

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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DEATH IN THE GARDEN / *La Mort en ce jardin*, or **THE DIAMOND HUNTERS** (1956)
Luis Buñuel (1900-1983)

OVERVIEW

Auteur Luis Buñuel is known as one of most influential surrealist filmmakers of the mid-twentieth century. Although he was born and raised near Zaragoza, Spain, he spent a large portion of his life and career as an exile in Paris and Mexico City. One of his earliest short films, *Le chien andalou* (1929), or the *Andalusian Dog*, became an iconic representation of eerie surrealist art in which Buñuel presented the audience with a series of unsettling, violent, and even erotic images plucked from a dream. Buñuel would continue in his surrealist style with such films as *L'Age D'or* (1930), or the *Age of Gold*. Later in his career, the director adapted novels and short stories to film and used the narratives to criticize the Francoist regime and expose the Catholic repression of the era. The middle period of Buñuel's career was characterized by several satirical and allegorical dramas based on Biblical stories and nineteenth-century Spanish novels. Buñuel's production in Mexico in the 1950s and 60s included this adventure film, *Nazarin* (1959), in which the title priest attempts to administer to a rural Mexican community, and *The Exterminating Angel* (1962), a masterful critique of the bourgeoisie. In the last phase of his career, Buñuel returned to his hyper-erotic and surreal style in such films as *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* (1972).

Film *Diamond Hunters* (1956) is set in a fictional South American country close to Brazil and the Amazon. Unlike most of Buñuel's films of this period, *Diamond Hunters* was filmed in color. The screenplay was an adaptation of the novel *La mort en ce Jardin* (literally translated as *Death in the Garden*) by José-André Lacour and was written by Luis Alcoriza, Gabriel Arout, Raymond Queneau, and Buñuel himself. The director cast Michael Piccoli, who would become one of his favorite actors, as the missionary Father Lizardi. In addition, the film featured the heartthrob George Marchal and the sultry Simone Signoret, both well-established French actors, in the roles of Chark and Djin, respectively. While this film does contain many Buñuelian tropes and themes, it is unique in that it is an action-adventure with a linear plot.

Background Due to a long exile in Mexico, Buñuel's films in the 1940s and 1950s (and early 1960s) were often shot in and around Mexico City. *La mort* was no exception: the Amazonian village scenes were shot in a tiny town about 100 miles from Mexico City. Buñuel worked with the Mexican producer Óscar Dancigers and the Tepeyac Production Company in Mexico City. However, *Diamond Hunters* was also distributed by the French company Cinédis, co-produced by Film Dismage, and of course, featured French actors speaking dialogue in French. The film was received tepidly by both critics and the public, and Buñuel considered the film one of his failures. Nonetheless, *Diamond Hunters* has received renewed critical attention in recent years: many scholars describe the film as a forgotten gem of Buñuel's Mexican (and specifically, Franco-Mexican) *oeuvre*.

CHARACTERS

<i>Chark</i>	The adventurer and bank robber
<i>Djin</i>	The madame
<i>Castin</i>	The miner who wants to move to France
<i>María</i>	Castin's deaf-mute daughter
<i>Father Lizardi</i>	The priest
<i>Chenco</i>	Boat captain, pimp, and military informant
<i>Captain Ferrero</i>	Commander of the Amazonian army
<i>Alberto</i>	Castin's friend and fellow prospector

SYNOPSIS

A group of prospectors work diamond mines near the Amazon jungle. When the army interrupts their mining and forces them to shut down, the prospectors lash out against the army and plan an attack. Meanwhile, the town madame Djin and boat captain / pimp Chenco are working with the corrupt Captain Ferrero to capture criminals—including the arrest of the suspected bank robber and stranger in town, Chark. The prospectors follow through with the rebellion, and the captain issues a bounty on both Castin and Chark's heads.

Castin, Maria (Castin's deaf-mute daughter), Djin, Chenco, Father Lizardi (the local missionary), and Chark flee by taking Chenco's boat down the river. When the army chases them, the suspected criminals all abandon the boat (it literally drifts away), and they run into the jungle. The characters walk in circles, and their attempts to find food and water largely fail. Chark starts to develop paternal affection for Maria and an attraction to Djin as they fight to survive.

Eventually, Chark comes upon a plane wreck and gathers enough provisions to keep the group from dying. However, Castin believes that it was God's plan that they die in the jungle, so he shoots at everyone and kills Djin and Lizardi. Only Chark and Maria escape alive. The bandit then takes Maria out on the lake, and they row out to supposed safety.

SCENES

CHARK ARRIVES IN TOWN

Shark seeks for a room After Lizardi leaves, Shark asks the bartender if he can sleep in a real bed. The bartender answers that he should walk to a building with an arcade. When Chark arrives, he knocks on the door but ends up entering the bedroom when no one answers. He takes off his boots and throws one at a stray cat that walked into the bedroom. He crawls into bed and falls asleep immediately.



Night with a Prostitute Chark awakes in the middle of the night to find Djin, the madame, in bed with him. She explains that he is in her bed and asks for his backstory. He tries to give her cash, but she insists that he needs to pay more. Chark reveals a flat billfold that is taped to his chest, and Djin asks how he will hold onto the money if someone shakes him down. He replies that he will make adjustments. She asks his name, and comments that Chark sounds like someone striking a blow with a weapon. She tells him that her name is Djin, which is an Indian word for bird. They kiss and descend out of frame.



Chark's Arrest The next morning, Djin leads a soldier into her bedroom where Chark is still sleeping. The soldiers arrest him and rip off his billfold with the cash. They take him away, and Chark threatens Djin. The colonel pays Djin cash and caresses her cheek while she darns a lace dress.



Mass in Church The camera cuts to an exterior shot of the church and an interior shot of Father Lizardi giving mass in front of the altar. Castin is at his side getting communion, and Maria is kneeling in the back row. The soldiers push the arrested Chark through the congregation and hit him on the back of his knees. He falls into the pew, and Maria helps him up. They exchange a glance before Chark is taken away to the cell that is adjacent to the church.



Interrogating Chark The camera cuts to the captain counting the cash in Chark's billfold. The captain mentions that Chark fits the description of foreign bank robbers who hit a bank in Cimarruna. Chark replies that he is not familiar with the town. The police bring in Chenco, who claims to have seen Chark at the site of the robbery. Chark punches him. The captain commands that Chark be sent to the Cimarruna authorities. Chenco thanks the captain for his cut of the cash, and the captain tells him that they need to discuss "business."



Escaping Prison Father Lizardi visits Chark and one of the wounded rebel prospectors in their cell. Chark admits that the rebel has lost too much blood, and Lizardi urges him to confess his sins. The rebel refuses even though Chark also pushes him to confess. Father Lizardi thanks Chark for his efforts. The bandit asks the priest to help him write a letter to his mother, and Lizardi asks the guard for pen and paper. The guard resists, saying it is against the rules, but Lizardi assures him that he will do the writing. When the guard brings over the pen and paper, Chark takes the pen and stabs the guard in the eye. He runs out of the cell into the night, and he overhears the captain's plans to kill the rebels via firing squad.

CASTIN AND MARIA

Father-Daughter Dinner Castin plays the accordion while Maria prepares dinner. When Maria sets the frying pan on the table, the dishes crash onto the floor and shatter. Castin comes over to alert Maria, and they clean up the mess together. Castin tells Maria that he still wants to move to France and he hopes to cure her deafness. Maria mouths some of his words, but it is obvious that she doesn't understand everything. Castin shows her a picture of Djin and reveals that he proposed to her and will get her answer that night.



Alberto Proposes to Djin for Castin Alberto, Castin's friend from the mines, visits Djin in her bedroom. He asks if she likes Castin, and the prostitute replies that he is ok and better than the typical bastards in town. Alberto tells Djin that Castin wants to marry her, but the madame laughs it off. Alberto admonishes her and says that Castin's offer is serious. Djin replies that he is too old and too pious. Alberto reveals that Castin is rich and she could be a young widow in France in only a few years. Djin suggests that Castin come in for a chat. Alberto calls her a dirty opportunist for taking the gold-digger bait. Their conversation is interrupted by soldiers searching the brothel for arms, and Alberto leaves in the chaos.

PROSPECTORS VS. SOLDIERS

Throwing Out the Miners The opening scene is a group of prospectors on the mountain mining for diamonds in the Amazon, and among them is the older miner Castin. When they take a break, Castin serves his friends a stew and mentions his dream—to return to France and start a restaurant in Marseille. The army approaches with rifles and declares that individual prospectors may no longer mine on this mountain. The miners protest and decide to visit the captain in town.

Confrontation The "fired" prospectors descend the mountain into town and accumulate in a mob outside of the captain's fortress. The captain is inside playing chess with his Lieutenant—and likely losing. One of the soldiers goes out to demand that the prospectors leave their weapons outside, but they refuse. The captain tells the Lieutenant to get rid of them. The Lieutenant and guards assemble with rifles and shoot upward while the prospectors scream for the captain. The miners are spooked by the assembled shooting squad and quickly disperse



Planning a Rebellion At night, the miners have assembled in the town plaza to plan a rebellion. They mourn the fact that they dispersed so easily, but they are sure that they could fight back if they had a better plan. Some of the men think that a rebellion will fail when the army calls for reinforcements.

The Priest's Advice Father Lizardi also enters the plaza and overhears the miners' plans for rebellion. He warns the mob that the Colonel is coming with men and any rebellion will be a slaughter. The men tell him to mind his own business and go work with the Indians. The priest counsels him against joining the rebellion, and Castin replies that he is torn: on the one hand, he is a peaceful man who wants to return to France. On the other hand, he feels an obligation to his fellow prospectors. Father Lizardi explains that he is on a mission to work with the local "Indians." The bartender admires Lizardi's watch, and the priest explains that he acquired it on another mission.



Sneak Attack Some of the rebel prospectors dress as workmen and attack the army. The corporal is shot, but several of the prospectors are wounded. When the Lieutenant comes on the scene, he commands that the wounded be arrested.

Angry Mob The Captain has the firing squad execute the one wounded rebel in custody, despite the fact that it is still the middle of the night. The prospectors watching start to shoot at the guards, and a huge battle erupts. First, the mob storms the plaza. Then, the army shoots machine guns from the fortress while the prospectors build a barricade. Both sides shoot at each other continually while Chark sets fire to the prison (where there is a stockpile of explosives). Castin is wounded in the riot even though he didn't participate, and he flees to the brothel. Djin lets him in.



Declared Bounty The next morning, a soldier makes a declaration of martial law in the plaza. He reads a report saying that he will pay 5000 pesos if any of the villagers turn in Castin or Chark, who they believe to be the surviving ringleaders of the riot. The soldier adds that if no one turns in the criminals, he will kill hostages as a punishment. Father Lizardi looks for Castin at home, then at the brothel. He tells Djin and Castin about the bounty and urges Castin to turn himself in and save the innocent hostages. Castin refuses and insists that he is innocent, too—and that Djin can testify he did not have arms. Lizardi warns him that no one will believe Djin, and the madame demands that Castin leave so that she is not implicated.



Searching the Brothel Everyone runs to the brothel to convince Castin to turn himself in. Djin stalls the mob once they have stormed in the brothel, but they proceed to search for Castin. Chenco warns Djin that the captain has been arrested and they must escape on the boat that night. When the villagers enter the bedroom, two men see Father Lizardi standing next to the bed and assume that he has just paid Djin for sex. Lizardi plays along while the men laugh and an old woman bemoans the fact that a priest could do such a thing. The villagers leave, and Castin emerges from behind Djin's clothes in the closet.

Preparing an Escape When Castin and Djin are left in the room to plan an escape, Castin realizes that he must leave alone for the safety of his daughter. Djin suggests paying off Chenco and sailing to Brazil, but Castin knows that Chenco will bring him in for the bounty. Castin says he will try to cross through the jungle and meet with Djin and Maria later. Castin gives Djin a bag of diamonds and declares that they are de-facto married. He begs her to take care of Maria if he doesn't make it, and Djin agrees.

Violent Escape That night, all of the characters meet on the dock to escape. Castin hides under ropes on the boat. Chark climbs up and threatens everyone with a knife. Chenco manages to get the knife and gloats about getting the bounty. Castin sneaks up from behind and hits Chenco on the head, knocking him unconscious. Chark forces Djin to accompany them and drives the boat. Djin gives Chark the cash that she received to inform on him, but he is not mollified. He punches her several times.

Boat Chase The criminals go through bags on deck and find arms. Chenco, now awake with a bandage, drives the boat. Father Lizardi asks to be dropped off to continue his missionary work with the Venantes Indians. Chark refuses, and the two men insult each other. Suddenly, they realize that the army is chasing them in a motorboat. Chenco pulls to the side of the river and they all run out onto the bank. The boat drifts away with some of the supplies. Shark pulls out his gun to shoot Chenco, but the latter reminds him that he is the only member of the group that knows the jungle. Chark reluctantly agrees to let him live and lead the group, and they climb the hill into the jungle.



Night in the Cave After walking all day, the group spends the night in a cave. Castin asks Chenco if he knows how to find his way around the Mambuti River, and Chenco assures him that he can. Djin doubts Chenco's abilities and starts picking fights with everyone. Djin rebukes Castin when he speaks of their future in France, and Father Lizardi calls her merciless. Djin strikes Maria, and Chark pulls her hair. Chark ties Chenco's hands, and the driver reminds him that he must be able to sleep in order to guide them effectively. Father Lizardi convinces Chark to tie Chenco's hands in front so that the boat captain can rest.

Chenco Turned Informant When the criminals awaken the next morning, they discover their foodstuffs ruined and Chenco gone. Chark and Castin find the rope and Chenco's head bandage on the ground. The camera cuts to a group of soldiers examining the stash of food outside the cave. They destroy it and continue chasing them, and Chenco, now an informant, guides the search party towards the cave. Chark climbs to a high point, pulls out his binoculars, and watches the army searching below. When he recognizes Chenco among them, Chark shoots him with a rifle and kills him. The army proceeds up the hill, but stops chasing the criminals when they realize that Chark and the others will die anyway from exposure or dehydration.

IN THE JUNGLE

Long Walk Once in the jungle, the group walks around aimlessly. Djin sprains her ankle badly, but the men insist that she keep walking. Chark catches up to the others and tells the group what happened. Father Lizardi asks for forgiveness for Chark's murderous actions, and they all walk farther into the jungle. They spend their first night under a tree and in heavy rain. Djin moans, and Chark yells at her saying that everyone else is "grinning and bearing it." Djin and Maria both rest their heads on Chark's thighs, and he puts his hat over Maria so that she can actually sleep.

We Can't Keep Walking The next morning, Maria is wrapping Djin's sprained ankle when Chark demands that they keep moving. Djin objects, saying that she can't walk without food. Chark explains that he looked for game but that the vegetation is too dense to see anything. Maria points out that her father has taken off his head bandage, and Chark runs to him, warning that the vermin will come after him. Castin replies that God has sentenced them to death, so it is futile to keep trying to survive. Chark and Lizardi make a plan to keep going south as long as they have strength.



Killing the Snake As they begin to walk, Father Lizardi spots a big snake on a branch, and Chark hacks it to death with his machete. Djin tries to start a fire with leaves, but the heavy rain makes it very difficult. Father Lizardi decides to rip pages out of the Bible to help get the fire going, but Chark manages to kindle it before he hands it over. However, as soon as they are ready to roast the snake carcass, they realize that a swarm of fire ants have already started devouring it.



Photos Won't Save Us The camera cuts to a scene of night traffic in front of the Arc de Triomphe in Paris, and as it pulls back, we realize that it is an old photo of Castin's. The group is camping at night, and Castin keeps the fire burning with his favorite photographs of Paris. Castin keeps repeating that they are all doomed. Another downpour puts out the fire, and the group huddles in the rain once again. Lizardi tells the story of his days in the seminary when they would eat poached eggs at the communal table.

There were never enough eggs to go around, and the seminarians realized that the cook was eating them as he walked from the kitchen to the rectory.

Preparing for Death The next day, the group walks for hours. Castin sits down dejected, and Djin approaches. She tries to keep him going by saying that she will help him survive and they can still open a restaurant in France. Castin replies that there is nothing now—no restaurant, no future, and no hope. Maria sits by him. Djin sees remnants of a fire. At first, Djin, Lizardi, and Chark think that there is another group—possibly Indians—in the heart of the jungle. However, Maria picks up a torn picture of the Arc de Triomphe, and they all realize that it is their fire and that they have been walking in circles. Chark insists that he will keep going as long as he possibly can, and he tells the group to wait for him while he looks for food or help. Father Lizardi shakes his hand and wishes him luck.



Finding Provisions Sometime later, Father Lizardi and Maria manage to dig up a turnip and they devour it immediately. Meanwhile, Chark has returned with a suitcase full of food, and he tells Djin and Castin to eat enough to get back their strength. As they eat together, Chark explains that he found a plane that crashed a few miles away, and he is convinced that there is a way out. Everyone makes it safely to the site of the plane crash, and they all look out over the lake. Chark suggests that they build a raft and look for boats on the river. Father Lizardi insists that they bury the dead passengers first.



Shark and Djin's Reconciliation Djin kisses Chark and thanks him for saving the group. Chark admits that he likes her. She apologizes for betraying Chark and admits that she liked him even on their first night together. Djin suggests that they go swimming in the lake.



Stealing the Passengers' Jewels The group starts to explore the wreckage and rummage through the passengers' suitcases. Maria finds a box with jewels, and she shows it to Father Lizardi. The priest admonishes her for stealing a dead person's treasures and says that he will hide it to give to the passenger's relatives. Maria tries to grab the box and sulks when the priest chastises her again. To make up, Father Lizardi gives Maria his missionary watch. Djin watches as Lizardi hides the box behind a root of a tree. Chark checks on Maria, who is still sulking. He comforts her and suggests that he would be "a fun dad" to her. Castin sits off on his own and throws his lifetime of mined diamonds into the lake.



Castin's Declaration That night, Father Lizardi serves coffee to everyone, but Castin refuses to eat or drink. Chark reminds him that they will survive, but Castin insists that God wanted them to die in the jungle. He declares that God intends to punish them. Father Lizardi retorts that Castin cannot decide for God.

Djin Confesses Her Love Djin emerges from behind the plane in an elegant party gown and with lipstick on. She presents Shark with the box of jewels that Father Lizardi hid. When Chark offers to share it 50/50, Djin says that he can keep it all and use it how he likes. Chark compliments her beauty and her newfound kindness, and he adorns her with the jewels. Djin suggests that they leave together and become a couple. Chark replies that he cannot desert Maria. Djin professes her love and says that she finally wants to have a man to herself.



Shootout Suddenly, the camera cuts to a wide shot of the lovers and we hear a gunshot. Djin falls down, dead, and Chark pulls out his gun to fire back. Chark manages to run to a rock where Maria is sitting. Chark explains that Castin shot at them and has gone crazy. Father Lizardi decides to stand up and walk towards the shooter. The priest puts up his hands and says "I trust you." After a few steps,

Castin guns down the priest, too. Chark shoots at Castin. Maria hugs him and tries to restrain him. Chark gives in and they run away from Castin.

Chark kills Castin In the morning, Chark leads Maria to the lake and raft. When Chark goes back in the jungle, he realizes that Castin has followed them. Castin shoots at Chark but misses. This time, Chark shoots back and kills him.

Final Escape Chark hurries back to the lake. He boards the raft and rows out. The last shot offers a panorama of the lake with the raft and two passengers in the middle. Andean harp music starts to play as the credits roll.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

CHARK

At first, Chark is a self-serving and mean-spirited criminal. Once he becomes the leader of the group in the jungle, he starts to think about and care for the others. Eventually, he feels true love for Djin and paternal tenderness for Maria.

Violent When Chark is under threat or wants revenge, he immediately attacks his enemy. Despite Castin's age, Chark twists his arm and pins him when Castin tries to defend his daughter. He punches and bruises almost all of the characters to make them bend to his will, and he beats Djin on the boat as revenge for her treachery. In order to escape prison, Chark stabs the guard in the eye and blows up the cell. He also shoots Chenco as an act of revenge.

Resourceful Chark survives imprisonment, imminent execution, the rebellion, and the jungle because he uses what he has to escape. He manages to manipulate Father Lizardi into getting a pen (which he uses to stab the guard and escape), and he uses his knives to take hostages and kill game for food. In addition, Chark is the person who manages to start the fire, find the plane wreck, find the lake, and row across it.

Caring Underneath his criminal behavior, Chark feels compassion for the others. He uses his last bit of strength to bring back food for the others, and he helps Maria on multiple occasions. He also plans an escape for everyone, and he refuses to leave Maria behind. His character transformation in the jungle suggests that he could be a good partner and father.

DJIN

Like Chark, Djin exists in a world of survival and selfishness—she only acts out of self-interest. However, she also experiences a moral conversion in the jungle and starts to atone for her past crimes.

Opportunistic The madame is always looking out for herself and thinking about ways to earn more money. She barter for bigger kick-backs from the captain, and she wants to hoard jewels as much as the prospectors. When Alberto tells her that Castin is rich, she entertains the idea of marrying him.

Manipulative Djin seduces and betrays Chark, then tries to influence Castin. She attempts to get Castin to Chenco's boat (probably to get the bounty on his head), and she convinces the old man that she will marry him and help take care of Maria, only to rebuke him in the cave. Later, she tries to dissuade Chark from taking Maria with him.

Repentant Once the group makes it to the lake, Djin apologizes for her sins and thanks Chark for saving them. When Castin gives up on life, Djin tries to help him regain hope by telling him that "we can have our restaurant yet". She returns Castin's bag of diamonds and gives the spoils of the wreckage to Chark.

CASTIN

Like many of the other characters, Castin goes through a transformation. Initially, he has a plan, a dream, and enough money saved to execute it. Once he is framed for leading the rebellion, however, he quickly descends into an existential depression.

Hard-working Castin is the richest prospector due to his years of labor and saving. Concurrently, he strives to improve his cooking for his future restaurant and he longs for a better life (and possible medical treatment) for his deaf-mute daughter.

Insane Due to the unjust criminal persecution and starvation in the jungle, Castin loses his mind. From very early in the escape, Castin believes that they are destined to die. He also takes it upon himself to execute the others.

FATHER LIZARDI

Like many of Buñuel's clergy characters, Father Lizardi puts forth a sincere effort to follow his vows and help those in need around him. Unfortunately, his sincerity fails to counteract the immorality, manipulation, and violence of those to whom he administers.

Generous Father Lizardi tries to help the other characters by offering solace, kindness, and gifts. Before the rebellion, he offers counsel to the prospectors and to Castin, specifically. He convinces the guard to give him a pen and paper in prison, and he prevents Chark from killing or abusing Chenco. When death is imminent, the priest helps Chark and gives half the turnip to Maria. One of his last acts is to give his watch to the girl as a consolation prize for not stealing the passengers' jewels.

Tough Although the missionary is kind and charitable, he also has the courage to stand up to the other characters. Physically, he presents more as a fit adventurer than a man of the cloth: we first see him in a tight white suit with boots and hat. His first entrance in the film is his interruption of the rebel meeting, where he immediately starts debating the prospectors. He tries to convince Castin to turn himself in, and he routinely stands up to Chark when he abuses the other characters. The priest is also one of the heartier characters in the group—like Chark, he manages to keep moving and fighting for survival. His history of being assigned to deserted areas / "hostile" tribes indicates that he has good survival instincts.

THEMES

QUEST

Search Each of the characters is longing for something that they cannot find or pursue in "civilized" society. For Captain Ferrero, the town provides the opportunity to wield power as a means of enrichment. For Chenco, the pursuit of power is really the pursuit of wealth within the underbelly of society. Up until his death, he engages in every crime or immoral action available to him, and for that reason, he flourishes in the corrupt system. Djin also benefits from the corruption of the town, but she also shows moments of vulnerability in which she expresses psychological yearnings. When she first meets Chark, Djin mentions that she enjoys the adventurous spirit of the prospectors. Later, she reveals her desire to have a real relationship with one man all to herself. As with many other gold rushes around the world, the prospectors trekked out to a dangerous jungle and mine in the hopes of becoming rich quickly. It is for this reason, perhaps, that the English title of the film is *Diamond Hunters* rather than the direct translation of *Death in the Garden*. The characters' fate is the climax, but the search for wealth is the motivating force of the plot. As the protagonist of the film, Castin's search represents not only that of the prospectors, but also as an everyman who is trying to find meaning in life and provide for his children. His nostalgia for Paris and Marseille suggests that he always intended to return to his homeland. For him, the diamonds are a means to an end: marriage, stability, and a restaurant.

RELATIONSHIPS

Prostitution Most of the relationships in town are transactional, including money for sex. Djin sees Chark as a john and also a kick-back for her relationship with the captain. In this sense, she is prostituting herself doubly. In addition, Chenco hires several young women to be his prostitutes. His pimping constitutes one of many immoral jobs he pursues. We only see the women briefly when Chenco brings his boat into town and distributes the money among the young women. However, this exchange does speak volumes about the immoral and opportunistic culture at the edge of the Amazon. The women he has paid are very young and possibly indigenous, and Chenco is the one who handles the money. In addition, Chenco reminds the girls that prospectors are loose with their money and easily manipulated. This early scene gives the viewer insight into Chenco's character and the nature of the town.

Marriage Castin believes that marrying Djin will solve his problems: he will have a companion for himself, a mother for Maria, and a family unit so that he can start a restaurant in France. Djin only entertains this idea to secure her own personal safety. She finds the concept of marriage so abhorrent that Alberto chides her for her insensitivity. In the end, the concept of marriage is an idealized dream for all of the characters. It is notable that Djin professes her love to Chark but does not actually ask for marriage—instead, she expresses a desire to have a man all to herself. Despite the shift in his behavior, Chark does not seem interested in committing to anyone.

CHANGE

Transformation It could be argued that almost all of the main characters experience a transformation in the jungle. Chark and Djin find love, compassion, and selflessness after behaving in a brutal and self-serving manner their whole lives, although critics disagree as to whether Djin really has had a change of heart. In the case of Chark, the transformation in behavior is striking. Whereas he is willing to injure or even kill anyone who tries to turn him in the beginning of the film, he sacrifices his own comfort and chances for survival in the jungle. He acts upon vengeance for the first half of the film, but appears to reconcile with Father Lizardi and forgive Djin later. He physically abuses Maria and Djin early in the action, but he treats them with tenderness in their last days in the jungle. Castin starts as a peaceful and caring father, but descends into madness and violence. Maria remains disabled and innocent, yet there are indications that she has matured and could be corrupted (both morally and sexually). It is unclear whether Chark and Maria will become lovers or whether Chark will continue on as a father figure.

LIFE STAGES

Old Age and Death Castin attempts to evade the ravages of old age through marriage and his dream of a new chapter in France. Alberto and Djin note that even if he makes it back to France, he probably won't live that much longer. This realization is what convinces Djin to go along with Castin's marriage proposal. Death is both a psychological / philosophical construct and a corporeal reality for the guests. Obviously, the state of being trapped in the jungle will lead to imminent death, as is evidenced by the fire ants devouring the snake. However, death looms large even before the characters flee into the jungle. There are the dangers of the mine, and then there is the threat of capture and execution. Much of the characterization in the film is developed through the varying responses to death: Castin resigns himself to death as fate, Djin also resigns when she realizes survival is hopeless, and Chark vows to cheat death for as long as he can fight. Father Lizardi has a strong survival instinct. He also uses his faith to survive psychologically.

PHILOSOPHY

Individualism With the possible exceptions of Castin, Lizardi, and Maria, the characters are all out for themselves. Chark has robbed a bank, committed violence, and coerced others to escape imprisonment. Djin and Chenco act in the moment according to their own interests and at the expense of others. The captain is willing to sacrifice his own troops to keep his position of power and wealth. None of the characters wish to improve the social infrastructure of the town. It is only with the fear of death and the dependence on each other in the jungle that the characters modify their self-serving behavior. It is also notable that Father Lizardi is punished for his generosity and faith in mankind. Every time he trusts one of the other characters, they defy him and commit violence / self-serving actions: Chark uses the pen to stab the guard in the eye, and Chenco takes advantage of the loose rope to escape and inform on the others. Even in the end, Father Lizardi trusts Castin not to shoot him and ends up being his second victim.

Predetermination Even when it appears that the characters will not die in the jungle, Castin clings to this notion that God has mandated their deaths. He continues to believe that death is punishment for misdeeds, and this notion drives him insane. We see his gradual descent into madness when he unwraps his head wound (despite Chark's warning that he could die from insects or infection), his reluctance to eat and drink, and the moment when he throws the diamonds (his life savings) into the lake. No one, not even Father Lizardi, can shake Castin's fatalistic viewpoint, and this philosophy secures everyone's fate. Remarkably, most of the characters die because of Castin's belief rather than from the dangers of the jungle. In this sense, death is predetermined.

SOCIETY

Religion: Faith Father Lizardi tries to main his faith even as death is imminent. In the early scene in prison, he tries to convince the wounded rebel to confess and agrees to help Chark write a letter. The missionary also believes that he can brocker a fair trail for Castin if the miner turns himself into the authorities after the rebellion. In the jungle, Father Lizardi refuses to allow for violence and theft within the group, and he walks towards Castin even as the miner has opened fire on the others. He also supports Chark's efforts to keep going despite the lack of supplies. Like other abused clergy in Buñuel's films, Father Lizardi suffers for trusting and attempting to help the others: Chark and Chenco escape, Djin and Chark insult him, and Castin ends up murdering him. Although we can assume that Father Lizardi has pure motives when he arrives for his missionary work, the other characters are more cynical. Some believe that Lizardi will die immediately upon encountering the indigenous tribes, and others believe it is a lost cause to try to convert "savages." The cynicism of the main characters also manifests itself in their refusal to engage with Father Lizardi's advice.

PYSCHOLOGY

Herd Mentality The miners rush into a rebellion even though they know that the captain has sent for more troops. When violence breaks out at the execution, the conflict escalates into a full-scale battle with multiple deaths. In the aftermath of the rebellion, the villagers become a rabid hunting party. When the main characters are trapped in the jungle, they contaminate each other with thoughts of resigning themselves to death. Death is both a psychological / philosophical construct and a corporeal reality for the guests. Obviously, the state of being trapped in the jungle will lead to imminent death, as is evidenced by the fire ants devouring the snake. The characters' ability to work together as a "herd" with Chark as the alpha male allows them to survive for longer periods. However, death looms large even before the characters flee into the jungle. There are the dangers of the mine, and then there is the threat of capture and execution.

FLAWS

Greed Most of the characters' actions (even in the jungle) are motivated by greed. Djin, Chenco, and Chark will do anything to get and keep money. The very first time we see Djin, she explicitly tells Chark that money is all that matters to her. Although part of their motivation is survival, they also look for more: Djin pockets Castin's diamonds, and Chenco pursues the bounty on Chark's head. While it is not clear why Captain Ferrero is arrested, the viewer knows from context that the captain is either embezzling money, skimming off the top, or getting kick-backs. Right after Chark is arrested for the bank robbery, the camera cuts to the captain counting cash from his billfold. When the group comes upon the plane wreck, Djin and Maria long to wear and steal the jewels. In the moments before she is gunned down, Djin steals the jewelry box and revels in modeling the jewels on her body. Even though she is willing to give them to Chark, there remains the glint of greed in her eyes. Maria's resistance to giving back the jewelry box suggests that even she has been corrupted by greed.

Paranoia / Obsession No one in the group trusts anyone else, and this mistrust is warranted. As discussed above, most of the characters are obsessed with and idolize money and jewels, even when they think they are on the brink of death. Although Castin is arguably the most idealistic character of the group in the first part of the film, the prospector is the first one to descend into madness and paranoia in the jungle. At first, he puts forth an optimistic view on his life and work, and he even trusts Djin to take care of Maria. Once they are trapped in the jungle, Castin becomes fixated on the concept of divine punishment. Castin even believes that Lizardi is out to get him. In their last moments together, Djin professes her love and devotion for Chark. Neither the bandit nor the viewer is sure that we can trust her word—and Djin senses this distrust.

POLITICS

Power: Corruption From the very beginning of the film, the viewer learns that this town in the Amazon runs on a corrupt network of dirty military personnel and informants. Chenco and Djin turn in criminals or dissidents for money on the side, and the captain uses his position to embezzle money, as well. The captain routinely imprisons and executes suspects without proof or a trial, and this lack of due

process leads to naming Castin as the leader of the rebellion. In addition, the captain's form of punishment suggests a Machiavellian attitude: he cannot wait until daylight to execute the wounded prospector rebel, and he is willing to shoot villagers if they do not turn in Castin. The military also tries to hoard diamond production and crush the competition. The prospectors are left without a job or place, and this economic exile pushes them to rebel. In addition, there is an implied mistreatment of the indigenous tribes (who were pushed further into the jungle) and the lack of recourse for the miners.

Rebellion The ingrained corruption and wildness of the Amazonian village provides a ripe ground for revolution and rebellion. While the jungle is the setting for the climax and contained in the title, it is the initial conflict between prospectors and the army which sets the whole plot in motion. In other words, there is no "death in the garden" without the sociopolitical forces that instigate the exodus. In addition, many critics have noted that only the last third of the film takes place in the jungle—the majority of the action and character development is tied up in the mine and the town. The breaking point for the prospectors is their loss of any income or job. It is not only that the government is imposing an oppressive oligarchy onto the mining industry; it is also that there is nothing left for the miners. In the opening scene, the army forces the prospectors to leave that day with no explanation. When they attempt to talk with the captain, they are rebuffed and shot at. With this preamble, it is hardly surprising that the miners decide to move forward with the rebellion even though they know they will likely die in the conflict (or be arrested and executed afterwards). For this reason, the prospectors fight in the night battle after their wounded colleague is executed in front of them.

Civilization versus Nature As discussed above, the town on the Amazon can hardly be classified as "civilized". However, there is a hierarchy of power that maintains order and efficiency, albeit in an unjust and sometimes chaotic fashion. There is also the allusion to the civilized world far away: Castin dreams of returning to France not just because it is his homeland, but also because it represents security and sophistication. The journey from prospector on the mountain to chef in a swanky restaurant mirrors the civilization / barbarism dichotomy. Once the characters flee into the jungle, the dangers of nature become unavoidable and explicit. Nature punishes the characters through bugs, dense foliage, and continuous heat and rain. As with many of Bunuel's films, the characters in *Diamond Hunters* must contend with their own physical deterioration: they are wasting away without food and water, and there are several times when Djin and Castin resign themselves to dying in the foliage and rotting away. Ironically, the characters have the opportunity to triumph over nature through the plane wreck, which itself may have been caused by a natural disaster.

Political Allegory Some critics interpret this film as an allegory for the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). In the early 1930s, Spain formed a government known as the Second Republic, which was based on socialist and democratic ideals. However, this form of government ended up failing due to infighting and the rise of fascism throughout Europe. A war broke out in 1936 between the Republicans and the Nationalists (who fought for and under Franco). The Nationalists won in 1939, and Franco became dictator of Spain until his death in 1975. If we interpret the film through this lens, the soldiers are the Nationalists under Franco who wish to dominate the area and control the land / resources. The prospectors are the Republicans who fight to stay on the land but are eventually executed and forced to flee Spain when they lose the war. The jungle is the state of exile and national limbo that the surviving Republicans face. Although Buñuel did not fight in the Spanish Civil War, he was a registered Communist (for a time) and supported the Republican side. As a result, Buñuel spent most of his life in exile, including 20+ years living and making films in Mexico City.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What do the brothel cat, the jungle snake, and the fire ants symbolize?
2. Diamonds appear throughout the film—both as the diamonds from the mines and in the form of jewels that the characters try on and steal. Discuss the inclusion of jewels in the last scenes of the film. What is the effect of Djin putting on the necklaces and bracelets before she is gunned down?
3. Do you agree that the film version of this story is an allegory for the Spanish Civil War? Why or why not?

4. Consider the title and concept of death throughout the film. Why does Castin believe that they all deserve to die? Why do Chark and Maria survive but Djin and Father Lizardi die?
5. Some critics suggest that one of the film's messages is that innocence does not exist. Do you agree with this assertion? What about Maria's innocence?
6. How do you interpret the ending of the film? Will Chark and Maria become lovers?