Tren de sombras* turns from a backdrop for the filmed memories of the Fleury family into a primary subject of attention when Guerín jumps into the present in order to visit their intimate space decades later. This space is thus established as a container of memory, a mobile cut in which duration is made evident. What the Spanish director's camera finds is a lifeless space, a space that is dead. The absence of the Fleury family deprives the space of its connection with their memory and recollections, and in its place are nothing but shadows and darkness. The camera reassembles fragments of memory and Guerín connects those fragments to an audiovisual memory in which the space is imbued with the individual's values and rituals. Guerín's mansion is a place of memory stripped of specific value and referentiality, but its physical presence in the frame is kept separate from the time and internal movement expressed by the duration of the memory; it is a signifier without a signified (Catalán and Romero, 2014: 47). The remembrance, the absence of a present and the fleetingness of the memory emerge out of the materialisation of the framed space, according to Catalán and Romero (2014: 47). Guerín's mansion is not altered; it persists in the profilmic realm as a family space in the past and as a bank of shadows of the past in the present. Its solid presence is the only concrete anchor that connects the narration, a persistent memory.

The so-called death of the author announced by Roland Barthes (1987: 65) means that spectators are emancipated from their passive role and share authorship of a film. From this point on, they will be active agents and co-creators of meaning and significance together with the director. Their gaze, like Guerín's in deciding whether to place fragments in a specific order, legitimises the memory with an autonomous and personal significance. Immanence is pure becoming because the way of looking and perceiving an immanent field captured in still frames can be transformed depending on how it is looked at. Fleury is focusing his camera in a specific direction: the husband is saying goodbye to somebody, the wife watches, and so does the servant in the bushes. They are spectators of their own lives, each with a unique, inimitable way of looking. Immanence is life in transformation and *Tren de sombras* expresses this duration crystallised in transformative movement through mobile images. Guerín uses memory as a segment of the immanent field that changes because active spectators judge through their gazes what the change is, giving memory a dimension of reality. Furthermore, the paradigm of *Tren de sombras* is based on its development in *tempo lento*, on its success in capturing a non-filmic present time—in which family stories have a duration that corresponds to reality—where Guerín effectively conveys to the spectator the *Deleuzian* notion of duration (Canet, 2013). This duration is achieved by adapting filmic time to real time and showing the spectator how, through this unhurried timing, the Deleuzian idea of duration is made even clearer. This way of reflecting duration achieves the hidden transformation in memory, which happens in real rather than filmic time coordinates. Guerín's approach is more historicist in its reconstruction of Fleury's memory in an attempt to build a logical discourse that reveals the truth hidden behind the innocence of remembrance.

The spectator's gaze in *Tren de sombras* points towards the known, towards that which is appa-



Imagen 10. Images and cuts in film's lenght

rently visible: a family at leisure, a father documenting family memories. The space is subject to an alienating process that turns it into a foreign place, suggesting an unknown memory and a new perception.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this article was to analyse a sequence of *Tren de sombras* with the aim of identifying the presence of postulates on immanence, duration and movement set forth by Bergson and developed by Deleuze. The intention has been to demonstrate that the Spanish director's film was not only a film in which meta-cinema plays a prominent role, but also a picture that offers a vindication of montage, a vindication that sought to demonstrate that montage is able to shape memory and articulate a reflection about the fictitious life of the Fleury family. To this end, the postulates of Bergson (2006) and Deleuze (1987) were contextualised, Guerín's artistic concerns were examined and a specific sequence of the film was interpreted for the purpose of relating montage to memory and establishing an analysis of immanence, duration and movement based on the mobile cuts furnished by the

Fleury family's filmed memories and their subsequent reorganisation.

*Tren de sombras* is a clear example of the possibilities that cinema offers to capture a field of immanence and to use the *spatialisation* of memories—through image, space and framing—to show the movement or transformation of a life between two given points. Jesús Cortés (2012) suggests that José Luis Guerín's films need to be understood through the dialogue of the image with its own condition; his is a filmmaking style that privileges a gaze in which the framing becomes gradually imbued with the reflexivity of cinema. *Tren de sombras* engages in a dialogue and acts as a tribute to the expressive possibilities of cinema and montage, but at the same time it stretches those possibilities, taking the meta-reflection to the field of montage conceived as an immanent memory.

If, noted above, for Deleuze (1987) immanence is a pre-reflexive phenomenon without subjectivity, given that life is in itself projection, for Guerín this idea requires reflexivity and consciousness. In other words, where Deleuze (1987) conceived of an absolute projection of a life outside all other things, for Guerín Deleuze's central concept is a life, the Fleurys', which is only cinematic potential, raw footage. The immanent field, its manifestation, is established in *Tren de sombras* in the organisation of the Fleurys' life. For both Guerín and Deleuze, cinema is the medium capable of reproducing immanent duration. However, to find it that duration must be vested with consciousness

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**TREN DE SOMBRAS ENGAGES IN A DIALOGUE AND ACTS AS A TRIBUTE TO THE EXPRESSIVE POSSIBILITIES OF CINEMA AND MONTAGE, BUT AT THE SAME TIME IT STRETCHES THOSE POSSIBILITIES, TAKING THE META-REFLECTION TO THE FIELD OF MONTAGE CONCEIVED AS AN IMMANENT MEMORY**

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**TREN DE SOMBRAS IS THUS AN EXCELLENT EXAMPLE OF AN AESTHETIC OF MEMORY, WHERE MONTAGE SUCCEEDS IN SHOWING THE CORPOREALITY OF MEMORIES**

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and reflexivity to give the field a meaning beyond mere projection, beyond a mere series of images.

Considering the presence of the subjectivity of memory, of the difficulty of capturing a life in motion, a field of immanence whose transformation lies in the duration between its cuts, Guerín privileges montage to put Deleuze's and Bergson's thesis into practice. *Tren de sombras* is an exercise in cinematic meta-reflection, but from the moment that Guerín reassembles the fragments of household footage and reconstructs them to reveal Mr Fleury's secret, it becomes an audiovisual work in which montage acts as memory, a memory capable of tracing the immobile cuts of an immanent field in the form of family recollections. Guerín replaces the subjectivity of the found footage, which prevents us from perceiving the duration of the movement of that plane of immanence—and in this he is in agreement with Deleuze—with reflexivity; it is a memory that reflects on the footage and reorganises it. The footage added by Guerín to the family's black and white images functions as mobile cuts, points of reference for making sense of the other cuts, the immobile cuts. All this is accomplished through montage, making it present in the image through images of the negatives or the splicer. Editing as memory, as the Catalan director's reflexivity extension. Only in this way is the spectator's gaze able to observe the transformation between two points, two memories: the Fleury patriarch's greeting and the receipt of that greeting by somebody. The montage plays with the duration between these two points to show the transformation occurring on the plane of immanence. The

original footage shows a greeting apparently directed at his wife. The edited and assembled footage shows that in reality the greeting is directed at his lover. It is here that Guerín's detective work oversteps the bounds of fiction. He does this to show how the montage of memory, through a cinematic meta-reflection, reconciles the possibility of showing the transformation of a human life through the montage of the real-time duration in the space of the image.

*Tren de sombras* reflects Deleuzian immanence and reveals the possibilities of cinema outlined by Bergson (2006). Through montage, Guerín shows the transformation of a life by means of the reorganisation of the Fleury family's memories. The Spanish director conceives of filmmaking as a plane on which montage, guided by the director's consciousness and reflection, becomes an instrument capable of projecting the duration of Bergsonian movement. He follows Deleuze's coordinates, although he deviates from them to show that what is needed is the existence of an infallible memory: montage, guided by the rationality and consciousness of the artist.

*Tren de sombras* is an exercise in cinematic experimentation that operates on the level of meta-cinema, of the tribute to the medium itself and the reconsideration of the concept of space (the Fleury's mansion) through an exploration of the shadows of the past in the light of the present. *Tren de sombras* is thus an excellent example of an aesthetic of memory, where montage succeeds in showing the corporeality of memories through the transformation of a life in the *entretemps* contained between those moments. ■

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## TREN DE SOMBRAS: AN AESTHETIC OF MEMORY

### Abstract

This article offers an exploration of José Luis Guerín's key work, *Tren de Sombras* [Train of Shadows] (1997), reflecting on the concept of memory and its manifestation in the cinematic language of this filmmaker, focusing on the idea of montage, time and space. Thus, based on an analysis of a sequence of the film and taking post-modern discourse on memory and space as our reference, we attempt to relate Guerín's work and discourse on filmed memory with the postulates of Gilles Deleuze and his reinterpretation of the work of Bergson. In this way, the objective of this study of memory, along with the concepts associated with the so-called new narrative, may acquire a stronger conceptual dimension and shed light on the director's work in the interests of a continued vindication of Guerín's role as an exponent of the experimental avant-garde in contemporary cinema.

### Key words

Guerín; Memory; Montage; Deleuze; Postmodernity; Memories; Aesthetic; Storytelling.

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## LA ESTÉTICA DE LA MEMORIA EN TREN DE SOMBRAS

### Resumen

El presente artículo aspira a aportar una aproximación a la obra clave de José Luis Guerín, *Tren de Sombras* (1997), reflexionando en torno al concepto de memoria y su plasmación en el lenguaje cinematográfico de dicho realizador, volcándose en la idea de montaje, tiempo y espacio. Así, partiendo de un análisis de una secuencia del film, y tomando como referente el discurso de la postmodernidad sobre la memoria y el espacio, se intentará relacionar la obra de Guerín y su discurso sobre la memoria filmada con los postulados de Gilles Deleuze y su reinterpretación de la obra de Bergson. De este modo, el objetivo de este estudio de la memoria, así como conceptos inherentes al llamado nuevo relato, podrá adquirir una dimensión conceptual más sólida y arrojará luz sobre la obra del director para continuar vindicando el rol de Guerín como exponente de la vanguardia experimental en el cine contemporáneo.

### Palabras clave

Guerín; memoria; montaje; Deleuze; postmodernidad; recuerdo; estética; relato.

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