

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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***Tristana* (1970)**

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 three satirical dramas loosely based on nineteenth-century Spanish novels: *Nazarín* (1959), which depicts an ineffective priest in rural Mexico, *Viridiana* (1961), in which a young novice lives on her uncle's estate and becomes sexually corrupted, and the subject of this essay, *Tristana* (1970). 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 *Tristana* (1970) is set in Toledo, Spain in the 1920s and 1930s. The title character is a young woman who lives with her heretical and morally challenged guardian, Don Lope. As with many of his films in the 1950s and 1960s, Buñuel wrote the screenplay with his long-time collaborator Julio Alejandro. Although the story is adapted from Benito Pérez Galdós's novel *Tristana* (1892), Buñuel frames Galdós's narrative in a twentieth-century context by evoking strikes and socialist movements at the turn of the century, the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera (1923-1930), and the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). In addition, Buñuel's interpretation acts as an allegory for the decadent years of the Francoist regime. According to the critic Víctor Fuentes, Don Lope's death at the end of the film symbolizes the death of the Spanish dictatorship, as well as the draconian Catholic dogma that dominated Spain since the Spanish Civil War. Along with several political references, Buñuel nods to multiple literary and artistic traditions throughout the history of Spain. This homage to Spanish culture is hardly surprising given that Buñuel characterized *Tristana* as his most authentically Spanish film.

Background After a long exile in Mexico, Buñuel returned to Spain in the 1960s and made several of his most impactful films in his homeland. *Tristana* was filmed in Toledo and even includes a shot of the old city during the opening credits. The director cast one of his favorite male actors, Fernando Rey, as the lustful Don Lope, and this casting echoes Rey's turn as the obsessive uncle Don Jaime in *Viridiana* a few years earlier. *Tristana* is played by Catherine Deneuve--one of the director's perennial favorites. Buñuel marveled at Deneuve's enigmatical aura, describing her thusly: "as beautiful as death, as seductive as sin, and as cold as virtue." *Tristana* won critical acclaim and was nominated for best foreign film at the 43rd Academy Awards. Although Buñuel did not take home the Oscar, the director and cast won multiple awards throughout Spain, including the Premios CEC and Sant Jordi awards for best film of 1970.

CHARACTERS

<i>Tristana</i>	The beautiful ward of Don Lope
<i>Don Lope</i>	Widower and <i>Tristana</i> 's guardian and lover
<i>Horacio</i>	Painter and <i>Tristana</i> 's lover
<i>Saturna</i>	Don Lope's maid
<i>Saturno</i>	The deaf teenager who works on Don Lope's estate
<i>Don Cosme</i>	Don Lope's friend and advisor
<i>Armanda</i>	Don Lope's wealthy sister

SYNOPSIS

As a young woman in Toledo, Tristana lives a sheltered life in the home of her guardian, Don Lope. Because of the death of her mother, Tristana rarely leaves the house except to go on walks with Saturna, Don Lope's maid.

Although Tristana adheres to social norms with respect to her gender, Don Lope openly defies the mores of 1920s Catholic Spain. He initially refuses to marry Tristana or any woman, and he proclaims that men are not subject to the same rules of morality as women. In accordance with this philosophy, Don Lope seduces Tristana and expects her to stay at home. Tristana initially gives in until she meets the artist Horacio.

Tristana and Horacio arrange secret meetings, but Don Lope quickly discovers the affair. The lovers leave town and make plans for their new life together. Tristana injures her leg and develops a tumor, and she asks to move back in with Don Lope a few years later. Don Lope allows Tristana to move back in, and she has a surgery to amputate her leg. Horacio says that he will visit her but ends up leaving Toledo and abandoning Tristana.

Don Lope and Tristana eventually marry and continue to live together frigidly. One night, Tristana awakens to Don Lope's cries of pain. She pretends to call the doctor but never makes the call, and she watches him die in bed. The final scene is a series of flashback clips from earlier in the film, ending with the opening scene of Tristana and Saturna walking across the plaza in their mourning clothes.

SCENES

Tristana and Saturna Hire Saturno Tristana and Saturna, dressed in mourning clothes, walk through Toledo. As they approach a boy's school, the camera cuts to the students playing soccer in uniform. One of the students, Saturno, gets into a fight after tripping one of the other boys. When the principal breaks up the fight, we see Saturno signing angrily and realize that he is deaf and somewhat of a troublemaker. Tristana approaches him and starts a conversation in sign language. Saturno asks why she is wearing a black veil, and Tristana replies that her mother just passed. Saturna recommends that the troubled boy work on Don Lope's estate as a skilled laborer, and the principal agrees that the student can be a good craftsman with practice.

Selling the Trinkets Don Lope walks home himself, eyeing a young woman who passes him. She scoffs at him, remarking that he is too old to be her boyfriend. Don Lope replies that he isn't dead yet. Upon returning to Don Lope's estate, Tristana and Saturna greet Don Lope, who is rummaging through various household items. He insists that the women sell the objects for less than they are worth. Tristana unpacks some of her own items, including her mother's crucifix and portrait. Don Lope says that he will allow her to keep some personal items, including objects of superstition. Saturna argues that they should not sell the pots, as they are useful for cooking. The maid also suggests that Tristana should continue living in the house for support and comfort, and Don Lope agrees.



Selling the Silver Don Lope has an appraiser look at the portrait and a set of silver tea trays and jugs. The appraiser offers him a cheap price, and Don Lope refuses to barter. Saturna and Cosme warn Lope that the silver is worth much more money. Don Lope does not heed their suggestions, saying that all businessmen and appraisers are bloodsuckers.

An Incident with the Police Don Lope escorts Tristana on their daily walks when they hear a commotion in the street. They see a young thief running away with a black purse. When one of the policemen asks if they saw a thief, Don Lope describes the boy but gestures in the wrong direction. The policemen run down the wrong street. Tristana asks why he lied to the police, and Don Lope replies that it is necessary to protect the weak from authority figures.

Don Lope's Bad Marriage Tristana and Saturna organize the household objects to be sold, and Tristana finds a frame with a portrait of Don Lope's late wife. She remarks that the woman was very beautiful, and Saturna indicates that the late wife humiliated Don Lope by cuckolding him. Surprised, Tristana knocks over white dye and kneels down to wipe it up. When Don Lope enters the room, he tells Tristana to let Saturna clean it up. Tristana greets him and offers to bring him his slippers. When she does so, Don Lope calls her an angel and his special daughter, and he tells her to think of him like a father. The doorbell rings, and Don Lope lets in his colleagues even though he has already put on his slippers. Together, the three men discuss the time and place of the boxing match.

Lack of Devotion Tristana, Saturno, and Saturno's friend are on the balcony looking at a view of Toledo, and the boys start pinching and kissing her. She starts hitting them and chases them inside. The laborer is preparing dinner, and Tristana asks if she can try some. He introduces Tristana to a humble peasant dish with migas, or chunks of stale bread. While they eat, he comments that the bells no longer inspire faith or devotion among the townspeople. Whereas the tolling of the bells used to remind the townspeople of their religious routines and alert them to fires or funerals, the Toledans merely ignore the ringing and rush about their lives.

Nightmare The next scene shows Tristana and the boys climbing the bell tower. When she arrives at the top, she sees that Don Lope's severed head is the primary bell. Tristana starts awake, realizing that it was a nightmare. Saturna and Don Lope comfort her, and Don Lope remarks that she always had bad nightmares.



Gender Roles at the Gentlemen's Club Don Lope strolls across the plaza and enters his favorite club. He sits down at a table with his friends, including Don Cosme. Don Lope notes a moment of awkwardness and jokes that the men must have been gossiping about him. They deny it, saying that even though they have run out of topics to discuss, Don Lope hasn't come up. The men smoke and discuss virtue and sin. Don Lope proclaims that while the Catholic mandates of virtue apply to women, men should enjoy greater freedoms. The other men at the table concur.

Don Lope's Demands at Dinner Tristana is practicing piano on the table since they sold the piano. She is interrupted by Saturna yelling at Saturno to get out of the bathroom. He eventually does so and Saturna chides him all the way to the front door. That night at dinner, Don Lope notices that there is only one egg and not enough food to share. He gives the last egg to Tristana, and Saturna complains that there is not enough money to prepare proper meals. While they are squabbling over the budget, Tristana becomes agitated, and Don Lope asks her what is wrong. Saturna answers that she is still in mourning and won't leave the house. Don Lope tells Tristana that she must remain at home, but that she must also end her mourning. He also says that he will take her on a shopping trip to enhance her wardrobe. Tristana dips a piece of phallic-shaped bread in an egg yolk.



Looking at the Columns During one of their many strolls, Tristana and Lope examine the columns on the periphery of the plaza. Tristana asks him which column he likes best, and Don Lope answers that they are all the same. When they enter the church, Tristana leans over Juan Pardo de Tavera's (one of the primary Inquisitors of the early 16th century) tomb while Don Lope observes her. Outside of the church, Don Lope asks Tristana whether she likes him or even loves him. Tristana replies that she could love him a little. He kisses her passionately, and she pulls away, giggling slightly.



Night of Seduction Don Lope enters Tristana's room while she is folding laundry. He tries to embrace her, and she resists slightly, saying she is not finished. Don Lope tells her to ignore her chores and kisses her passionately. Tristana looks at the door, worried that Saturna might walk in. Don Lope assures her that Saturna is asleep, and he escorts her into the bedroom. The camera pans around the walls of the bedroom and reveals Tristana taking off her dress in front of Don Lope. While Tristana proceeds to unhook her garters, Don Lope picks up the dog from the center of the bed and gently throws him.



Don Lope's Cold Saturno hides from the police as they chase a group of strikers in front of the estate. When he enters, Saturna warns him that he can't keep getting in trouble. Saturna and Saturno enter Don Lope's room, and they watch as Tristana tends to his cough. Don Lope asks why Saturno has bruises, and he surmises that the boy is an abused worker like the masses. He explains that he empathizes with the oppressed workers and is relieved that he has never had to work. Meanwhile, Tristana eats another humble dinner and plays with garbanzo beans.

Meeting Horacio Tristana and Saturna go for a stroll, and Tristana complains that she cannot bear Don Lope's tyranny much longer. As they walk down a side street, they hear neighbors complaining about a rabid dog. The camera follows a black dog calmly walking up the cobbled street. Saturna follows, interested in hearing what is happening. Tristana walks towards the plaza and sees Horacio painting a portrait. She watches as the artist adjusts the pose of his subject: a Catalan in a red beret standing next to a donkey. The camera cuts in between Horacio and Tristana's conversation and the dust up over the rabid dog. A policeman approaches with a gun, then we see a panoramic side view of Tristana and Horacio talking in the plaza. The camera cuts to the policeman reporting that he shot the dog, and the Saturna enters the plaza and takes Tristana home. On the walk home, Tristana admits that she "said yes" to everything Horacio asked, including meeting with him on another day.



Confrontations in the Park Don Lope and Tristana are taking their daily walk in the park. Don Lope confronts Tristana about her absences and tells her that he suspects her of an affair. He threatens that he will kill her if she betrays him. As Don Lope is threatening Tristana, he sees his sister walking past and runs up to her. He asks her for money, and his sister replies that she does not support heretics. They trade insults, and Don Lope leaves saying "you can keep your money."



Saturno in the Forge Saturna and Tristana visit the smelting building and inquire after Saturno. The foreman says that he disappeared and has been missing for an hour. They go outside and knock on the door. When Saturno exists, Saturna admonishes him for shirking his work.

Visiting Horacio Tristana arrives at Horacio's apartment-studio for a tryst. She confesses to him that Don Lope is not merely her tutor, but rather her lover, pseudo-husband and father-figure. Tristana explains that they are married in practice if not by law, and that she has developed a love-hate relationship with Don Lope. Tristana professes her love for Horacio, explaining that he actually respects her. Horacio responds by throwing Tristana out, but just as she is about to leave, he reconsiders. They kiss in front of the open door.



Throwing Out the Slippers Back at the house, Saturna is cleaning up from dinner. Don Lope is about to leave and scolds Tristana for not being a proper wife. He demands that she take his slippers to the bedroom. When he leaves, Tristana fetches the slippers but proceeds to throw them in the trash.

Kissing in the Street Tristana and Horacio are walking in the street at night. They discuss their plans for the future, and Tristana suggests that she could teach piano lessons while he painted. They begin to embrace and kiss in the street. A pair of old men pass by and admonish them for being indecent.



Confrontation at the House When Tristana returns to the house flushed one night, Don Lope asked whether she ran back. She answers yes, and he remarks that she looks very beautiful in that moment. He accuses her again of adultery, saying that she is acting like a “dog (bitch) with a bone.” He also warns her of staining her honor, and Tristana retorts that it was he who dishonored her long before.



Packing for Barcelona Tristana and Horacio are packing their suitcases in the artist’s studio. They discuss their plans for the future, and Horacio suggests marriage. Tristana rejects the idea, instead promising to stay with Horacio as long as he still loves her. The artist describes her resistance as the influence of the old man. When they hear that Don Lope is in front of the studio, Horacio goes down to confront him. They exchange accusations, and Horacio calls him a dirty old man. Don Lope slaps him with his glove, and Horacio punches him in the face. Don Lope collects himself, and the camera follows his retreat uphill on the cobbled street.



Boarding the Train Saturna sees off Tristana and Horacio at the train station. As the wave goodbye, Saturna enters the depot where Don Lope is waiting. Saturna leaves with him as Don Lope predicts: “she’ll be back.”

Sister’s Funeral A few years later, we see clusters of Toledans in mourning walking through the streets. A few moments later, we see a visibly aged Don Lope walking with Don Cosme. Lope bemoans the fact that he is being judged for not attending his sister’s funeral, explaining how they were estranged until the end. Don Cosme reminds him that he will still inherit his sister’s fortune, and the money will give him a comfort in his old age.

The New House The aged Don Lope is now living in his sister’s big house. He is sitting at the dinner table getting drunk when Saturna enters. Don Lope brags that he was able to buy back the silver jugs and trays that he sold at a loss before. Saturna tells him that she has been avoiding the subject, but that she must now tell him the situation. She explains that Tristana is downstairs, with Horacio, and that she wants to see him. She adds that Tristana has a problem with her leg and is in poor condition.



Don Lope and Horacio Make Plans When Don Lope meets Horacio in the parlor, the artist explains that Tristana has a tumor in her leg that has rendered her disabled. Horacio also tells Don Lope that Tristana wants to live with him again, and that he will leave Toledo. Don Lope replies that Tristana needs his presence, and he will allow Horacio to visit her. The artist agrees to stay in Toledo and visit Tristana daily. Don Lope proclaims to himself: “She won’t escape me now.”

Doctor’s Visit While Don Lope moves in a new piano, Tristana lays in bed with extreme pain. The doctor examines her and tells her it is common to have this sort of leg injury. When he leaves the room, the doctor admits to Don Lope that Tristana is in grave condition. He recommends an amputation surgery and that Tristana confess to a priest. Don Lope resists the suggestion, remarking that even though Jesus was the first socialist, he can’t help in this situation. Saturno enters and signs angrily at Don Lope after the doctor leaves.



Horacio's Last Visit Don Lope meets Horacio in a restaurant. The guardian reminds Horacio that Tristana needs him to visit and that he should come in the evening. Horacio replies that he will visit her in the afternoons. That day, Horacio visits Tristana while she is playing the piano with one leg. He tells her that he will leave for a month. She chides him for leaving her in the house, and he leaves without more of a goodbye. Saturna enters to tell Tristana to wear her prosthetic that she left on the sofa.



The Priest's Advice A few years later, Tristana hobbles out of church with a cane. The priest accompanies her and suggests that she would be happier and more secure if she got married. Tristana scoffs at the idea and continues walking. She sits down outside, and Don Lope approaches. When he bends down to kiss her, Tristana pulls away. Don Lope proceeds to walk home.



Hot Chocolate Back at the house, Don Lope is hosting a group of clergymen at the dining room table. He serves them hot chocolate with churros, and all remark at the quality of the chocolate.



Breasts Tristana is on the balcony looking over the city. Saturno appears below, and he opens his jacket playfully. Tristana responds by opening her shirt and exposing her breasts, which startles Saturno.



The Last Night That night, Tristana and Don Lope cross each other in the hall on their way to bed. Don Lope makes a pass at her, and she responds that it is ridiculous that he thinks he can still seduce her. The next scene is an image of Don Lope's head as the bell in Tristana's recurring nightmare. She starts awake and hears Don Lope crying for her in the other room. When she goes in to check on him, Don Lope cries out that he needs a doctor. Tristana leaves the room and holds the receiver, but she only pretends to make the call to Doctor Miquis. She returns to the room and tells Don Lope that the doctor is coming, but she opens the window to let in the cold, snowy air. As her guardian dies, Tristana has flashes of past embraces (which are scenes from the film going in reverse). The final shot is Saturna and Tristana walking backwards through the plaza in their mourning clothes.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

TRISTANA

Like many of Buñuel's heroines, Tristana incarnates both virgin and whore (in this case, adulteress and seductress). She starts off as a fragile virgin but evolves into a mature lover and later, a defiant woman. She vacillates between freedom and paralysis. At the beginning and end of the film, Tristana struggles to leave the house. It is only during her affair with Horacio that she breaks free from Don Lope and the domestic sphere.

Naive Due to her sheltered upbringing and grief over her mother's death, Tristana lacks experience in the outside world. Her innocence allows her to go along with Don Lope's demands and seduction during the first half of the film. This compliance is shown through the repeated act of fetching Don Lope's slippers and tending to his needs when he is sick or agitated.

Defiant After Don Lope "dishonors" Tristana and she falls in love with Horacio, she openly disobeys Don Lope (and by extension, society's mandates). She does not attempt to hide her affair with Horacio and does not apologize for living in sin with any of the men in her life. Even when she is physically restricted at the end of the film, she flashes Saturno and betrays Don Lope by letting him die in bed.

Strong Despite Tristana's emotional fragility as a young woman and physical restrictions later in life, she still manages to endure. She shows strength in her rejection of social mandates and Don Lope's advances. In addition, her determination to play the piano again without her pedal leg also underscores her perseverance.

DON LOPE

Like Tristana, Don Lope is a contradictory figure in that the viewer both condemns him and empathizes with him. Despite his immoral and hypocritical behaviors and beliefs, Don Lope does extend generosity and kindness towards Tristana and Saturno. The societal condemnation of the dirty old man seems reductive, and the viewer may wonder whether Don Lope truly deserved to die the way he does.

Compassionate Although Don Lope attempts to dominate Tristana, he also shows her and the other characters empathy and kindness. When Tristana is distraught over her mother's death or perpetual nightmares, Don Lope comforts her. When there is not enough money for groceries, he gives Tristana the last egg. After his sister's death, Don Lope buys Tristana a piano. He also allows Tristana to live with him and receive visits from Horacio. This generosity also bears out with his sympathy for the working class: first, when he facilitates the purse snatcher's escape from the police, and later when he counsels Saturno about his rights as a laborer.

Lecherous Don Lope makes no apologies for his love of women and sex. The first time he appears on screen, he is ogling a young woman passing by. When he participates in the tertulias at the gentleman's club, he admits his intentions to sleep with women, even with the rare and delicate flowers (which refers to Tristana). He systematically seduces Tristana as a teenager, and he expects her to provide sex even on the night of his death.

Hypocritical Don Lope eschews all religious and social expectations thrust upon him as a man of occasional wealth and power. Nonetheless, he expects Tristana to behave as a proper wife—at home with a broken leg. When he realizes that Tristana has a lover, he condemns her for her dishonor and acting like “a dog with a bone.” He completely fails to acknowledge that her dishonor derives from the night he took her virginity.

HORACIO

Even though Horacio provides the key moment in Tristana's transformation from dutiful daughter to defiant adulteress, his own characterization is not very fleshed out in the film.

Talented Although Horacio does not brag about wealth or status, the implication is that he is a successful and skilled painter. When Tristana meets him in the plaza, he is painting a portrait of a posed Catalan. Horacio adjusts the model's position and posture in such a way that the viewer infers that he is well trained. When Tristana and Horacio meet for their trysts, Horacio reveals that he has a studio and an apartment, along with enough wealth and stability for them to live together in Barcelona.

Persuasive Despite Tristana's fear of the public sphere and disobeying Don Lope, Horacio convinces Tristana to meet him at his house right after they met. Later, he convinces her to run away with him to Barcelona. Even with their violent encounter, Horacio is able to persuade Don Lope to take in Tristana and tend to her injury.

SATURNA

As the primary servant of the estate, Saturna is the lynchpin that keeps both of Don Lope's households intact. She is the character who facilitates Don Lope's emotional and economic survival after the death of his wife, and she is also the person who acts as Tristana's escort and confidant. In addition, Saturna is also the character who takes in and disciplines Saturno.

Loyal Along with performing her daily duties, Saturna acts as a counselor for the other members of the household. She assists and nurses Tristana during all of her different stages, and she stays with Don Lope as both a somewhat destitute Lothario and as a wealthy inheritor.

Resourceful As part of her loyalty, Saturna frequently makes suggestions for the wellbeing of those who live in the house. She is the one who first suggests that Tristana and Don Lope should live and care for each other, and she also facilitates Saturno's “internship” at the house. In addition, it is Saturna who often finds solutions to the problems in both estates. She manages to keep the pots and pans and cook meals on a limited budget. Later, she facilitates Tristana's return to the house and helps her learn how to use her prosthetic leg.

SATURNO

Unlike the other characters, Saturno remains stagnant in his characterization as a rebellious teenager. He continues to work as a laborer off and on and chase after Tristana.

Defiant Saturno refuses to work and often hides inside a room for hours at a time. He confronts everyone around him, and he participates in the workers' strikes frequently. He continues to sign at those around him even when the communication is limited.

Vibrant Despite his deafness, Saturno is the character least affected by aging and injury. His sex drive seems unaltered throughout the film.

THEMES

SOCIETY

Gender

The Angel of the Hearth: Galdós and other Spanish authors frequently commented on the role of women in nineteenth-century society. The common expectation was that women remained in the domestic sphere and rarely leave the house. This ideal position for women was deemed *ángel del hogar*, or angel of the hearth. Should a woman enter the public sphere (in particular, urban streets), she was in immediate danger of dishonor and moral contamination. This attitude is reflected throughout the film in Don Lope's mandates and Tristana's actions (first, as an innocent virgin afraid to leave the domestic sphere, then as an adulteress who ventures out into the streets to meet her lover).

Virgin versus seductress: Tristana evolves as a character throughout the film. At first, she epitomizes a pure virgin and faithful daughter to Don Lope. After Don Lope seduces her, Tristana experiences a sexual awakening and defiance which is incited by her affair with Horacio. When she returns to Don Lope and his new home, Tristana resigns herself to her position but also remains defiant: she refuses to sleep with Don Lope, and she entertains the idea of seducing Saturno.

Religion: Heresy Although Don Lope expects Tristana to remain the angel of the hearth, he does not hold himself to any standard of piety, purity, or spousal responsibility. His initial refusal to marry Tristana or any second wife cements his position as a heretic in the town's eyes. While his friends at the male tertulia sympathize with his position, Don Lope's sister has effectively disowned him for his unchristian behavior. When presented with Catholic relics, prayer, or scripture, Don Lope immediately dismisses them as superstition. This attitude influences Tristana's own *laissez-faire* attitude towards marriage and sexuality in the second half of the film.

Class

Socialism Throughout the film, Buñuel alludes to the history of strikes and socialist activism in early twentieth-century Spain. The police chase a purse snatcher early in the film, and later, they chase a group of strikers down the street. Saturno breaks off from the group and hides in Don Lope's house. In the following scene, Don Lope notices Saturno's bruises and condemns the police brutality. He also comments on workers' rights. When pressured to bring a priest into his house to give last rites to Tristana, Don Lope remarks that Jesus was the first socialist. Buñuel himself had an affinity for socialism, as it often aligned with avant-garde expression in the 1920s and 1930s.

Wealth Although Don Lope starts off as a socialist who does not value household objects, he ends up as a rich old man who cares for both money and possessions. Whereas Don Lope refuses to work or marry in his middle age, he eventually marries Tristana and lives in his sister's home. In addition, he makes an effort to buy back all of the objects that Tristana and Saturno sold in the first half of the film: most symbolically, a piano for Tristana to play and the silver serving set that he sold under value. By the film's conclusion, he has acquired wealth and comfort but cannot buy Tristana's affection, nor can he stave off death.

POLITICS

Power: Along with the power dynamics of class and social standing, Buñuel consistently underscores the power struggles between Don Lope and Tristana and Don Lope and his sister, Armanda. As the father figure and Don Juan seducer, Don Lope dominates Tristana initially. However, his lack of a fortune also places him at the mercy of his sister. When Tristana declares her independence and leaves, she has agency briefly. Her eventual return as a disabled wife can be interpreted in various ways: first, that she has been weakened physically and psychologically and has resigned herself to being caged in the domestic sphere; or, that Tristana retains power through her insolence, the legal marriage, and the psychological (castrating) fear that her missing leg and prosthetic produces. There is little ambiguity to Don Lope's loss of power at the end of the film: he is weak and sickly, Tristana denies him sex and affection, and he has given into society's expectations regarding marriage and obedience.

RELATIONSHIPS

Marriage: The main characters in the film, with the possible exception of Horacio, eschew marriage as a construct of control. Don Lope characterizes marriage as imprisonment of men and a method of subservience mandated by the Church. Tristana prefers not to marry either of her lovers and only marries Don Lope out of semi-resignation.

Love: While the main characters lust after each other at different moments in their lives and relationships, it is unclear whether they actually experience love for one another. When Don Lope takes on the role of a father figure, his affectionate and protective behavior towards Tristana indicates that he feels more for her than sexual passion. Tristana also shows affection as a daughter and briefly as his lover. Horacio and Tristana seem to be in love, but the painter's blasé attitude towards Tristana after her injury indicates that perhaps it was only infatuation. Conversely, Don Lope's willingness to take in (and later marry) Tristana, while at least partially motivated by wanting to dominate her, also indicates that he does retain a pure love for her.

Sexuality

Sexuality Practices Tristana has sex with both men outside of marriage, thereby destroying her potential to be the angel of the hearth (see the **Gender** section below). Although her sexual encounters are consensual, both Don Lope and Horacio seduce and manipulate her through a calculated seduction. Saturno and his friend ogle and grope Tristana. In two different scenes, Saturno has to kick Saturno out of the bathroom where he has been masturbating. Later, Tristana gains "higher ground" by flashing Saturno from the balcony. Ironically, Tristana and Don Lope do not have sex after they are officially married.

Adultery: Don Lope begins the film as a cuckolded widower who has lost power and credibility. While he does not marry Tristana until the end of the film, he expects her to act as the proper wife in the domestic sphere. When she leaves the house to have an affair with Horacio, Tristana and Horacio commit adultery by practice if not by law. The characters' blasé attitude towards sexual encounters and adultery underscores Buñuel's social criticism of Spanish hypocrisy.

Don Juan: At the beginning of the film Don Lope presents himself as the quintessential Don Juan. He does not need marriage or a relationship, and he frees himself of the mandates of Catholic morality. He seduces Tristana as a young virgin and implies that he has had multiple lovers in his life. Like the Don Juans of the 17th-19th century, Don Lope suffers the consequences for his sexual conquests—he cannot escape death or condemnation.

Fetishism As in many of Buñuel's films, clothing, accessories, and objects are invested with sexual undertones and symbolic meaning in *Tristana*. There are several phallic objects that either underscore Don Lope's virility (or lack thereof): the silver rapiers, house slippers, and bell clapper. In addition, Buñuel also uses phallic objects in relation to Tristana in the last third of the film: her crutches, the piano pedals, and her prosthetic leg. The men fetishize Tristana by dressing her up like a doll, focusing on her legs (even before her surgery), and painting her as an object of the male gaze.

PYSCHOLOGY

Honor and Dishonor: The concept of adultery / illicit sexual activity as staining male honor stretches back to the Spanish Renaissance. Once a woman was marked by the stain, even if she did not commit adultery, her dishonor automatically contaminates her husband's bloodline (along with ruining his reputation). Although Don Lope does not adhere to the prescribed mandates of marriage, he does show concern about Tristana's dishonor.

Loneliness: Although Don Lope and Tristana live together, their estranged relationship perpetuates their isolation. Both characters also suffer from betrayal and abandonment: Tristana loses her mother and Horacio leaves her to languish in the new house, and Don Lope suffers from his first wife's adultery, his sister's condemnation, and Tristana's disdain and indifference

CHANGE

Transience: The dynamics of power, love, and sexuality change and evolve over the course of the film. Except for Saturno, the characters age and change physically and psychologically (see the **Psychology** and **Life Stages** sections below). In addition, the nature of the relationships change. Don Lope and Tristana's relationship evolves from father-daughter affection to lust and pseudo-marriage, to a break-up, to a toxic reunion. In Buñuel's interpretation, Tristana ends in a place of resentment and hate. Horacio's love for Tristana wanes over time, although we are not privy to the details of their cooled passion.

Sickness and Disability Nearly all of the characters suffer some sort of physical ailment or disability, and the sickness is often linked to the characters' sin or immorality. From the very first scene, the viewer connects Saturno's deafness to his wild and unruly nature, and he regularly engages in many of the seven deadly sins: anger, sloth (Saturno and Tristana frequently catch him avoiding work and hiding), and lust (he grabs and ogles Tristana several times and is masturbating throughout the film). Don Lope leads a life full of debauchery and heresy, and he is punished in his old age with a chronic cold, a limp, and a somewhat violent death in bed. Tristana suffers the punishment of restriction both literally (the loss of a leg) and emotionally/ socially (she is trapped inside with Don Lope until his death). The characters' refusal to repent or confess their sins locks in their respective fates.

LIFE STAGES

Adolescence: Tristana and Saturno incarnate the spirit and innocence of youth for the majority of the film. Tristana is the innocent flower who is "dishonored" by Don Lope before she turned twenty. While the seduction drastically changes Tristana's behavior, she acts as the dutiful daughter-lover to Don Lope for several years. Saturno's characterization is based on his extended adolescence: he is always fighting, running, and grabbing at / ogling Tristana. Even when Tristana and Don Lope have aged drastically, Saturno remains frozen in a state of immature youth.

Old Age: Very early in their relationship, Tristana perceives Don Lope as an old man. Even after their relationship becomes sexual, Tristana thinks of her guardian as a father figure. Don Lope, conversely, imagines himself to be somewhat young and virile. Eventually, Don Lope cannot avoid the telltale signs of aging and encroaching death: his severe cold, his white mustache, and his need of a cane. Tristana also ages from her disability and bitterness—she becomes a sort of wilted flower by the film's end.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How do Tristana and Don Lope change and evolve over the course of the film?
2. Consider the frequent use of food imagery and metaphor in *Tristana*: the migas dish, the one remaining egg, the garbanzo beans, and the hot chocolate. Why are there so many close ups and discussions about food?
3. How does Buñuel critique Spanish culture and government in this film? Do you agree that Don Lope could represent the dictators in twentieth-century Spain?
4. If the novel *Tristana* is set in the late nineteenth century and the film was made in 1969-1970, why did Bunuel set the action in the 1920s and 1930s?
5. In his early years as a filmmaker (the 1920s and 1930s), Buñuel was considered at the vanguard of the surrealist movement. Look up a few key traits of surrealism. Do you see surrealist

techniques or images in this film? HINT: some scholars point to Buñuel's mimicking of Dalí paintings in certain shots.

6. Unlike other Buñuel films, *Tristana* has no music or soundtrack aside from the scene where Tristana plays the piano. Why do you think Buñuel made that choice?
7. How is Buñuel in dialogue with other filmmakers of the 1960s and 1970s? Do you see similar stylistic choices to other European auteurs such as Saura, Godard, Felini, and Hitchcock?