

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE  
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***Diary of a Chambermaid / Le journal d'une femme de chambre (1964)***  
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. Buñuel's middle period 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 *Nazarin* (1959), in which the eponymous priest attempts to administer to a rural Mexican community, and *The Exterminating Angel* (1962), a masterful critique of the bourgeoisie. The featured film of this essay, *Diary of a Chambermaid* (1964), was a French production that in many ways presaged the last phase of Buñuel's career: a series of hyper-erotic French satires such as *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* (1972) and *That Obscure Object of Desire* (1977).

**Film** *Diary of a Chambermaid* (1964) is a black and white film about Celestine, a maid who lives and works with a morally challenged bourgeois family on an estate in the French countryside. The basic plot is based on the homonymous French novel by Octave Mirbeau in 1900, although Buñuel and his fellow screenwriter Jean Claude Carrière added characters and events that were not part of the novel. Most notably, the murder of the young girl Claire, which becomes the driving force of the film, does not occur in the novel. Moreover, the film adaptation is set in the 1920s (20-30 years later than the novel's setting) and reflects the sociopolitical milieu of France in that period (see Themes below). Many critics consider this Buñuel film as the most "realist" production of his *oeuvre* of the 1960s, as it lacks many of the director's signature surrealist techniques. However, other tropes of Buñuel's style are recognizable, including the focus on insects, weapons, mirrors, and several moments of repressed eroticism.

**Background** There are three different film adaptations of Mirbeau's novel, including a 2015 adaptation directed by Benoit Jacquot. Critics often argue that Jean Renoir's film adaptation of 1946 best captured the essence of the novel. Nonetheless, Buñuel's *Diary of a Chambermaid* is featured in the Criterion Collection as an exemplar of the auteur's French style. The majority of the scenes in this film were shot on the Panhard Estate, a stone villa next to an expansive French National Park. The villa sits close to Milly-la Forêt, a town in northwest France. Several critics credit Jeanne Moreau's performance as Celestine with the effectiveness of the film. She lent a defiant coolness to the character that enhanced Buñuel's style and perhaps influenced the characterization of future female protagonists such as Tristana in *Tristana* (1970) and Conchita in *That Obscure Object of Desire* (1977). As with many of his French films, Buñuel wrote the script with Jean Claude Carrière. Because *Diary* provided Buñuel with his first opportunity to collaborate with Carrière, this film set the stage for the last period of Buñuel's life and career (the pair collaborated on six films between 1964 and Buñuel's death in 1980).

CHARACTERS

<i>Celestine</i>	Maid who lives and works in the Rabour estate
<i>Monsieur Rabour</i>	The patriarch of the estate
<i>Marianne</i>	Rabour's personal maid
<i>Joseph</i>	Groundskeeper and right-wing nationalist
<i>Madame Monteil</i>	Matriarch who runs the household; Rabour's daughter

<i>Monsieur Monteil</i>	Madame Monteil's husband
<i>Captain Mauger</i>	The Rabour's neighbor and foe
<i>Rose</i>	The Captain's longtime lover
<i>Claire</i>	Young girl murdered in the woods

## SYNOPSIS

Celestine, a young woman, arrives at the Rabour estate after having been hired as a new maid. She first meets the Monteils, who are the daughter and son-in-law, respectively, of Monsieur Rabour, the patriarch. Madame Monteil gives Celestine a tour of the house and explains that her father (Rabour) has a few eccentricities that Celestine will have to indulge. Almost immediately, Monsieur Monteil corners Celestine around the house and tries to seduce her. When she meets Rabour, Celestine learns that the patriarch's eccentricities involve fitting his maids in vintage boots. She obliges reluctantly and even walks around Rabour's room in the boots. In addition to her bourgeois bosses, Celestine clashes with the caretaker Joseph, who tries to undermine her as the new servant. In addition, Joseph displays sadomasochistic tendencies and espouses extreme nationalist rhetoric. He meets repeatedly with the town sexton in order to organize right-wing protests.

Celestine befriends the Monteils' neighbors, Captain Mauger and his long-time live-in girlfriend, Rose. They warn her about Monsieur Monteil's seductions and explain that he has impregnated all of the previous female servants. They also describe a long-standing feud with the Monteils. Mauger and Monsieur Monteil have a series of confrontations about the feud, which ultimately results in an arbitration. Mauger "wins" the arbitration by convincing the judge that he is telling the truth.

One morning, Monsieur Rabour is found dead in his bedroom with the door locked from the inside. Celestine decides to quit and return to Paris. Before she can leave, however, she learns that Claire, the young girl who played on the estate, was murdered on the same day as Rabour. She suspects that Joseph is the culprit. Celestine returns to the estate and vows to bring Joseph to justice.

In addition, she continues to spend time with the captain until he announces that he has dumped Rose and is interested in marrying her. Celestine says that she will think about the proposal. Meanwhile, she remains dedicated to framing Joseph by any means necessary, including seducing him, promising to marry him, and placing incriminating evidence in the woods. Joseph tells Celestine of his plans to open a café in Cherbourg, and she agrees to work side by side with him. Before they can leave, Joseph is arrested.

At the end of the film, Celestine agrees to marry Captain Mauger in order to inherit his fortune. She learns that Joseph has been released due to lack of evidence. The last scene of the film is a shot of a right-wing protest and parade through the streets of Cherbourg, where Joseph and a pretty brunette (presumably his new wife) are running a tavern on main street.

## SCENES

**Train Ride** The film opens with the view of the French countryside flying by (from the viewpoint of the train). The credits roll in large white letters as the background changes to a bridge and a small town. There is a following shot of a woman's back as she looks out at the country. Then, she disembarks the train. She crosses to a carriage where a man greets her. She asks if he is going to the priory, and he replies yes.



**Carriage Ride** The camera cuts to the back of the trotting horse on the country road, then back to the man and woman in the carriage. The woman leans over to tie the laces on a fashionable shoe, and the man asks if she has other ones. When the woman responds with "I don't understand", the man remarks that she is playing innocent. As they pull into town, the woman learns that the man's name is Joseph. She walks to the front door, and an old man watches her from behind the trees in an adjoining forest.



**Rabour Chats with Monteil and Claire** The old man hears his son-in-law, Monteil, approaching with a young girl named Claire. He inquires after the hunting, compliments Claire on her scarf, and allows Claire to blow her nose into his hanky. When Claire runs away, Rabour chides his son-in-law for not shaving and for killing too many animals on his daily hunts.

**Meeting Madame Monteil** Inside the house, Madame Monteil gives Celestine a tour and recites the house rules. Madame Monteil explains that she demands the utmost cleanliness and limited breaks for the staff. She also shows Celestine the most valuable trinkets and furniture in the house, including a mother of pearl bureau and a valuable Chinese rug. Madame Monteil criticizes Celestine's outfit saying that fancy Parisian clothes are not suitable for the country. Celestine assents to all of the demands. Madame Monteil warns Celestine that even though her father has his strange "whims," she must be nice to him.

**Shooting the Butterflies** The camera cuts to a close-up of butterflies landing on a flower. Suddenly, there is a gunshot, and the butterflies are blown off violently. The camera pulls out to show Monsieur Rabour aiming Monteil's rifle at the butterflies, then handing the weapon back to him. Monteil compliments him on his aim and asks him if he really never shot before. Rabour replies that he does not remember shooting before and he wishes he had missed the butterflies. Monteil walks inside while Rabour meanders around the garden.

**Servant Gossip** Celestine meets Marianne, a fellow servant, as she unpacks in her new bedroom. Marianne admires all of Celestine's fine objects from her past jobs, including a framed picture of a thoroughbred horse. Celestine asks Marianne for an account of the family. She replies that Rabour is kind and harmless and the Madame is extremely demanding and even locks up the sugar cubes. When Celestine asks about Monsieur Monteil, Marianne whistles and makes a face. Celestine says "thanks for the warning."

**First Encounter with Monsieur Monteil** Celestine knocks on the door while Monteil is putting on shaving cream. When she enters, he asks her name and requests that she fetch his bathrobe. She answers Celestine, and he looks her up and down. She leaves for his bedroom but is intercepted by Madame Monteil, who asks her what she is doing. Monteil sticks his head out and declares that the robe is in the bathroom. Madame Monteil warns Celestine to be careful with an antique lamp that is in the upstairs living room.

**More Servant Gossip** Celestine enters the kitchen area where Marianne and the cook are trying to catch a mouse in the cupboard. The mouse runs out and escapes through a hole in the wall. Celestine carries the antique lamp to the kitchen and starts polishing it, all the while imitating Madame Monteil's voice. Celestine also declares that she will quit. The cook asserts that Celestine will stay. Marianne explains that the Madame cannot have sex due to an illness that makes it painful.

**Nationalist News** The gossip is interrupted when Joseph enters and forces Celestine to move out of his chair. He also demands that she move the lamp, and as she does so, the bulb detaches and shatters on the floor. Joseph reads the newspaper and reports that the police beat up a group of "wops." He applauds the news. When a buzzer sounds, the cook tells Celestine to take up the master's herbal tea. She leaves, and Joseph continues reporting about the conservative moment in France.



**Celestine Meets Monsieur Rabour** Celestine brings in the tea and introduces herself to Rabour. The patriarch compliments the name but warns her that he is going to call her Marie like all of his former chambermaids. Before he excuses Celestine, he tells her that he likes his maids to read to him at night. She begins to read a Marxist passage, but Rabour interrupts her to ask if he can caress her calf. She is startled but reads on as he touches the area above her ankle. Rabour opens a closet with a collection of women's boots, and he selects a pair called Rose in the Wind for Celestine. He requests that she wear them in the evening. Madame Monteil enters holding the lamp and chides Celestine for breaking the bulb. Celestine



apologizes, and Rabour comments that he never liked that lamp. When Celestine leaves the room, he comments to himself that she is pretty and has good character.

**Conflict with the Neighbors** When Celestine wanders around the property, she is startled by a stone that breaks the glass of a greenhouse structure on the ground. She climbs up on the hedges and asks the man on the other side if he threw the stones. The man, Captain Mauger, introduces his long-time girlfriend Rose and explains his grievances with the neighbors. The captain says that he does not have an issue with Rabour but rather with Monteil due to his criticism of his sinful relationship with Rose. Rose climbs a ladder on the other side of the hedge and warns Celestine that there is already gossip about her and Monteil. She elucidates by saying that Monteil always sleeps with the help and impregnates women at the drop of a hat.



**Monteil's First Proposition** When Celestine enters the dining room, Monteil asks if she is getting used to the place. Celestine deflects, and Monteil chases her around the dining room table. He explains that he is crazy with desire for her and that he loves "wild love." He offers her a cookie and grabs her as he propositions sex. Celestine inquires after Madame Monteil, and Monteil replies that she has ruined his life—and he might do something drastic. Celestine says she will not cheat and that if he keeps harassing her, she will tell Madame Monteil. She leaves the dining room but bites the cookie coquettishly and says: "Give me time to get used to the place."



**Joseph Tortures the Duck** Joseph grabs a duck by the wings and takes it to the barn. Celestine hears the duck squawking in pain and runs over. She begs Joseph not to torture the duck, but he replies that they taste better if they suffer and he enjoys their pain. When Joseph presents the dead duck to Madame Monteil in the kitchen, he takes the opportunity to tell her that Celestine has befriended Rose. Madame Monteil indicates that she doesn't care, but Joseph persists in warning her about the dangerous relationship.



**Joseph Tortures Claire** The cook begins to serve dinner, and Claire starts eating first. She dips the bread in the sauce. Joseph comes in from the rain and sits down next to Claire. He asks why she is eating with them and inquires after her aunt. Claire replies that her aunt is not doing well. Suddenly, Joseph grabs Claire and tells her to look into his eyes and describe what she sees. She replies "me," and Joseph says "that proves I'm thinking about you." Joseph begins to strangle Claire. Celestine appears from the kitchen, and Joseph releases Claire when he catches Celestine's eye.



**Politics with the Sexton** The servants continue eating, and Celestine gets up for butter and apples. Joseph asks for one, but Celestine replies that she doesn't serve snitches. Before they can continue the discussion, the sexton enters from the rain and sits down with the group. He reports that 20 "Reds" were wounded in a skirmish, and Joseph comments that it would have been better if they had died. The sexton replies that 12 Jews were actually killed in Romania, and Joseph says "12 less." The sexton criticizes corrupt judges and Bolsheviks, and both men praise the Church as a way of getting rid of the Jews.

**Madame Monteil's Warning** After dinner, Rabour and Monteil play backgammon while Madame Monteil sits at her vanity desk. When Celestine enters to collect the tea cups, Madame Monteil demands that she take off her Parisian perfume and that it is inappropriate for servants to wear perfume. Celestine leaves with the tea cups, and Madame Monteil approaches her husband. She warns him not to pursue Celestine and reminds him that she had to pay off the last servant whom he impregnated. Monteil argues that Celestine probably has city diseases, and Madame Monteil replies: "I know you." Rabour, irritated at their fighting, leaves the game and goes to bed. Meanwhile,



Celestine tucks Claire into the servant's bed and defiantly applies a generous amount of her Parisian perfume.

**Confrontation Between Monteil and Mauger** Early the next morning, Monteil grabs Celestine before leaving for a hunt. She escapes his grasp and quips that she must have syphilis (referring to his repeated comments that Parisian women have STDs). Frustrated, Monteil takes his rifle out and catches Mauger cutting branches off of his trees. Mauger claims that it is in his legal rights to do so, but Monteil warns that he will take him to court. Monteil calls over Joseph to bear witness to Mauger's actions. Monteil throws the branches and garbage at the hedge, and Mauger yells at him "Dirty Jew!"



**Curious Experiments** That night, Madame Monteil pours liquids into a several beakers as if she is performing a chemical experiment. One of the beakers has boiling liquid in it, and Madame Monteil also pours something into a watering can attached to the wall.



**Boot Fashion Show** Celestine passes by the bedrooms and Rabour comes out and asks the maid to join him. Per his request, she puts on the Rose of the Wind boots. Rabour brags about the quality of the patten leather and asserts that he will enjoy polishing them himself. He tells her he knows that it is a strange "whim", but he asks her to walk around the bedroom. Rabour watches intently and asks her to "make them live." He notices a hole in the sole and promises to fix it. Celestine collapses in an arm chair and starts to fall asleep while Rabour removes the boots and walks away, irritated.



**Confrontation between Celestine and Joseph** Joseph is loading the carriage when Celestine comes out to fetch wine for dinner. Joseph indicates that he has set out the wine on the windowsill. Celestine walks over to Joseph and accuses him of being the house informant. Joseph retorts that he is the one whom the masters trust, and that is very valuable. Celestine calls him ugly, and Joseph grabs her and calls her beautiful. She leaves, and he calls after her that he likes her obedient nature.



**Madame Monteil Considers Alternatives to Sex** The camera cuts to a priest meandering around the parlor. Madame Monteil enters with orange cake and greets her confessor. The priest mentions that he saw Monsieur Monteil chopping wood vigorously, and Madame Monteil explains that his vigor is the problem. Madame Monteil discretely implies that she is looking for a solution to satisfying her husband's sexual needs but without intercourse. He asks her how often she would perform sexual favors, and Madame Monteil replies twice a week. Her confessor says that twice a week is way too often, and he warns her that any alternatives should not give her pleasure. She replies that it won't be a problem. The priest changes the subject and reports that the church roof must be fixed before winter.



**Monsieur Rabour is Dead** In the midst of the conversation with her confessor, Madame Monteil is interrupted by Celestine's cries for help. Everyone congregates outside Rabour's room, and Celestine reports that the door is locked from the inside. Madame Monteil cries out for her father to open the door, and when he doesn't answer, the men start kicking and knocking down the doors on either side of the bedroom. Monteil uses an axe. As they continue to struggle, the camera cuts to an interior close-up shot of Rabour's legs on his bed. The camera pans across his body and lands on the back of Rabour's head. The shot includes Rabour's left hand grasping one of the Rose of the Wind boots while the other lies next to his head.



**Claire's Murder** The camera cuts abruptly to a close-up of a snail being held by Claire's tiny hand. She places the snail in a basket with others and continues walking and skipping through the forest. She also eats berries that leave a stain on her mouth. She hears Joseph with his cart, so she walks out to the

road and offers him the basket of snails. Joseph says no and watches as she walks back into the woods. He yells out to watch for wolves. He looks around for witnesses, then follows her. The camera cuts to shots of a warthog running through the forest and a bunny hopping along. Then, there is a shot through the trees of Claire's boots and legs covered in blood. On her left leg crawl two of the snails, and we hear a piercing train whistle.

**Celestine's Departure** Celestine enters the parlor where Madame Monteil is working on the bills and Monsieur Monteil is playing solitaire. Madame Monteil correctly guesses that Celestine is quitting and returning to Paris. She wishes Celestine well and thanks her for her "discretion." She also indicates that Celestine can come back and work for them in the future. As Celestine is waiting at the train station, she overhears two cops reporting on Claire's murder. She approaches and ask for the details. The cops explain that she was raped and left in the Raillon Forest, and that she was likely killed six days ago—the same day that Monsieur Rabour died.

**Celestine's Return** After hearing the news of the murder, Celestine takes a car back to the house. When she exits, she comes upon Captain Mauger, Rose, and a group of villagers who are all gossiping about the murder. They wonder whether the culprit is still in town, and one of the women laments that the police won't pursue the case for a poor girl. Captain Mauger admonishes her for disrespecting French police. Celestine approaches and explains that she changed her mind about leaving. The villagers continue speculating about the murderer: one accuses two monks, and Captain Mauger thinks that Monsieur Monteil may have done it given his proclivities. Celestine does not give her opinion but vows vengeance for the murder of a such a sweet innocent. As she walks away, Rose looks on and asks where she gets money for such fancy outfits.



**We're the Same** That night, Marianne asks Celestine why she came back, but Celestine only replies "Because." She takes potatoes outside and throws them into the bonfire that Joseph created. When Joseph appears, he comments that he likes potatoes that way, too, and he is happy that Celestine has returned. He goes on to say that even though women are difficult to understand, he knows Celestine because she thinks the same way he does. Celestine starts to interrogate him about his whereabouts on the day of Claire's death. Joseph answers honestly but then changes the subject, and the camera continually cuts to close-up of Celestine' alarmed face. As Celestine walks away, Joseph grabs her from behind and whispers that they are the same. He kisses her neck passionately, and Celestine winces.



**The Captain's Plot** Celestine goes on errands and runs into Captain Mauger, who is irritated that Rose is spending his money. She chides him for throwing garbage over the hedge when they were going to the funeral. He replies by suggesting that Celestine accuse Monteil of indecent exposure or sexual harassment. The captain asserts that he will serve as a witness, and the group's accusations will link Monteil to Claire's rape and murder. Celestine rejects his plan and starts to leave. The captain chases after her and invites her to visit him when Rose is out.

**Informal Arbitration** Monteil and Mauger sit in front of a local judge and bicker about their feud. Monteil reports that Mauger keeps throwing garbage over the hedge, but Captain Mauger denies it and asks for witnesses. The judge believes the captain due to his esteemed record in battle. The two men insult each other until the judge cuts them off. Rose meets Mauger as he exits the courthouse, and the captain tells her to cook him a rabbit to celebrate. She laughs and declares, "What a baby!"



### **Evidence, Propaganda, and a Proposal**

Joseph asks Celestine to come up to his room with him. When she follows him, he asks her to mend his shirt. While she sews, he reveals that he knows she was rifling through his chest and closet. Celestine accuses him directly of Claire's death and says that he is bad. Joseph points to the propaganda posters and portraits on his wall and declares his love for the church, the army, and the law. Celestine replies that he is sincere in his love for those things. Joseph declares his love for Celestine and his intention to be with her forever. Celestine kisses his neck and suggests that they be together right away. Joseph says that he wants to marry her properly, and they will wait for the right time to have sex.



### **Twice Rejected**

When Celestine goes to bed, Monteil jumps out and whispers at her intently. Celestine merely says "Good night" and keeps walking up the stairs. Agitated, Monteil knocks on his wife's bedroom door. When he enters, he sees Madame Monteil brushing her hair at the make-up curio. He looks at the bed, and the camera shows Madame Monteil through the mirror's reflection. Then, the camera cuts to a normal shot of the couple side by side. Monteil squeezes her shoulder and says "Listen, dear." She replies "Leave me alone", and Monteil storms out and slams the door.



### **Reporting to the Police**

Celestine rides a bike to the courthouse and asks to speak to the judge. The clerks ask her about her reason for wanting to see the judge, and she replies that it has to do with Claire's murder. They ask her to wait, and Claire sits for a few seconds. She paces around for a minute, then says that she is in too much of a hurry to wait. The clerks remark that it is a shame.



### **Mauger's Proposal**

As Celestine bikes back to the house, Mauger sees her and calls her over. She inquires after Rose, and Mauser reports that he broke up with her and threw her out of the house. Celestine reminds him that Rose was a faithful partner of many years who knew his tastes and habits, but Mauger retorts that she didn't do anything in the house and she always sat in the armchair. He also jokes that Rose was jealous of Celestine. Mauger suddenly suggests that they get married. Celestine is taken aback, then warns him that she can't cook. He replies that he is more interested in another type of cooking. Celestine tells him she will think it over, and he gives her a peck on the cheek.



### **Celestine's Seduction**

Celestine fakes a headache so that Marianne serves the Monteils dinner in her place. While Marianne pours the wine, she and Monsieur Monteil exchange a charged look. The camera cuts to Joseph's loft where Celestine has entered and takes off her coat to reveal a black negligée. She adjusts her garters, slips under the covers, and waits for Joseph to arrive.

### **Joseph's Plan**

When he enters, Joseph chides Celestine for trying to get quick sex. He explains that he wants to marry Celestine, move to Cherbourg, and run a tavern for French soldiers and sailors—who, according to Joseph, will be attracted to Celestine's beauty and amiable nature. Celestine retorts that he is describing prostitution, and she asks him about money and other logistics. Joseph explains his plan to save enough money to move in six months. Celestine says she will agree if he sleeps with her right away. Joseph resists but eventually gives in when Celestine swears to marry him. He turns the lamp off and gets into bed. Celestine murmurs—"Now, my little Joseph, tell me you were the one who killed little Claire."

**Giving Our Six-Month Notice** Joseph and Celestine take off their shoes at the foot of the stairs. Celestine picks up Joseph's shoes and looks at the metal semicircle on the toe. She traces the metal piece with her finger. Joseph takes her hand and they enter the parlor room. Joseph explains to the Monteils that he and Celestine intend to get married and move to Cherbourg in a few months, but they will stay until they can find replacements. Madame Monteil says they will both be missed. Monsieur Monteil paces angrily and looks out the window at Marianne, who is approaching the house with basket under her arm. Madame Monteil ask them to help her move the table.



**Monteil Pursues Marianne** Monsieur Monteil walks outside to Marianne, who is hanging wet laundry on the line. He asks her if she had fun as a young woman, and Marianne replies that she has worked her whole life. Monteil repeats his motto about wanting "wild love" and suggests that he visit her bedroom that night. She looks at him without answering, and he says "How about 10:00, you little hussy?" He begins to walk away, and the camera closes-in on Marianne's face. She cries but returns to hanging the laundry. Monsieur Monteil stops at the opening to the chicken coop and calls over Marianne. He commands her to go in, and after looking around, he follows her in and closes the door.



**Framing Joseph** Celestine opens up Joseph's cupboard, takes out one of his shoes, and scrapes off the metal semicircle piece on the sole with a knife. The camera cuts to the sexton opening the gate to the estate while the dog barks continuously. Joseph and the Sexton discuss a fascist demonstration that they have planned while Celestine sits quietly and knits. Joseph takes out a club, and the sexton shows him copies of the fliers that he made.

**Joseph is Arrested** Their plans are interrupted by the gendarme approaching. Joseph tells Celestine to sit on the club (which he has placed under the mattress). The cops enter, drink booze, and praise the tidiness of Joseph's living space. Eventually, they ask Joseph questions about the day Claire was murdered. He gives them the same responses as before, but one of the cops takes out the toe-plate that Celestine had removed. When Joseph opens his cupboard, the cop matches the toe-plate to his shoe. The cops quickly arrest Joseph, who looks at Celestine and says: "Too bad, Celestine—I wasn't wearing those shoes that day". She watches from the upstairs window as they leave, then sits at the table contemplatively and murmurs: "Bastard."



**Celestine Marries Mauger** The camera cuts to an aerial shot of a church and a wedding party pouring out of the front. The church bells chime as the Mauser and Celestine emerge in modern attire (Celestine is wearing a white traveling outfit and cloche hat rather than a traditional wedding dress). Monsieur Monteil approaches and congratulates the couple. He explains that Madame Monteil is too ill to attend. Mauger invites Monteil to kiss Celestine and join the procession leading to the reception.

**Married Life** Mauger appears from the second-floor window of his house and shouts down to Marianne, who is watering plants on the ledge below. When he closes the window, he approaches the bed and kisses Celestine, who is reading the paper and eating breakfast in bed. They discuss Mauger's will, but Celestine interrupts his plans to ask about the investigation. Mauger reports that the police released Joseph due to lack of evidence. Mauger calls Joseph a patriot, and Celestine sits on the edge of the bed with her back turned to Mauger. The camera closes in on her disturbed face.



**Fascist Demonstration** A group of conservative protesters is assembled at the docks and shouts "Down with wops!" Another group of well-dressed conservatives march along the shore and hold a sign saying "France for the French." As the parade passes, Joseph appears at the door of what is presumably his dream café in Cherbourg. He



chants along with the protesters while a pretty brunette serves a group of sailors from behind the bar. She walks out to the street, and Joseph puts his arm around her. Joseph buys a right-wing newspaper called French Action and starts a new chant—"Vive Chiappe." The marchers pick up the new chant, and the camera shoots the marchers from behind down a narrow street. There are three abrupt cuts that interrupt the flow of the parade—in other words, the marchers "skip ahead" down the street. The last shot is the empty street, followed by a quick pan up to a stormy sky with lightning.

## CHARACTER ANALYSIS

### CELESTINE

Celestine is a young, beautiful chambermaid who is recently hired by the Monsieur Rabour and the Monteils. Although several other characters describe her as sweet, her demure demeanor masks a determination, toughness, and dark side.

*Rebellious* Celestine verbally complies with Madame Monteil's and Joseph's mandates, but she immediately does what she always intended to do. She defies several of the Monteils' orders, including not wearing Parisian perfume. Despite continual gossip, Celestine continues to wear expensive outfits in the country. When the other servants ask her why she does what she does (especially, why she returned to the estate), Celestine merely replies "Because." Perhaps most importantly, she refuses to give in to Monteil's constant advances.

*Determined* In this adaptation of the film, the viewer does not hear Celestine's inner monologues through diary entries. Instead, we see her determination through her actions and Jeanne Moreau's steely interpretation of the character. Her primary motivations are to care for Claire on the estate, then avenge Claire's murder by incriminating Joseph. She is so determined to get justice that she goes to the local judge, plants evidence in the woods, and even sleeps with Joseph to gain his trust.

*Practical* Celestine innately understands her limitations in the sociocultural ambience of the estate. As a result, she pretends to comply with social mandates in order to survive. Rather than fighting the men's advances and proposals, she either ignores them or says yes in the moment. She plays the obedient servant to both Rabour and Madame Monteil even though she is exasperated by their unreasonable obsessions. Her ultimate decision to marry Mauger is born of practicality. She knows that she will have her own estate and not have to work as a maid again.

### JOSEPH

Joseph is the long-time caretaker of the estate. He describes himself as old and ugly, yet he still holds ambitions for a marriage and career in the city. He is a fan of the military and right-wing propaganda, and has a penchant for murder.

*Persistent* Joseph is very methodical in his work and planning for the future. Most of his daily actions revolve around two goals: opening a café in Cherbourg and planning right-wing demonstrations. In the first half of the film, he continually tries to sabotage Celestine by reporting on her actions to his bosses. In the second half of the film, he doggedly pursues Celestine until she agrees to marry him. Despite getting interrupted and arrested, Joseph works with the sexton to print out fliers and foment a right-wing movement.

*Sadistic* Joseph loves to cause pain in other living creatures. While he does not try to harm Celestine physically, he does bite her neck in a vampiric manner at the bonfire. His sadism is unleashed on two vulnerable and weak subjects: the duck slaughtered for dinner, and little Claire. He does not deny taking pleasure in the pain of either, and he does not hide his sadistic tendencies (although he denies the murder). His performative sadism manifests itself when he half-strangles Claire in front of the other staff during dinner.

*Hard-working* By all accounts, Joseph is good at his job. Most of his screen time consists of manual labor such as loading and unloading the cart. Even his moments of diversion are done within the context of a chore. His dedication has allowed him to stay on the estate for years and save money for his café.

When he announces his engagement, Joseph assures the Monteils that he will wait for and train his replacement.

### **MONSEUR MONTEIL**

Monteil is the nominal head of the household and a thin, dark gentleman. He is a typical bourgeois gentleman who smokes, gambles, and hunts, but he is also compulsive in his sexual desires.

*Obsessive* Monteil is always smoking, hunting, gambling or having sex. His behavior is very compulsive and addictive. When he struggles to seduce Celestine, he becomes even more fixated on that sexual conquest. It is only when Celestine announces her engagement that Monteil changes course and sexually coerces Marianne.

*Selfish* Monteil constantly seeks gratification at the expense of others. Due to their means and power, Monteil usually gets to do what he wants when he wants it. He harasses the help with little thought to the effect on their lives. In the early scenes of the film, Monteil does not seem to care at all that he impregnated the last servant, nor that the whole town knows about it, nor that his wife had to pay for his mistake. When he is rebuffed by Celestine, Monteil basically forces Marianne to engage in sex in the barn.

### **CAPTAIN MAUGER**

*Dishonest* The Captain blatantly lies several times throughout the film—most notably when he tells the legal official that he did not throw garbage onto Monteil's side of the hedge. In addition, Mauger relishes the idea of fabricating false information and gossip to get revenge on Monteil. Specifically, he tries to get Celestine to give false testimony that Monteil exposed himself to her.

*Selfish* Like Monteil, Mauger expects to get what he wants when he wants it. He consistently commands Rose and expects her to act like a dutiful wife, even though they are not married. When he is unsatisfied with her "service," he throws her out of the house and proposes to Celestine. Like Monteil, he propositions Celestine sexually without pause or scruples.

### **THEMES**

#### **SOCIETY**

**Class** As with many of Buñuel's films, *Diary of a Chambermaid* satirizes the bourgeoisie. Monsieur Rabour and the Monteils epitomize the selfishness, eccentricities, and commodity fetishism of a relatively rich family living on a country estate. Each rich character becomes absorbed into his or her obsession to avoid ennui. For Madame Monteil, it is cleaning, interior decorating, and compulsive hygiene and make-up. Monsieur Monteil can only think about hunting and sexual conquest. Monsieur Rabour is weary of life in general and finds solace in nostalgia (by means of vintage shoes). Conversely, the working-class characters resent the privilege of the Rabour-Monteils and do not have the time or luxury to indulge in fetishes and fantasies. Joseph, Marianne, Rose, and the cook have worked all their lives and are caught in a cycle of menial labor. As a sort of orphan, Claire wanders around the estate and has no protection. Even if she hadn't been murdered, there would have been little opportunity for her to climb out of her circumstances. In the case of Celestine, she bridges the working and middle classes. She works diligently as a maid, but she always behaves as if she is a sophisticate. Furthermore, she marries Mauger in order to gain stability.

*Illustrative Moment: Bourgeois privilege* Monsieur Monteil uses his bourgeois privilege to sexually coerce the naïve and working-class maid Marianne near the end of the film. Monsieur Monteil walks outside to Marianne, who is hanging wet laundry on the line. He asks her if she had fun as a young woman, and Marianne replies that she has worked her whole life. Monteil repeats his motto about wanting "wild love" and suggests that he visit her bedroom that night. She looks at him without answering, and he says "How about 10:00, you little hussy?" He begins to walk away, and the camera closes-in on Marianne's face. She cries but returns to hanging the laundry. Monsieur Monteil stops at the opening to the chicken coop and calls over Marianne. He commands her to go in, and after looking around, he follows her in and closes the door.

**Gender** Just as the Rabour-Monteils hold power over the working-class characters, so do the men dominate the women in the rural French hierarchy. Rural French masculinity is equated with dominance, violence, and political and financial power. The Rabour-Monteils use their social station to dominate, and Joseph and Mauger use their military and police connections / status to get away with their crimes. The judges, cops, and priest give credence to the male characters while often ignoring or discounting the women. Celestine, Rose, and Marianne are all objectified as sexual objects and only valued for the ways in which they serve their bosses and lovers. Mauger considers Rose to be his companion and domestic servant, yet he refuses to marry her. As a result, she is thrown out when he feels she has taken over the domestic space and gained too much agency. Monteil only sees the women around him as tools of his sexual gratification; therefore, he acts in a predatory manner throughout the film. Once the men have conquered the female domestics, the women are characterized as whores (Celestine even accuses Joseph of trying to make her into a prostitute). Claire becomes a victim due to both her class and gender. The only exception to this dynamic is Madame Monteil, who acts as both victim and victimizer. In many ways, she holds the power within the family and dominates both her husband and the staff. Her characterization as a rich bitch (muttered several times), frigid wife, and a sort of witch (always gazing in the mirror and mixing “potions”) plays to gender stereotypes. Even though she has the most power among the female characters, she is still subject to her father’s wishes and her husband’s behavior. On the other hand, Celestine’s defiance allows her some agency that the other female characters do not enjoy. It is notable that at the end of the film, Mauger is serving Celestine in bed, and this position could represent a subversion of the gender dynamic throughout the film.

*Illustrative Moment: Guns* Monsieur Rabour and Monsieur Monteil wield their rifles and blow away delicate butterflies in a show of violent masculinity. The camera cuts to a close-up of butterflies landing on a flower. Suddenly, there is a gunshot and the butterflies are blown off violently. The camera pulls out to show Monsieur Rabour aiming Monteil’s rifle at the butterflies, then handing the weapon back to him. Monteil compliments him on his aim and asks him if he really never shot before. Rabour replies that he does not remember shooting before and he wishes he had missed the butterflies. Monteil walks inside while Rabour meanders around the garden.

**Rural versus Urban Culture** Most of the film takes place in the French countryside on and around the Monteil’s estate. Although Buñuel emphasizes the beauty and wonder of nature, this pastoral tranquility is overwhelmed by the gossip, pettiness, and injustices of the small town. This critique is perhaps best illustrated in the scene immediately proceeding Claire’s murder. In an overt reference to Little Red Riding Hood, Claire skips around the Raillon Forest, collecting and eating berries. In addition, she picks up snails and studies them, and the camera zooms in on their probing heads. This innocent convening with nature is destroyed when the “wolf,” Joseph, attacks, rapes, and kills Claire. After the murder, the villagers comment that the police will not investigate fully due to Claire’s poverty and orphan-like status. In this way, Buñuel juxtaposes the transcendent quality of the woods with the brutish attitudes of the rural community. The film also references the benefits and vices of urban culture and society. The villagers mistrust Celestine because she wears expensive Parisian clothes and perfume, and the implication is that she refuses to blend in with rural culture and expectations. The final scenes in the film show Joseph and his new wife running a successful café in Cherbourg, yet the city is also the site of the racist protest and parade. Buñuel seems to suggest that the clash between rural and urban culture in 1920s France does not erase the universal prejudices and vices of both communities.

*Illustrative Moment: Clothes* In the opening credits, Buñuel immediately juxtaposes the shots of the rural countryside with Celestine’s posh Parisian travelling suit, thereby setting up one of the central and repetitive conflicts of the film. The film opens with the view of the French countryside flying by (from the viewpoint of the train). The credits roll in large white letters as the background changes to a bridge and a small town. There is a following shot of a woman’s back as she looks out at the country. Then, she deboards the train. She crosses to a carriage where a man greets her. She asks if he is going to the priory, and he replies yes.

## JUSTICE

**Injustice** The gender, race, and class dynamics throughout the film exemplify the general prejudice and overall unfairness of rural French society in the 1920s. Obviously, the greatest injustice is that

Joseph is not tried or punished for murdering Claire. However, many of the characters also escape consequences for their immoral or criminal behavior. Monsieur Monteil is free to harass and impregnate the domestic servants in perpetuity, and Mauger gets away not only with abandoning Rose, but also with continual slander and vandalism. The legal system fails to protect the vulnerable members of society. The discussion of right-wing politics also underscores the sociopolitical injustices towards immigrants and minorities. There are several racist comments about Jews, Bolsheviks, and Italians. For example, the editorials in the right-wing newspapers suggest that the immigrants and left-wing members of French society are damaging France as a whole, and the slogans on posters and protest banners echo this sentiment. Whenever the sexton reports on riots or demonstrations, he mentions those who were killed. The implication is that they will never see justice.

*Illustrative Moment: Immigrants* As the servants eat dinner together, Joseph and the sexton discuss their prejudiced attitudes towards immigrants. The servants continue eating, and Celestine gets up for butter and apples. Joseph asks for one, but Celestine replies that she doesn't serve snitches. Before they can continue the discussion, the sexton enters from the rain and sits down with the group. He reports that 20 "Reds" were wounded in a skirmish, and Joseph comments that it would have been better if they had died. The sexton replies that 12 Jews were actually killed in Romania, and Joseph says "12 less." The sexton criticizes corrupt judges and Bolsheviks, and both men praise the Church as a way of getting rid of the Jews.

## POLITICS

**Conflict** Along with the conflict among and between characters in their personal relationships, Buñuel consistently underscores political tensions of 1920s France—in particular, the right-wing and fascist ideology of the military and police juxtaposed with the left-wing ideology of the working class and immigrants. Joseph and the sexton fully embrace the nationalism of right-wing propaganda, and Mauger's comments about the military also suggest an inclination towards conservative politics. No character espouses rhetoric about the left, but the newspaper articles about Republican deaths allude to the overall oppression of racial minorities in the period. In addition, Buñuel jabs at fascist oppression in the last scene of the film, when Joseph cries out "Vive Chiappe." Chiappe was the right-wing constable in Paris that shut down viewings of Buñuel's controversial surrealist film *The Age of Gold* in 1930. In this sense, Buñuel not so subtly critiques the repression of right-wing movements in between the two world wars.

*Illustrative Moment: Nationalist Movement* The nationalist movement is in full force as the protesters march down the streets of Cherbourg. A group of conservative protesters is assembled at the docks and shouts "Down with wops!" Another group of well-dressed conservatives march along the shore and hold a sign saying "France for the French." As the parade passes, Joseph appears at the door of what is presumably his dream café in Cherbourg. He chants along with the protesters while a pretty brunette serves a group of sailors from behind the bar. She walks out to the street, and Joseph puts his arm around her. Joseph buys a right-wing newspaper called French Action and starts a new chant—"Vive Chiappe." The marchers pick up the new chant, and the camera shoots the marchers from behind down a narrow street. There are three abrupt cuts that interrupt the flow of the parade—in other words, the marchers "skip ahead" down the street. The last shot is the empty street, followed by a quick pan up to a stormy sky with lightning.

## SEXUALITY

**Desire** As the protagonist of the film, Celestine's desires and motivations are important for the trajectory of the plot. Unlike other adaptations of the novel, the viewer does not hear excerpts from the eponymous diary in Buñuel's version. As a result, the inner thoughts of Celestine are implied at best. Jeanne Moreau's Celestine seems to abhor Monteil and acts indifferently towards Mauger. It is possible that she is sexually attracted to Joseph, or it could be interpreted that she is only using sex with him in order to incriminate him. Thus, Celestine's desire revolves less around sex and marriage and more around justice and financial stability. Conversely, the male desire in the film is much more overt and predatory. As with many of Buñuel's films, the female protagonist in *Diary of a Chambermaid* is constantly harassed, pursued, and desired by several male characters. All of the male characters desire Celestine in one way or another: Monteil considers her yet another receptacle of his "wild love," and Mauger and Joseph want

her for sex, companionship, and a sort of trophy wife. Although Rabour is not specifically after sex, he does assume that Celestine will indulge in his fetishistic whims. Monteil's sexual desire is so strong that he directs it towards multiple women. He uses Marianne as a substitute and even attempts to convince his wife to have sex with him after Celestine rejects him. In Monteil's case, his sexual desire remains at a compulsive and obsessive level—he constantly lusts after Celestine. Joseph craves dominance, be it through legal, military, or sexual means. His desire for and violence towards Claire derives from a lust for power. He is the proverbial “wolf” in the Red Riding Hood scene leading up to Claire's murder. Along with sex, the working-class characters yearn for stability. Most of the characters want to be married as a means of gaining status, wealth, assistance, and opportunity. There is also a more internal desire to belong to a group or to have a greater purpose, hence Joseph and Mauger's attraction to nationalist and “pro-French” propaganda.

*Illustrative Moment: Lust* Celestine and Joseph chat by the fire and reveal their mutual attraction and distrust of each other (and Celestine's hate simmering just below the surface). After her return, She takes potatoes outside and throws them into the bonfire that Joseph created. When Joseph appears, he comments that he likes potatoes that way, too, and he is happy that Celestine has returned. He goes on to say that even though women are difficult to understand, he knows Celestine because she thinks the same way he does. Celestine starts to interrogate him about his whereabouts on the day of Claire's death. Joseph answers honestly but then changes the subject, and the camera continually cuts to close-up of Celestine' alarmed face. As Celestine walks away, Joseph grabs her from behind and whispers that they are the same. He kisses her neck passionately, and Celestine winces.



**Sadomasochism** The most overt example of sadism is through Joseph's behavior. First, he tortures the duck before slaughtering it, and when Celestine tries to intervene, he proclaims that he enjoys inflicting pain. A few minutes later at the dinner table, Joseph mock strangles Claire. When Claire's body is found in the woods, the police report that she was raped and cut, which suggests that Joseph also tortured the girl before she died. The women, conversely, seem to embrace a masochistic pleasure in their sexual relationships. Even though Celestine knows that Joseph killed Claire, the maid seems to be sexually excited by Joseph's advances and the thought of exacting revenge through seduction. Marianne's reaction to Monteil's advances is to cry, but the viewer does not know how to interpret the tears. Has the servant resigned herself to harassment and coercion by the master of the house, or had she secretly wished that he would desire her? Does she feel trapped or excited by the boss's sudden interest? It is possible that Marianne takes a masochistic pleasure in her own objectification.

*Illustrative Moment: Strangling* During one of the servants' dinners, Joseph sits by Claire and ends up strangling her for a few seconds. The cook begins to serve dinner, and Claire starts eating first. She dips the bread in the sauce. Joseph comes in from the rain and sits down next to Claire. He asks why she is eating with them and inquires after her aunt. Claire replies that her aunt is not doing well. Suddenly, Joseph grabs Claire and tells her to look into his eyes and describe what she sees. She replies “me,” and Joseph says “that proves I'm thinking about you.” Joseph begins to strangle Claire, and the camera zooms in on her frightened face. Celestine appears from the kitchen, and Joseph releases Claire when he catches Celestine's eye.



**Fetishism** As with nearly every Buñuel film, *Diary of a Chambermaid* is replete with objects that become eroticized through fetishism. Obviously, Rabour's fascination with feet, calves, and nineteenth-century boots constitutes a strong fetishistic desire. For him, the boots take on a life of their own when the servants put them on and walk in them. His pleasure is derived from rejuvenating himself through the “new life” of the shoes, hence his vow to polish and repair the chosen boots for Celestine. It appears that the woman wearing the boots is incidental, although Rabour does take pleasure in sizing Celestine's feet and calves for the perfect fit. The erotic and nostalgic power of the boots becomes stronger in the scene of Rabour's suicide—he clings to the boots as if they are a lover or a pet that he can cuddle in the last moments of his life. Buñuel also presents certain objects through the obsessions of the characters.

Madame Monteil obsesses over her perfumes, lamps, and containers (many of which are round like breasts), and Monteil compulsively hunts with his rifle (a common phallic fetish in Buñuel's films). It could also be argued that certain foods are eroticized as part of the exchanges between Joseph and Celestine, such as throwing the potatoes in the fire or Celestine's refusal to give Joseph an apple after dinner.

*Illustrative Moment: Boots* Celestine tries on her assigned boots and walks in front of Monsieur Rabour in one of the most iconic scenes of the film. Celestine passes by the bedrooms and Rabour comes out and asks the maid to join him. Per his request, she puts on the Rose of the Wind boots. Rabour brags about the quality of the patten leather and asserts that he will enjoy polishing them himself. He tells her he knows that it is a strange "whim", but he asks her to walk around the bedroom. Rabour watches intently and asks her to "make them live." He notices a hole in the sole and promises to fix it. Celestine collapses in an arm chair and starts to fall asleep while Rabour removes the boots and walks away, irritated.



## RELATIONSHIPS

**Motherhood** Several of the female characters in the film adopt maternal behaviors even though none of them have biological children. Celestine stands in for Claire's absent mother and neglectful aunt up until her murder: Celestine feeds her, comforts her, and gives her shelter in her own room. Celestine's crusade for justice also suggests a maternal fierceness towards Claire. Although Mauger and Joseph espouse traditional views and propose to Celestine, neither of them brings up a desire to have children with her. Monsieur Monteil does not seem to crave children; he is fixated on sexual conquest instead. As literary and film critic Peter William Evans notes, the maternal instincts of the female characters manifest themselves in their interactions with their lovers and husbands. Madame Monteil bosses around and controls her husband as if she were his mother, and Rose describes Mauger as an immature child on more than one occasion. Both Celestine and Rose serve the men who desire them. This oedipal (and potentially toxic) dynamic is explored in many of Buñuel's films.

*Illustrative Moment: Tucking Claire in bed* Madame Monteil scolds her husband in a maternal fashion while Celestine feeds and tucks in Claire. After dinner, Celestine leaves with the tea cups, and Madame Monteil approaches her husband. She warns him not to pursue Celestine and reminds him that she had to pay off the last servant whom he impregnated. Monteil argues that Celestine probably has city diseases, and Madame Monteil replies: "I know you." Rabour, irritated at their fighting, leaves the game and goes to bed. Meanwhile, Celestine tucks Claire into the servant's bed and defiantly applies a generous amount of her Parisian perfume.



## FLAWS

**Obsession** With the possible exception of Mauger, all of the male characters have sexual compulsions. Monteil persists in trying to seduce Celestine and corners Marianne in the chicken coop, even though his wife constantly surveils him. In order to fill the gap when he does not seduce Celestine, Monteil becomes a gambling and hunting addict. Rabour remains obsessed with his shoe collection, and Joseph pursues the twin obsessions of a owning a business with Celestine and inflicting pain and dominating others. Madame Monteil is arguably the most obsessive-compulsive within the family, as her obsessions extend to personal hygiene, finances, domestic chores, antiques, and make-up. The implication is that the rich and bourgeois have the means and the time to be excentric. In other words, obsession indicates a privileged and indulgent lifestyle.

*Illustrative Moment: Lust* Monsieur Monteil tries to seduce Celestine yet again, then moves on to coaxing his wife. However, she is too preoccupied with her ablutions to give in. When Celestine goes to bed, Monteil jumps out and whispers at her intently. Celestine merely says "Good night" and keeps walking up the stairs. Agitated, Monteil knocks on his wife's bedroom door. When he enters, he sees Madame Monteil



brushing her hair at the make-up curio. He looks at the bed, and the camera shows Madame Monteil through the mirror's reflection. Then, the camera cuts to a normal shot of the couple side by side. Monteil squeezes her shoulder and says "Listen, dear." She replies "Leave me alone", and Monteil storms out and slams the door.

**Dishonesty** On the one hand, the small-town atmosphere of the Monteil's estate prevents anyone from keeping a secret or hiding a scandal. In this way, an attempt to hide the truth seems counter-productive. For example, the whole town is well aware of Monteil's affair with his last servant (the Jezuro girl). Nonetheless, the men in *Diary of a Chambermaid* effectively use lies to cover up their crimes. Joseph blatantly lies about Claire multiple times, and his testimony overcomes the circumstantial evidence against him. Mauger lies at court about his vandalism and asserts that his status as a soldier will protect him. Moreover, he is more than eager to frame Monteil for Claire's death by fabricating false testimony. Celestine also lies regularly about her compliance with Madame Monteil's mandates, and she falsely promises to marry Joseph while she plants evidence against him. In the end, there is little accountability for the immoral behavior and crimes of any of the characters.

*Illustrative Moment: Lies* Captain Mauger tries to frame Monteil for Claire's murder by eliciting false testimony from Rose and Celestine. Celestine goes on errands and runs into Captain Mauger, who is irritated that Rose is spending his money. She chides him for throwing garbage over the hedge when they were going to the funeral. He replies by suggesting that Celestine accuse Monteil of indecent exposure or sexual harassment. The captain asserts that he will serve as a witness, and the group's accusations will link Monteil to Claire's rape and murder. Celestine rejects his plan and starts to leave. The captain chases after her and invites her to visit him when Rose is out.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. The major plot point of Claire's murder is not in Mirbeau's novel, nor did it appear in any of the other adaptations of *Diary of a Chambermaid*. What is the purpose of this addition?
2. How do you interpret the sex drive and desire of the female characters? Do they want sex with the men who are pursuing, harassing, dominating or proposing to them, or is sex a means to an end?
3. How does Buñuel juxtapose the characters' right-wing ideologies with his own political message?
4. What is the effect of the shots of passing countryside from the train in the beginning of the film? What about the abrupt, skipping cuts of the protest march at end of the film?
5. What is the symbolism of animals and insects in this particular film? Consider, in particular, the characterization of Claire as both innocent orphan and Little Red Riding Hood.
6. How do you interpret the second-to-last scene with Celestine and Mauger at the house? What is the message expressed when Celestine (and the viewer) realizes that Joseph got away with murder?