HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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Themes in **Bunuel**'s Films

Contents

Society

Class Buñuel's commentary on class usually consists of satirizing the bourgeoisie. The characters remain securely within the confines of their homes, or if they venture outside, they convene in restaurants and bars. When the privileged live in the country, they enjoy hunting or leisurely walks through the forest. Despite (or perhaps because of) their level of comfort, the bourgeois characters often long for a subversive activity or the opportunity to indulge in taboo sexuality. This unsatisfied desire becomes a motivating force in both Buñuel early surrealist films as well as his later French *oeuvre*; however, the erotically-charged protagonists rarely gain satisfaction. In some specific cases, Buñuel also exposes the blight of poverty on both rural and urban society. In his quasi-documentaries *Land Without Bread* (1933) and *The Young and the Damned* (1950), Buñuel reveals the extreme challenges and tragedies with which the poor must contend: hunger, desperation, disease, disability, and victimization.

Religion Along with the frequent critique of the bourgeoisie, Buñuel satirizes the Catholic Church and religious doctrine in nearly all of his films. At times, Buñuel takes aim at the Catholic rituals that the characters perform, many of which result in little positive effect. A frequent target of Buñuel's dubious attitudes towards Catholicism is the enactment of the Eucharist, featured prominently in both *Belle de Jour* (1967) and the *Milky Way* (1969). The frequent inclusion of priests, monks, and nuns in Buñuel's films only serve to underscore the lack of logic, morality, or humility among the clergy. Even when the protagonists attempt to administer to the poor or troubled, such as the nun Viridiana and the priest Nazario, the clergy end up raped, beaten, or robbed. Biblical stories and early Christian prophets provide the foundation for several of the plotlines of Buñuel's films, from the parallels with Jesus's life in *Nazarín* (1959*)* and *The Milky Way* (1969) to the story of ascetic Simon in *Simon of the Desert* (1965). The female characters frequently embody the virtue and chastity of the Virgin Mary (at least initially), then give into the man's or their own desire and sexual curiosity. There are also a handful of prostitutes (most overtly Ándara in *Nazarín*) who are obvious references to Mary Magdalene. Although these biblically-themed films pay homage to the source text, the virtuous characters often become disillusioned when they fail to compel their flock to change their ways. Neither the Church nor the scriptures nor rituals save the characters—they often end up in a worse condition or circumstance then where they started.

Nature and Science As a student of agronomy and lover of insects, Buñuel regularly emphasized flora and fauna—sometimes to contextualize a farm or ranch setting, and sometimes to construct a jarring surrealist nightmare or avant-garde sequence (see Bestial Imagery in the *Storytelling Devices* section below for more). The inclusion of insects and beasts enhanced the creations of Buñuel's rural worlds: the mountainous villages and forests of Las Hurdes in *Land Without Bread* (1933), the

tropics of the lush yet foreboding island in *Robinson Crusoe* (1954), the foreboding mountain mines and lowland jungles of Brazil in *Diamond Hunters* (1956), and the vast country estates and forests in *Susana* (1951), *Viridiana* (1961) and *Diary of a Chambermaid* (1964). Even the dramas and satires set in the heart of Mexico City or Paris contain travel or fantasy sequences that take place in nature. It is clear that Buñuel appreciated natural beauty but also recognized its danger: often, the human characters face death and disease due to exposure, viruses, or predators of the environment. In addition, Buñuel incorporated geographical, biological, or entomological lessons into the plotline of some of his films. When the characters travel (especially on a pilgrimage), Buñuel ensures that the viewers understand the route, landmarks, and landscape of the journey. When the characters work as farmers or ranchers, there is usually at least one monologue in which the male protagonist or secondary character explains their techniques. Despite the illogical surrealist sensibility in Buñuel's *oeuvre*, the director also infused his dramas with an appreciation for scientific methods.

Justice

Crime A common thread in Buñuel's oeuvre is the male protagonist's desire for violent sexual conquest. The characters who indulge their Ids end up attacking the women they desire, from the Man chasing the Young Girl around the apartment in *An Andalusian Dog* (1929), to Francisco strangling his wife Gloria in *This Strange Passion* (1953), to Archibaldo fantasizing about strangling, stabbing, and incinerating the attractive women he encounters in *Rehearsal of a Crime* (1955). Rape and murder abound in Buñuel's rural settings, as well, including the attempted gang rape of Viridiana by the rural vagabonds, the immoral seduction of Evalyn by her adult male guardian in *The Young One* (1960), and the rape and murder of the young girl Claire in *Diary of a Chambermaid* (1964). In the quasi documentary *The Young and the Damned* (1950), the slums of Mexico City are replete with criminals and gang violence, the latter leading to two brutal murders. In Buñuel's later movies, there are frequent allusions to terrorist attacks and international drug deals. Whereas Buñuel's earlier films focused more on crime as a symptom of Mexican societal decay, the later films juxtapose large-scale, international crime with bourgeois love and sex.

Injustice Often, the violent crimes committed in nearly all of Buñuel's films (see paragraph above) go unpunished. The homicidal gallants of the 1950s thrillers do not receive punishment for their attempted murders apart from their own nagging conscience. The poor and vulnerable end up bearing rape, theft, and incest, as poverty begets chaos. Two murders, in particular, gnaw at the viewer: the dumped body of the young boy Pedro in the *Young and the Damned* (1950), and the police's nonchalant response to the murder of the young girl Claire in *Diary of a Chambermaid* (1964). The suave criminals of Buñuel's later films profit from their drug deals and kickbacks. Buñuel obliquely criticizes his own dictator (Franco), but also satirizes the growing number of autocratic governments in Latin America. Often, police officials and military men are on the take and complicit with either the gangs or the dictators. We see the rot of corruption and chaos in such films as the *Diamond Hunters* (1956), where the army stages a coup to control the diamond mines, bribes informants, and displaces the miners and their families.

Violence Buñuel frequently explores violence as it relates to taboo sexuality, particularly with regard to sadomasochism and rape. Arguably the most jarring moments of violence, however, occur in the more realistic and less surreal films of Buñuel's early and middle periods. In *Land Without Bread* (1933), Buñuel and his crew filmed a long on-site sequence of a festival in the mountains where bachelors tear off the heads of live roosters. In his other commentary on the effects of poverty, the *Young and the Damned* (1950), the teenage hooligans are constantly committing violent acts on the old, disabled, or each other. There is also the violence that springs from desperation and a fear of death. In both the *Diamond Hunters* (1956) and *Exterminating Angel* (1962), a group of people are trapped without food or water. Some characters commit violence on the weaker members of the group in order to survive.

Politics

Power Clearly, Buñuel pitted himself against the Nationalist dictatorship in Spain, as well as other oppressive regimes in Latin America in the last years of his life. His communist and anarchic sensibilities manifested at first in the shocking avant-garde aesthetic of Spanish surrealism, then later in protest sequences set in the 1920s and 30s (but included in films of the 1960s and 70s). In *Tristana* (1970), the police shut down a union strike and protest. In *Diary of a Chambermaid* (1964), a fascist

parade winds its way down a street while protesters chant “Vive Chiappe”—a specific reference to Buñuel’s standoff with a Parisian chief of police during the run of his controversial film *The Age of Gold* (1930). Buñuel’s films also include a general criticism of ineffectual governments and state bureaucracy. In both *Land Without Bread* (1933) and *The Young and the Damned* (1950), Buñuel included a postscript and prologue, respectively, in which he directly criticizes the Spanish and Mexican governments for not helping the poor people on the edge of society. In the case of Spain, the power at the time were the leftist leaders of the Second Republic (1931-1939), whose in-fighting and inefficiency contributed to the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). In the case of Mexico, Buñuel criticized mid-century modern capitalism and emphasized the fact that peasants and workers had just as poor a quality of life as they did before the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920).

War Buñuel alludes to three wars or conflicts throughout his oeuvre. As a Spanish citizen and long-time exile, the director was an oblique victim of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and subsequent dictatorship (1939-1975). For a brief period, he worked on propaganda films for the Republicans (the leftist party), but left when the Nationalists won the war. This national trauma creeps into some of Buñuel’s films in exile (see Allegory below). When Buñuel first arrived in Mexico City in the 1940s, the population was one generation removed from the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920). The Revolution’s purpose was to redistribute land to the poor and create a sense of Mexican national identity apart from U.S. and European barons, investors, and politicians. However, the modern capitalism at mid-century did not fulfill the promise of the Revolution, which led to the continued oppression of indigenous people and the working class. Buñuel underscores this sociopolitical failure in many of his Mexican films that feature desperate and impoverished characters. Finally, Buñuel’s last few films, although centered on bourgeois sexuality and hypocrisy, also contained references to European and Latin American unrest in the late 60s and early 70s. Fiery union workers and terrorist attacks interrupt the bourgeois trysts and dinners. In *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* (1972), the police arrest the would-be diners and torture a young man presumed to be a terrorist. In these later films, Buñuel acknowledges the residual or current effects of oppressive dictatorships and the political instability of the period.

Allegory As discussed above, Buñuel’s films often offer subtle or overt critiques of capitalism and oppressive dictatorships throughout the twentieth century. In some cases, the conflicts among characters can be interpreted as an allegory for specific political conflicts. Some critics interpret the *Diamond Hunters* (1956) as an allegory for the Spanish Civil War in that the miners are brutally displaced by a general and his military. When the miners resist with violence, the military engages them in battle and executes them. The group who survives is forced to flee to the jungle, which could extend the allegory to Buñuel’s exile. Within Buñuel’s Mexican films set in Mexico, there is the repeated allegory of Mexico’s origin story after the Conquest: la Malinche, the Aztec princess, interprets for and sleeps with Cortés, then marries him and bears the first mestizos of the New World. The veneration towards la Malinche as the mother of Mexico, combined with her characterization as “the raped one” and a traitor, are reflected in the family dynamics of such films as *The Young and the Damned* (1950). In Buñuel’s later French period, the director references the plethora of dictatorships in Latin America and the scourge of the Vietnam War. *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* (1972) is the exemplar of this combination of references. Miranda, the fictional South American country, is a thinly-veiled reference to Argentina or Chile, both of which were rife with coups and right-wing dictatorships. In addition, the bishop, the ghost, and the young soldiers who interact with the diners all tell their tales of the horrors of war, and their descriptions parallel many of the atrocities and PSTD problems of Vietnam.

Sexuality

Introduction:

Sex and sexuality are at the core of nearly all of Buñuel’s films, from his early silent films replete with surrealist images of foreplay, nudity, and not so subtle references to genitalia, to his last films that explore both prosaic and adventurous sex between couples. Even in his Mexican melodramas, Buñuel alludes to the characters’ sexual desire beneath the surface. Regardless of the period, the Spanish director loved to explore the psychology of sexuality. As a foundational Spanish surrealist, Buñuel attempted to exhume repressed sexual desires and kinks—to bring the subconscious mind and the hidden desires of the Id to

light. This essay will address the emotional, mental, social, and physical aspects of sexuality that Buñuel addresses in his *oeuvre.*

Psychology

Madness / Psychosis Buñuel often presents his audiences with two levels of psychological problems. The milder level is that of repressed desires, kinks, obsessions, and in the case of some female characters, frigidity or hysteria (or sometimes both). The characters strive to work out their sexual proclivities either by attempting to stifle them or indulging their desire. Often, neither method leads to sexual satisfaction or happiness. The second, more dangerous level of psychological problems is homicidal tendencies, violence, psychopathy, or complete breaks with reality. Arguably the "craziest" female character in Buñuel's *oeuvre* is Susana, who literally escapes from an insane asylum. Often, the male antiheroes of the 1950s dramas and thrillers indulge in their violent fantasies and completely lack a moral compass. El Jaibo brutally kills two defecting gang members in the neorealistic *The Young and the Damned* (1950), and Archibaldo and Francisco both descend into homicidal and paranoid madness (in *Rehearsal of a Crime* and *This Strange Passion*, respectively). Finally, there are several well-meaning characters who lose their minds due to extreme circumstances, including Beatriz in *Nazarín* (1959), Castin, the old man facing death from exposure in the jungle in *Diamond Hunters* (1956), and the bourgeois guests who remained trapped in the living room without food or water in *The Exterminating Angel* (1962).

Desire and the Gaze The focus on the young, beautiful (and often blond) ingenue as the object of the male gaze is hardly specific to Buñuel's oeuvre, but the director also (on occasion) frames the male characters as objects of the female gaze or desire. In several of Buñuel's later films, the older Don Juan character acts as a father figure to the young woman, then seduces her or coerces her into a sexual relationship. She rebels by pursuing or sleeping with a young buck. We see iterations of this erotic triangle of desire in films ranging from the melodramatic thriller *Susana* (1951) to Bunuel's last film, *That Obscure Object of Desire* (1977). The young woman gains some agency by rejecting the older man's advances and exploring her own sexual desires with other men. In some cases, such as in the melodrama *Susana*, the female lead is the seductress. In other cases, the female characters wrestle with their own taboo sexuality and lusting after what they cannot have, such as the Young Girl characters in Buñuel's silent films, the erotically-charged peasant Beatriz in *Nazarín* (1959), or the afternoon prostitute Séverine in *Belle de Jour* (1967). Whether the desire emanates from the male or female protagonist (or both), Buñuel's characters frequently unleash their illicit desires and fantasies after a long period of repression.

Fetishism Like Hitchcock and many other directors of his generation, Buñuel employs the scopophilic nature of the camera to fetishize the female body. The male characters gaze at the women, and Buñuel cuts to close-ups of their feet and exposed legs. The frequent close-ups on feet and shoes appears in several Buñuel films, including the opening scene in *This Strange Passion* (1953) and one of the most iconic scenes in *Diary of a Chambermaid* (1964), where the aging patriarch of the estate asks the maid Celestine to put on and model vintage boots. In Bunuel's earliest films, the vagina also becomes fetishized obliquely through the use of dark circles, keyholes, and purses with locks (all of which appear in Bunuel's silent short *An Andalusian Dog*). At times, articles of clothing and accessories are invested with erotic meaning, such as schoolgirl uniforms, hats, embroidered blouses or skirts, dresses, and earrings or necklaces. It should also be noted that severed hands and the lack of a limb (or its prosthetic replacement) are often framed fetishistically. The most well-known example is Tristana's prosthetic leg laying on the living-room floor in *Tristana* (1970). Although it occurs less frequently, Buñuel also fetishizes male characters by using close-ups on their torsos and hands and through the frequent focus on phallic props: canes, paintbrushes, and of course, the nearly ubiquitous close-up on rifles and pistols.

Sadomasochism One of Buñuel's favorite texts was the Marquis de Sade's *120 Days of Sodom* (1785) (the plot of which is even acted out at the end of *Age of Gold from 1930* and in a brief scene in *The Milky Way* of 1969). It is of little surprise, then, that Buñuel explored sadomasochistic sex and fantasies within many of his characters' relationships. In an early scene in *The Age of Gold* (1930), the Young Girl dreams about murdering her children, and in *An Andalusian Dog* (1929), the Man is aroused

after watching a car run over a woman. Several characters display sadistic tendencies, including the psychopathic sculptor Archibaldo in *Rehearsal of a Crime* (1955), the violent vagabonds in *Viridiana* (1961), and the homicidal, strangler caretaker Joseph in *Diary of a Chambermaid* (1964). The imagery of bondage as both pleasure and punishment appears in several films, including Francisco's plan to sew up his wife's vagina in *This Strange Passion* (1953), and Séverine's fantasies about being tied up in *Belle de Jour* (1967). In *That Obscure Object of Desire* (1977), Conchita evades intercourse by wearing stitched-up breaches. In several of the toxic sexual relationships, the characters vacillate between sadism and masochism (and the positions of power change with it).

Taboo or "Immoral" Sexuality

Prostitution Along with the frequent emphasis on fetishes and sadomasochism, Buñuel often addresses other forms of socially condemned sexuality in his films. Prostitution becomes a method by which Buñuel satirizes the hypocrisy of the bourgeoisie. Contemporary prostitutes appear in *The Milky Way* (1969) and *Belle de Jour* (1967), where the male characters hire them in a nonchalant manner. Rather than hallmarks of poverty or crime, the prostitutes blend into the fabric of modern society. As the taxi driver explains in *Belle de Jour*, there are multiple brothels throughout Paris, all well-known—if technically illegal. The ubiquity of prostitution in polite society suggests that the police and French society accept this form of sexuality as a part of life, yet the hiring of prostitutes remains taboo and immoral on paper.

Buñuel also references Catholic doctrine and the Bible through his stylized portrayal of prostitutes. In two of his films that provide variations on Christian narratives, *Nazarín* (1959) and *Simon of the Desert* (1965), Buñuel creates obvious parallels between Jesus and the two male protagonists of both films. Father Nazario is cast out of his church and wanders around rural Mexico. His most loyal followers, Ándara and Beatriz, have engaged in sins of the flesh and wish to atone by serving their priest. Ándara worked explicitly as a prostitute, and Beatriz shows Father Nazario a feverish devotion that develops into sexual love. In this way, both women represent different facets of Mary Magdalene. Although it is assumed that neither woman reforms completely or is purified by her pilgrimage, Buñuel shows an empathy towards the prostitute who yearns for redemption. In *Simon of the Desert*, the devil shapeshifts into different female forms, all of which retain a Jezebel-like sexiness designed to incite the ascetic's desire and to distract him from his penance.

Adultery Both male and female characters cheat on their spouses, particularly in the plotline of Buñuel's later French films. Adultery within bourgeois marriages becomes a key exemplar of hypocrisy and sexual repression. Nearly every married character in Buñuel's last six films at least contemplates or fantasizes about an adulterous affair, with several main characters choosing to enact their wildest fantasies. Those characters who commit adultery, most notably the Ambassador and Simone in *Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* (1972) and Séverine of *Belle de Jour* (1967) go to great lengths to deceive their spouses. The male adulterers, conversely, often give into their lustful impulses without bothering with intrigue. Don Guadalupe, the patriarch in *Susana* (1951), ogles and kisses the psychopathic visitor inside the domestic space where his wife, Carmen, sees their interactions. Monteil in *Diary of a Chambermaid* (1964) is perhaps the most egregious adulterer, as he seduces and impregnates every female employee on the estate and leaves his wife to manage the resulting scandals.

Violent Sexuality

Rape Sexual violence against children and women is an unfortunate reoccurrence throughout Buñuel's *oeuvre*, but is particularly pronounced in his dramas of the 1950s and 1960s. In his grittier films about the slums of Mexico City, sexual predators lurk around every corner. In the quasi documentary the *Young and the Damned* (1950), nearly every child is molested, and Pedro's mother, Marta, is raped and left to raise him alongside her other two children. In these films, sexual predation exemplifies the brutality of poverty. However, Buñuel also portrays rape in idyllic rural settings. The beauty of the forest or the ranch does not protect Evalyn from sexual coercion in *The Young One* (1960) or the young Claire from rape and murder in *Diary of a Chambermaid* (1964). Even Viridiana, the young nun with pure intentions, is almost gang raped by the vagabonds that she invites into her inherited country estate. Despite her austerity and purity, the male characters pursue her sexually throughout the film, and her uncle drugs her so that he can fantasize about his late wife. Bourgeois children and teenagers also find themselves

fighting off sexual predators: in *Belle de Jour* (1967), both the young Cathy and Séverine (as a child) experience "close calls" with molestation.

Predatory Sexuality

Incest The most overt discussion of incest in Buñuel's oeuvre occurs in the quasi-documentary *Land Without Bread* (1933), in which the Narrator and filmmakers "interview" the mentally disabled shepherds in the mountains. The narration claims that the retardation of the young "cretins" is a direct result of incest in the village, which itself is a direct consequence of isolation, poverty, and a lack of education. In this context, incest is yet another social problem that keeps the Hurdanos (the residents of this region) mired in a so-called "medieval" existence.

Because Buñuel explored the dark corners of the psyche, his male protagonists often struggle with their Oedipal complexes, which includes an incestuous attraction to their mothers. Critics regularly point to Buñuel's portrayals of Mexican masculinity as a mask for internal turmoil. For those male characters who lack a nurturing mother, most notably the boys in *The Young and the Damned* (1950), the Oedipal complex manifests itself in the attraction to older women who may fill in for their absent mothers. It is hardly surprising that the gang lead El Jaibo sexually pursues Pedro's mother Marta as a stand-in for the mirage of his own mother. For those men who experience a cloying mother, there is also the danger of Oedipal urges. One interpretation of Archibaldo's murderous fantasies in *Rehearsal of a Crime* (1955) is that he is driven to recreate his close relationship with his mother. Actual incest does not occur, but Buñuel implies that the other mental problems of his leading men are exacerbated by their unresolved feelings towards their mothers.

In the adaptations of nineteenth-century novels (*Viridiana* (1961) and *Tristana* (1970), in particular), the elder guardian seduces his young ward, often in a coercive or vaguely incestuous way. In the context of this period, the eventual marriage between uncle and niece, or the progression from ward to wife, was not considered as taboo as in the period in which Buñuel filmed his adaptations. Nonetheless, the director does enhance the viewer's discomfort by implying that the Don Juan character has taken advantage of the young ingenue. The poisonous root of their relationship festers to the point that the young protagonist takes a lover and kills her uncle-husband through rejection and neglect (in *Tristana*, the implication is that the title character hastens her husband's death by not calling for the doctor). In the case of *Viridiana*, she survives the rape attempt only to be drawn into a threesome with her cousin Jorge and the maid of the estate, Ramona.

Heteronormative Versus Queer Gender and Sexuality:

Despite his provocative forays into taboo expressions of sexuality, Bunuel's characters are largely straight, cisgender individuals who engage in heteronormative sexual relationships. However, the typical Buñuelian characters often long to break out of their traditional relationship dynamic. The wives in Buñuel's films frequently engage in adultery and other forms of taboo sexual behavior. The exemplar of this escape from heteronormativity is Séverine in *Belle de Jour* (1967), who creates a sort of alter ego prostitute character in order to quench her desire for humiliation and sexual adventure. One could also argue that the Girl in *The Age of Gold* (1930) lusts after the Young Man in part to defy her prescribed role dictated by her rich parents, the Marquises X.

While queer characters are rare in Buñuel's films, there are moments in which characters "try on" a queer gender identity. In Buñuel's first silent short, *An Andalusian Dog* (1929), the Young Man puts on a nun's habit, skirt, and carries around the striped purse (which quickly becomes a metonym for the vagina). Later, another male character admonishes him for his subversive clothing, and the Young Man appears moments later in a masculine suit. In addition, the androgenous woman in the street defies gender norms with her suit and slick-backed hair. She also holds the striped purse before being run over by a car, which could indicate lesbian or trans tendencies.

Ironically, male queerness is explored most frequently in Buñuel's Mexican dramas and thrillers of the 1950s. Often, film and literature critics point to the hypermasculinity of the young male characters who strut around the slums of Mexico City (as seen in the *Young and the Damned* (1950) and *The Brute* (1953). These characters attempt to behave in a way that reflects the machismo of the Mexican

Revolution and the capitalist modernity of mid-century Mexico. On the other hand, Buñuel also subverts the mandate of Mexican masculinity by suggesting that his male protagonists may be gay, transvestites, or some other form of queer. In both *Rehearsal of a Crime* (1955) and *This Strange Passion* (1953), the protagonists are psychopaths who obsess about controlling the women in their lives. In both cases, however, the men lack sexual experience and show fear towards the women they "conquer" in their minds. In addition, Archibaldo and Francisco indulge in shoe and mannequin fetishes, even to the point of trying on their victims' clothes and undergarments. In this way, Buñuel contextualizes their pathology by implying a latent homosexuality.

Corporality and Biological References to Sex

As an ardent scientist, Buñuel alludes to mating habits and the anatomy of flora and fauna. It was not uncommon for the director to insert mini nature documentaries into the larger film or write monologues in which the ranch or farm characters discuss the business of tending to the animals. Buñuel also used zoology and nature as metaphors for the sexuality of the characters themselves. Female characters regularly milk cows and collect eggs in a seductive fashion, and bestial imagery frequents the characters' sexual fantasies or visions. Cows and cattle reference sexual desire of the female characters in both *Age of Gold* (1930), where the Young Girl hears a cow bell and sees a cow in her bed, and in *Belle de Jour* (1967), where one of Séverine's fantasies occurs amidst a herd of cattle on the plains.

Although Buñuel rarely shot explicit sex scenes, he did allow for occasional nudity. The female characters in his later French films appear in their underwear and frequently expose their breasts. Often, bras become metonymic for the sexual transgressions of the protagonist. There is also a consistent use of fetishes referencing genitalia, from the dark circles and striped purse in *An Andalusian Dog* (1929), to the elongated canes of various gentlemen characters in his later films.

Along with alluding to his characters' repressed animal instincts, Buñuel also explored the corporality of his characters, particularly with respect to aging and death. The older Don Juan characters try to avoid aging through the conquest of young women, which ironically creates a dynamic in which they take on the role of father figure. One could also argue that Mattieu's sexual obsession with Conchita in *That Obscure Object of Desire* (1977) is really a ploy to evade death, which is why he keeps going back to her. Buñuel likely sensed his own death during the filming of *Object*, which was his last completed project. The arousing fear of death also manifests in the necrophiliac moments in *Viridiana* (1961) and *Belle de Jour* (1967), where the older male characters force the young women to "act dead" for an erotic mourning ritual. Buñuel's personal love of the fairy tale *Sleeping Beauty* also informed this tendency to have the male characters aroused by the women's performance of death.

Buñuel understood the human tendency to stave off death through sexual context and pleasure, which is precisely why he juxtaposed intercourse / sexual fantasies with scenes of death and decay. Shortly after their supposed sexual encounter, the Young Girl in *An Andalusian Dog* (1929) moves on to her beach-coming boyfriend, while the Young Man murders his doppelganger, experiences his own funeral procession, and then is reincarnated as a moth on the wall. In the final scene, the Young Girl and her new lover are "baked into" the beach sand in a death pose. Even while the Young Man is pursuing the Young Girl, he has visions of the rotting donkey corpses on the piano. In true surrealist form, Buñuel conflated sexual desire with the fear of encroaching death.

This juxtaposition of sex and death also occurs in *Exterminating Angel* (1962), where the normally reserved bourgeois guests face their own imminent deaths. Some characters die and begin to rot; others perform hygiene measures but cannot avoid the stench of body odor and excrement. The guests' descent into animal instincts includes sex. The young couple, Eduardo and Beatriz, actually use sex as a means of crossing over into death. In this scene, Buñuel plays with the concept of the orgasm as "la petite mort," which in this case, results in actual death.

Relationship

Motherhood In Buñuel's adaptation of the Spanish novels of Galdós--*Nazarín*, *Viridiana* and *Tristana*--the parental relationship at play is that of the young woman being shepherded by a male guardian. The mother is dead or nowhere to be found. Occasionally, the French films include a mother figure who

influences the trajectory of the plot, such as the religious zealot Encarnación in *That Obscure Object of Desire* (1977) or Celestine's decision to protect and avenge the orphan Claire in *Diary of a Chambermaid* (1964). However, motherhood is explored most deeply in Buñuel's Mexican dramas of the 1950s. Often, the mother tries to protect her son from poverty, sexual predators, and crime, but is unable to fight the societal forces that oppress the family. Marta, Pedro's mother in the *Young and the Damned* (1950), fails to keep her son away from gang life. Ironically, she incarnates both sides of sexual predation, as she was raped as a young girl but also seduces El Jaibo, who in a disturbingly erotic scene, considers Marta as a maternal figure. In *Simon of the Desert* (1965), Simon's mother lives in a tent at the base of her son's column and tries to fortify his efforts to remain pure. Even when the family is well-to-do, such as in *Susana* (1951), the benevolent matriarch Carmen is unable to break Susana's spell as she seduces every man on the ranch. Despite usually pure motives, the mothers in Buñuel's dramas are outmatched by circumstance, poverty, and psychology.

Marriage Buñuel usually portrays marriage as a bourgeois construct that represses and suppresses sexuality. When the paternal Don Juan ends up seducing and marrying his ward, she immediately feels trapped and tries to escape. She also rebels by having an affair with a young artist. Even when the ingenue is fortunate enough to have a kind, supportive, and young husband, as in *Belle de Jour* (1967), Séverine (the protagonist) feels stifled and decides to break away by becoming a prostitute. The psychopathic Francisco and Archibaldo use marriage as a tool for domination and punishment, while the embittered Don Quintín in *The Daughter of Deceit* (1951) literally gives away his baby daughter when he discovers his wife's infidelity. The members of the clergy evade marriage so that they can pursue careers or spiritual purity, such as Viridiana's attempts to become a nun and maintain her virginity. For the abject poor or working-class characters, marriage is a necessary means of survival. If the women are raped or abandoned, they are doubly victimized and doomed to lose their children.

Love

Contents(Romantic Love-Familial Love (Lack of Love-Mother/Son-Mother/Daughter-Father/Son-Father/Daughter)-Spiritual Love / Devotion to God-Love of Nature-Love of Country and Nationality

Introduction:

To state it bluntly, the films of Luis Buñuel do not depict love—they address sex and sexuality. It is true that Buñuel appears not to address loving relationships as much as he explores psychological desires and power struggles between and among his lead characters. Romantic love is either secondary to sexuality or a false construct. Often, the notion of couple hood provides a basis for Buñuel's constant skewering of bourgeois vices and hypocrisy. In these cases, it is the *lack* of true romantic love that Buñuel underscores. This cynical or apathetic attitude towards romantic relationships would suggest that love should not be the subject of a thematic analysis of Buñuel's oeuvre. Nonetheless, Buñuel's satirical take on marriage does not preclude other forms of love in his films. Along with the drumbeat of sexual urges and desires, Bunuel's characters frequently yearn for meaningful connections: to their parents, to their children, to their partners, to their environment, to their nation, and to their God. This yearning can be interpreted as a search for love, and even when the characters fail in that quest, the desire for love informs the thematic landscape of Buñuel's *oeuvre*. Therefore, this essay will address the ways in which Buñuel's characters look for love in all of its myriad forms.

The Couple and the Ambiguity of Romantic Love:

While Buñuel's later French films portray married couples, his early surrealist films and Mexican oeuvre often feature leading men and women who do not have a significant other. The surrealist silent films portray the characters' lust for sex and the seeming lack of interest in love, marriage, or other social conventions, even when clergy or parents admonish them for their lack of decorum. Sex is the ultimate goal, and this quest to quench primeval urges corresponds to the surrealist interest in portraying the Id and the dark desires of the subconscious. Even in Buñuel's last film, *That Obscure Object of Desire* (1977), the lead characters Mathieu and Conchita do not seek love and marriage, but rather sexual gratification, attention, power, comfort, and autonomy.

In the case of many of the Mexican dramas, a wife-mother or husband-father is conspicuously absent. They have died or abandoned their spouses and children, with the result that the remaining adult is left to fend for him or herself. Along with social and economic hardship, the single mother or father longs for sexual and emotional connections with potential lovers. When the family unit remains intact, and the couple at the head of family appears to enjoy a loving marriage, events or other characters conspire to disrupt the seemingly stable family dynamic. In several of Buñuel's Mexican thrillers and melodramas, the psychopathic character destroys the possibility for a loving marriage through seduction, obsession, adultery, and even murder.

Even when the family is able to expunge the destructive force (as in casting out the seductress Susana in *Susana*), the resulting "happy ending" is hardly convincing. Buñuel himself has mocked his own happy endings (both in interviews and in his own writings) and even infused them with a subversive tone. A prime example is the forest scene at the end of *Rehearsal of a Crime* (1955), when the psychopathic Archibaldo throws out the cursed music box and declares himself cured of his homicidal obsessions. He reunites with one of his would-be girlfriends, and they walk arm in arm through the Chapultepec Park in Mexico City as the music swells gleefully. This contrived ending emphasizes Buñuel's cynicism towards the idea of a "happily ever after."

When the characters enjoy a seemingly happy marriage with an appropriate partner, the idyllic bourgeois picture is revealed to be a façade. At least half of the married characters in Buñuel's late French period cheat on their spouses and show little to no remorse for their transgressions. The most brazen married characters are arguably Séverine in *Belle de Jour* (1967), who casually works as a prostitute in the daytime and comes home to her unsuspecting husband at 5:00, and Monsieur Monteil from *Diary of a Chambermaid* (1964), who sexually harasses every woman in sight and consistently impregnates the maids who work in his estate. Even when the marriage remains relatively normal and stable, the viewer is not entirely convinced that the characters love and cherish each other.

Familial Love:

Neglect and Lack of Love Buñuel's realist dramas frequently emphasize the *lack* of love and affection—particularly in the lives of children. The quasi-documentaries *Land Without Bread* (1933) and *The Young and the Damned* (1950) feature a long line of neglected and abused children. In the case of *Land Without Bread*, the children have parents but lack basic necessities. The family unit exists for survival, and miserable conditions prevent the parents from providing stability or affection. With respect to *The Young and the Damned*, every child suffers from abandonment, violence, and physical (and often sexual) abuse. Buñuel ensures that the children's yearning for love shines through the poverty; even the delinquent gangbanger El Jaibo is attracted to Marta, Pedro's mother, because he lived most of his life as an orphan. In Buñuel's melodramas of the 1950s and satires of the 1960s, Buñuel creates teenage characters who may be going down the wrong path. The adult characters either take advantage of their precarious state or act as would-be parents who attempt to protect them from victimization. Often, the adult characters' motivations are mixed or ambiguous, with the result that the viewer is conflicted about the semi-parental relationship that has developed between the adult lead characters and their adopted wards. Do the teenagers experience a loving relationship with their new parental figures? It depends on our interpretation of the characters in each film. Below are a few examples of this ambiguity.

Mother-Son Dynamic: In those films where the story explores the relationships in a traditional family (particularly the Mexican melodramas and comedies such as *The Great Madcap* (1949), *Daughter of Deceit* (1950), and *Susana* (1951)), mothers and sons have a close and loving relationship. In *Susana*, it is the benevolent matriarch Carmen who protects both her son and husband from the title vixen's clutches, and Carmen is the one who advises her son throughout the film. In some cases, the mother's love of her son is overly indulgent or lacking altogether, which contributes to social problems generally and the son's psychosis, specifically. We see these binary effects in *Rehearsal of a Crime* (1955), where Archibaldo's mother spoils him and gives him the cursed music box (implying that she incited his homicidal tendencies), and also in *The Young and the Damned* (1950), where Marta's cold indifference to her son's plight contributes to his descent into gang life. Buñuel frequently plays with the psychological construct of the Oedipal complex in that his male lead characters become fixated on their mothers, then carry their obsessions into their romantic relationships. At the end of *This Strange Passion* (1953), the

psychopathic Francisco sees his ex-wife Gloria with her new husband and son, who is also named Francisco. The viewer does not know whether the boy is Francisco's biological son or not, but the implication is that he will experience much more love and stability with the empathetic stepfather Raúl.

Mother-Daughter Dynamic Buñuel frequently presents a young ingenue who lacks a mother. In the case of the virginal women in the adaptations of Galdos's novels, such as *Tristana* (1970), the young ingenue's mother has died. This absence leads her to live with her older ward, who becomes both a father figure and lover-husband (see below). In the case where the girl lacks parents, it is not uncommon for the older women in the film to attempt to fill the void, at least temporarily. The orphan Claire in *Diary of a Chambermaid* (1964) is ultimately murdered, but the maid Celestine shows her attention and affection in the brief time that she works at the estate. Celestine's maternal instincts drive her to avenge Claire's death, even though she fails to do so. Another protective mother appears in *Belle de Jour* (1967) when Pallas, the assistant / neighbor to the brothel, tries to give her daughter a proper education and shield her from a life of prostitution. Pallas's actions seem more sincere than those of Encarnación in *That Obscure Object of Desire* (1977)—in that film, the mother figure takes an opportunistic approach to Mathieu's advances towards her daughter Conchita. Even when mothers have the means to raise their daughters well, the parenting techniques of the mother characters leave much to be desired.

Father-Son Dynamic Because so many of Buñuel's characters lack parents, there are not many active relationships between fathers and sons in his *oeuvre*. We see glimpses of paternal moments in *Diary of a Chambermaid* (1964), when father-in-law Rabour hunts with and advises his son-in-law Monteil, or in the early silent film *The Age of Gold* (1930), when a father figure shows his son how to shoot a rifle at the Marquis's party. In the case of the latter, the father ends up shooting his own son when he impetuously runs out into the field. Some of the children in *The Young and the Damned* (1950) appear to have paternal guidance, but the viewer soon realizes that the slum fathers are neglectful addicts, and the blind busker Don Carmelo only wants to exploit the children in the neighborhood. Even when the adult men make a sincere effort to rescue and mentor the boys of the slum, their efforts do not yield the desired result.

Some possible exceptions to the neglectful father appear in the Mexican dramas starring Fernando Solís. Solís's father figures are flawed in many ways, yet the patriarch wishes to do right by his family and provide a good model for his sons. His virtuous motivations often lead to saccharine happy endings whether the father atones for his mistakes and vows to love and support his family. In these cases, the viewer is relieved to see love and affection between and among the members of a traditional family.

Father-Daughter Dynamic

This familial relationship is arguably the most common and fraught dynamic in many of Buñuel's films. Father-figures are more plentiful and present than mothers, yet fathers often abuse their positions and become sexual predators (or, at least, coercive) of their "daughters."

The traditional dynamic between father and daughter rarely appears in Buñuel's films. Even in *Daughter of Deceit* (1951), the patriarch gives his baby girl away to another family to raise. It is only in the last frames of the film that the father repents and takes steps towards fostering a full relationship with his daughter (now about 20).

The father-lover character falls into three Buñuelian categories: the guardian who takes care of, then seduces or marries, his young ward, the overt predator who openly victimizes young girls, and the conflicted man who vacillates between protecting a younger woman and giving into his sexual desire towards her. The father turned lover-husband character is a trope of nineteenth-century novels, in which context a marriage between guardian and ward or cousins was not considered predatory, but somewhat of a natural progression. Whether the couple truly love each other as companions or sexual partners is not fully answered in Buñuel's adaptations of the iconic novels. Obviously, the predatory men in the second category do not show any love towards their victims, but Buñuel provides for more ambiguity in the third category of father figure. In the *The Young One* (1960), both adult men lust after the thirteen-year old Evalyn, but both also protect her and act as father figures. When Miller sneaks into her bed one night, it is unclear whether Evalyn gives consent and whether she even has the capacity to do so. The nature of their relationship remains a source of debate for film critics who interpret the sexual encounter

as rape, sexual awakening, or some combination of the two. In the case of *Diamond Hunters* (1956), the reformed thief Chark works towards survival for everyone in the group, but he is particularly protective of the deaf teenager María. When they are the sole survivors of the jungle, the two row out on the lake together. Chark obviously intends to fill in the role of father figure after María's father dies, yet the implication is that they have also developed romantic / sexual feeling towards one another.

The Bonds of Friendship

Whereas the relationships among family members and between lovers can become tainted by psychosis, neglect, abuse, or incestuous desire, many of Buñuel's characters enjoy a healthy partnership with their friends. Despite his increasingly erratic behavior, Francisco enjoys counsel, comfort, and empathy from several characters in *This Strange Passion* (1953): the priest Father Velasco defends him, the valet Pedro advises him, and even Gloria and Raúl try to understand his behavior and care about his mental health. In the *Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* (1972), the characters keep trying to connect with each other via a dinner among friends. The characters support each other through the various obstacles they endure, even walking together down the road to nowhere. Of course, Simone and the ambassador Rafael are cheating on Simone's husband Francois, but a bourgeois solidarity does run through the film.

Despite the glaring power dynamic in play between the bourgeois characters and their servants, there are several moments when the servant characters act as loyal friends and confidants to their employers. Along with Pedro's advice to Francisco, the maid Felisa and the butler Mateo constitute the voices of reason in *Susana* and *That Obscure Object of Desire* (1977), respectively. Even though Buñuel satirizes the Catholic Church and lampoons the clergy, he often creates sympathetic priests and prophets who proffer good advice. Many of the clergy who declare love for their flock (see below) counsel their friends in a sincere effort to improve their lives and buttress their faith.

Whenever the lead characters go on a journey, the resulting travelogue provides fertile ground for strengthening friendships. The power of the journey with friends becomes a central theme of *The Milky Way (*1969), in which several pairs throughout history go on pilgrimages, evade capture, play the wingman for each other, and debate philosophy and religious doctrine. There is also a strong sense of fellowship among members of a particular sect, such as the Jansenist nuns who support their masochist sister, the followers of Saint Anthony in the woods, and the disciples who attempt to protect Jesus before his crucifixion. We also see this solidarity among Buñuel and his longtime friends and collaborators. Buñuel's own experiences in filmmaking underlies the action in the pseudo-documentary *Land Without Bread* (1933). In fact, the narration frequently describes the filmmakers' emotions and reactions as they traverse the harsh terrain of Las Hurdes, then have to bear witness to the shocking misery of its inhabitants.

Spiritual Love / Devotion to God

As discussed above, many of the religious leaders in Buñuel's films sincerely love God, their faith, and their flock. While some clergy engage in performative rituals and rhetoric in Bunuel's films, others sacrifice themselves in order to do good works out in the world. The director acknowledges the sincerity of Jesus, Mary, James, and Simon the ascetic as they give of themselves to the characters in need. In addition, Nazario, the priest in rural Mexico, and Viridiana, the nun in rural Spain, use their knowledge and training to help the vagabonds, disabled, and prostitutes in their flock. Unfortunately, their efforts go unrewarded-- Nazario is imprisoned and beaten, and Viridiana is nearly gang raped. In the case of *Nazarín* (1959), Beatriz sincerely hungers for purity and righteousness, and she demonstrates her devotion to Nazario by accompanying him on his painful pilgrimage. Although the bonds of spiritual love are often broken by the end of the film, there remains the sincerity of the prophets' devotion to their people.

Some of the characters also engage in acts of devotion to show their faith. Jean and Pierre's pilgrimage shows a love for St. James, the Catholic faith, and their affection for each other. Many of the poor rural Mexicans in *Nazarín* also engage in prayer and ritual in an effort to receive God's blessings.

Love of Nature

As a trained agronomist and entomologist, Buñuel was perpetually fascinated by biology, zoology, botany, and the natural world at large. The director even joked that his favorite actors in *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* (1972) were the cockroaches featured in the torture scene at the police station. His love of and respect for flora and fauna bleeds into many of his films. At times, Buñuel's respect for nature is displayed through an emphasis on its power to endanger or even kill humans, such as the analysis of the diseases in *Land Without Bread* (1933) and the imminent danger of the jungle in *Diamond Hunters* (1955). In films with rural settings, such as *Susana* (1951), *The Young One* (1960), and *Viridiana* (1961), the characters work as farmers and ranchers and rely upon their livestock for sustenance. Even in urban settings, Buñuel managed to place animals within the greater plotline. For example, the characters in the *Young and the Damned* (1950) tend cows and chickens even in the heart of Mexico City.

Often, the love of nature takes the form of the characters studying or even identifying themselves with the animals in their surroundings. Alberto, the young university student in *Susana* (1950), uses his studies to better run his father's farm. Viridiana milks the cow on her uncle's estate and empathizes with a drowning bee, and Pedro (from *The Young and the Damned*) shows affection towards the roosters who are cast out of the slum, then helps take care of the hens at the reform school. Animals often feature prominently in characters' surrealist hallucinations, fantasies, and nightmares.

The love of nature also manifests itself in the freedom and adventure of the outdoors. The pilgrims and prophets of Buñuel's most religiously-themed films *(Nazarin*, *Simon of the Desert*, and *The Milky Way*,) explore their own spirituality through the acts of sacrifice and pilgrimage in the great outdoors. Simon communes with the birds of the desert sky, and several characters in other films walk into the woods or the mountains in order to engage in a religious experience. The woods also become a symbol of sexual and social freedom, particularly in *Diary of a Chambermaid* (1964) and *Belle de Jour* (1967). In the latter film, Séverine fantasizes about sexual encounters and humiliation in the woods. In essence, Séverine is indulging her masochist nature *in* nature.

Love of Country and Nationality

As evidenced by his sharp political satire, Buñuel prefers to criticize rather than praise governments. The director's affinity for the avant-garde and his association with communism and the Spanish Republicans put him at odds with Franco's dictatorship and French conservatism. In his later films, Buñuel also offered thinly veiled critiques of Latin American dictatorships and terrorism in the 1970s. In some cases, the director skewered governments even more than the Catholic Church or bourgeois hypocrisy. It is likely that Buñuel considered his satire a patriotic act in which he professed his love of, and concern for, the country of his birth.

Although Bunuel's films show a certain cynicism toward government, nations-states, and patriotism in general, the director was also keenly aware of his Spanish essence. Buñuel studied and referenced Spanish art and literature throughout his career, as evidenced by his consistent interest in bringing classic Spanish novels to the screen. Even after living decades in exile, Buñuel paid homage to the Spanish canon, from quoting Golden Age literature to drawing from the gothic style of Goya's paintings. The director remained rooted in his childhood in rural Aragón and his studies at the University of Madrid.

Buñuel also showed an affection towards his adopted country of Mexico and his artistic muse, Paris. He understood the identity conflicts that characterized Mexican life after the Revolution and the promise of equality that did not materialize in the 1950s and 1960s. Many of his Mexican films, while seemingly formulaic, also emphasize the social and political problems of his adopted homeland. Like the narrators in both *Land Without Bread* (1933) and *The Young and the Damned* (1950), Buñuel hoped for a future in which the governments would protect the most vulnerable. With regard to France, Buñuel recognized the challenges of lingering fascism and terrorism.

Buñuel's penchant for travelogue sequences in his films (complete with picturesque panoramas, aerial shots, and adventures on famous streets and neighborhoods) underscore his love of history and science throughout Europe and the Americas. As is suggested in *The Milky Way* (1969), *The Age of Gold* (1930), and *That Obscure Object of Desire* (1977), the characters express their love of their native lands and

culture through the act of travelling. Each journey allows for an appreciation of what Spain, Mexico, France, Argentina, and Italy (among other countries) have to offer.

Flaws

Obsession Often, Buñuel's characters are obsessed with sexual conquest or satisfaction. We see unrequited, obsessive sexual desire in Buñuel's first and last films: the unnamed male characters in *An Andalusian Dog* (1929) and *The Age of Gold* (1930) pursue the Young Girl characters but never consummate their desire, and Conchita always denies Mathieu sex in *That Obscure Object of Desire* (1977). The lack of satisfaction drives both the plot and the protagonists' obsessions. The obsession grows and consumes some characters to the point of violence or madness. Francisco in *This Strange Passion* (1953) is obsessed with catching his wife sleeping with other men, and Archibaldo in *Rehearsal of a Crime* (1955) fantasizes continually about murdering the women in his life. The young criminal Marcel becomes infatuated with Séverine in *Belle de Jour* (1967) and shoots her husband, Pierre.

Jealousy Erotic triangles and affairs occur frequently in Buñuel's films. While a handful of characters act nonchalantly when faced with a potential rival (such as Pierre's calm demeanor towards his potential rival Henri in *Belle de Jour*), the majority of husbands and male lovers feel resentment and jealousy toward their rivals. The old Don Juans who seduce their wards try to control their much younger wife or lover, which results in her affair with a younger man. The young lovers also lash out in jealousy, such as Alberto confronting his father in *Susana* (1951) or Marcel shooting Séverine's husband Pierre in *Belle de Jour* (1967). Likely the most jealous characters are the psychopaths who consider their wives and lovers their property—the exemplar is Francisco in *This Strange Passion* (1953), who torments his wife Gloria without mercy and whose jealousy leads him to strangle her and attempt to sew up her vagina. Honorable mentions go to the violent stalkers Pinto in *Nazarín* (1959) and Marcel in *Belle de Jour* (1967). On occasion, female characters lash out against their rivals, such as when the normally docile Carmen whips Susana as a punishment for seducing her husband and son.

Quest

Search As discussed at length in the sections on desire and obsession above, the primary motivation for many of Buñuel's characters is sexual gratification. The characters want to indulge their Ids and act out their sexual fantasies. Sometimes, such as with several characters in *Diary of a Chambermaid* (1964) or Séverine in *Belle de Jour* (1967), the characters quench their taboo or criminal desires but with disastrous consequences. Sometimes, the characters yearn for love and acceptance, especially in the neorealistic films with neglected children, disabled poor, or abandoned wives. In other cases, the characters are motivated by greed, such as with Chark the thief and Djin the madame in *Diamond Hunters* (1956). Still others thirst for spiritual truth or purity (such as the priest Nazario and reformed peasant woman Beatriz in *Nazarín* (1959), or the various pilgrims and disciples featured in the *The Milky Way* of 1969). Both the tragedy and satire in Buñuel's films derive from the inability to gain or retain love, sex, stability, faith, or fortune. More often than not, the adults do not get satisfaction, the children do not find stability or affection, and the pious end up losing their faith (or at least experience an existential crisis). Moreover, the characters do not reach their destination, but rather remain in an unending loop. In the cases where the characters are trapped in a life-or-death situation (such as the jungle in *Diamond Hunters,* the mostly deserted island in *Robinson Crusoe* (1954), and the living room of death in *Exterminating Angel*), the search is for an escape. In all three films, some characters get out, and others perish.

Exploration Buñuel's films often reflect the individual's yearning to explore themselves—in particular, their own sexuality and psyche—to know themselves. It is for this reason that so many of Buñuel's more surrealist films provide dream sequences or fantasies in which the characters may imagine themselves in erotic situations. In addition, some of Buñuel's more "commercial" films provide a literal adventure in which the characters venture out into the wilderness or travel in unknown territory. Several protagonists literally leave the city in order to explore the country: the rebels in *Age of Gold* (1930) live communally in a shack alongside the ocean, Celestine travels to a rural town in order to find work, and Jean and Pierre commit to a long pilgrimage in which they walk on foot from Paris to Santiago de Compostela in *The Milky Way* (1969). Viridiana is encouraged to leave the convent in order to help sort out the family's ranch. Even Susana, the psychopathic seductress, escapes the asylum and finds refuge on a country estate. At

times, the characters turn into tourists within Buñuel's mini travelogues: the Man in *An Andalusian Dog* (1929) and the bourgeois Parisians enjoy walking through the streets of Rome and Paris. In *This Strange Passion* (1953), Francisco and Gloria take pictures of the striking buildings in Guadalajara. Jean and Pierre enjoy the breathtaking view of San Sebastian in *The Milky Way*, and Mathieu dines al fresco as he looks over the Sevillian skyline in *That Obscure Object of Desire* (1977). Despite the bleak despair of the villagers, Buñuel and his crew still consider the trek through the mountains of Las Hurdes to be a beautiful (if daunting) adventure in *Land Without Bread* (1933).

Life Stages

Childhood In his searing documentary-like drama *The Young and the Damned* (1950), Buñuel presents a group of children (most of whom are tweens or teens) who are doomed to a life of delinquency, crime, and poverty. Pedro and his cohorts must either join the gang or find work in a shop or construction, and many of them are orphaned, abandoned, beaten, or molested (or a combination of all four). In essence, they are denied a childhood all together. There is a similar pallor of gloom over the starving children of Las Hurdes in *Land Without Bread* (1933). While the children in poverty suffer most overtly in Buñuel's Mexican dramas, the bourgeois or bourgeois-adjacent children of Buñuel's French films also contend with sexual predators and coming of age challenges. Nearly every French-language Buñuel film includes a girl between the ages of 8-17 who, when not protected by one of the maternal female characters, becomes victimized by an older man. Claire is strangled in the forest in *Diary of a Chambermaid* (1964), and the 13-year-old Evalyn is raped (or, at the very least, inappropriately seduced) in *The Young One* (1960). María in *Diamond Hunters (1956)* and Cathy in *Belle de Jour* (1967) become sexual objects that men ogle. The children are often framed as innocents who will be marked by the violent or sexual fantasies of adults who pursue them.

Death Depending on the context of the film, Buñuel's characters either face and accept death or try to evade it. Often, death is brought about by violence or circumstance rather than old age, but the older characters succumb early or first. In *Exterminating Angel* (1962), some characters give into death, some fight back violently, and others try to use logic to reason out of their fate. Russell, one of the oldest guests, dies almost immediately. Similarly, Castin, the older father character in *Diamond Hunters* (1956), adopts an existentialist perspective and decides that everyone deserves to die in the jungle. The old Don Juans perform a sort of mid-life crisis in which they imagine themselves as young lovers, yet the majority of them die in their beds from illness or old age. The old woman at the end of *Land Without Bread* (1933) becomes the angel of death, wandering the streets and mourning the dead and dying. In many cases, Buñuel's characters must face their own mortality even if they are relatively young.

Change

Repetition and Time Much of the humor in Buñuel's later films derives from the lack of change. The bourgeois characters remain stuck in an absurdist loop without a definitive beginning or end. The characters in the *Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* (1972) are never allowed to eat, then are seemingly executed, then resurrected in the final shot of them walking down the country road. Mathieu never gets to sleep with Conchita in *That Obscure Object of Desire* (1977), yet he keeps going back to her. The poor of Mexico City and las Hurdes remain trapped in their state of abject poverty with no way out. In the case of Las Hurdes, their geographical isolation ensures not only poverty but a perpetual "medieval" existence. Even though most of the guests eventually escape the living room in *Exterminating Angel* (1962), their salvation comes in the form of repeating actions and dialogue from when the clock struck 3:00AM on the night of the party. The ability to "stop" time or rewind creates disorientation in the viewer and also creates the surrealist uncertainty in many films. In *Belle de Jour* (1967), there is the frequent emphasis on time, both with the chiming of the clock and Séverine's insistence that she must leave the brothel by 5:00 PM. Yet, this marking of time does not give a sense of continuity or linear movement to the viewer. We never quite know what is reality and what is a dream. This conflation of multiple possible realities is particularly confusing in *The Phantom of Liberty* (1974), which film critic Wendy Everett aptly describes as a "decoupage" of fragmented storylines. When there is a historical plot or reference at play, such as in *Simon of the Desert* (1965) and *The Milky Way* (1969), Buñuel distorts the timeline by first contextualizing a certain period, then suddenly incorporating ridiculous anachronisms

(such as when the ascetic of the Dark Ages, Simón, is whisked away on a jet and visits a go-go dance club in 1960s New York City).

Transformation Despite the frequent stagnation or circular action in Buñuel's films, there are also moments when characters pass from one state to another. The young women often pass from a state of virginity or frigidity to sexual awakening. Conversely, some male characters who suffer from psychosis find a cure and are reformed, such as Francisco becoming a monk at the end of *This Strange Passion* (1953) or Archibaldo "throwing out" his homicidal tendencies with the cursed music box at the end of *Rehearsal of a Crime* (1955). In addition, Buñuel often uses the supernatural to conflate the states of the living and the dead, with the result that some characters seem to exist in both realms. The Man in *An Andalusian Dog* (1929) kills "himself," has a funeral, then transforms into a moth. The couple in *Exterminating Angel* (1962) conflate sex with death, and seem to disappear when they embrace their fate. Ghosts visit and interact with the living, and sometimes the living "play dead," such as when Viridiana and Séverine become Sleeping Beauties in the male characters' necrophiliac fantasies. Along with the occasional suspension of death, Buñuel also leans into the grotesque by emphasizing biological transformation—in particular, rotting flesh and decomposition. The human characters confront their own mortality by seeing and smelling the results of death. Even when there is not rotting flesh, the frequent appearance of insects reminds the viewers of the cycle of life.

Appearance

Deception Often, Buñuel's characters offer a straight-forward espousal of their desires and ideologies. The bourgeois men do little to hide their interests in sexual adventure or proclivities even to the point of flaunting their affairs and fetishes in front of their wives, lovers, and friends. In Buñuel's early surrealist films, he lays bare the sexual and violent tendencies of his characters. While the female characters are not as brazenly open as the men, some female characters do assert their ideologies, such as Viridiana's proclamation that she will remain a virgin, create a charity / refuge out of her uncle's estate, and eventually take her vows as a nun. Arguably the most deceptive female character in Buñuel's oeuvre is Séverine in *Belle de Jour* (1967) in that she hides her dissatisfaction and prostitution from her husband and "polite" society. She also refuses to tell her colleagues at brothel anything about her life in the hopes of maintaining a double life. Aside from the case of Séverine's secrets, Buñuel's psychopathic characters are those who lie and misdirect continually. Susana and Francisco pretend to be "normal" people who are looking for a partner, and they manage to hide their psychosis long enough to seduce and manipulate others. Archibaldo, the would-be murderer in *Rehearsal of a Crime* (1955), uses his charm and wealth to disarm his victims and make them more vulnerable to his violent fantasies.

DreamsA large part of the surrealist aesthetic relies upon creating an illogical dreamworld that expresses subconscious desire. This aspect of surrealism manifests itself most overtly in Buñuel's early Parisian films where there is little to no discernable plotline. In his later films, Buñuel folds characters' dreams into the seemingly linear movement of the plot, thereby mixing supposed reality with dreams, visions, or fantasies. While the viewer thinks she knows which sequences are Séverine's fantasies in *Belle de Jour* (1967), it is unclear by the film's end whether anything at all, including Séverine's foray into prostitution, actually occurred outside of her imagination. In other words, were her masochistic fantasies dreams within the larger dream of breaking out of her bourgeois ennui? A similar confusion is created in both *Exterminating Angel* (1962) and *Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* (1972). Even though the members of the group (the opera swells at the party in *Angel* and the Parisian friends attempting to have dinner in *Discreet Charm*) experience the same (or at least, similar) perception of reality, the interference of individual visions and dreams disrupts continuity. In *Exterminating Angel*, some characters appear to die or disappear (or both), and several experience hallucinatory visions. The amount of time trapped in the living room is ambiguous. In *Discreet Charm*, several of the failed dinners are revealed to be dreams of one particular character. Even when all the characters are gunned down in the film's climax, they reappear walking down the road—and this suggests that their murder was also a dream.

FILMS

AGE OF GOLD

SOCIETY

Class The first human characters presented in the film are the poor: the wandering vagabond and the rag-tag bandits in the shack. Buñuel and Dalí suggest that their yearning to fight back against the invaders is a just cause, if a futile one. While they attempt to fight back, their efforts result in an early death, thereby giving way to the arrival of the rich on shore. As in many of Buñuel's films, *The Age of Gold* provides a strong critique of the bourgeoisie. The rich characters at the party ignore the plights of their servants and the wars that surround them. The extreme occurrences in the party fail to disrupt the guests' mingling—no one even turns their head when the enormous carriage drives through the living room or when the female servant dies from the kitchen fire. Even though the party guests do pay attention to the murder of the young boy outside, their interest only lasts a minute or two. After each death or tragedy, they resume their festivities. In addition, the bourgeois characters stifle their desires and impulses. It is only the Marquis's daughter who continues to subvert the expectations of her station and indulge in her sexuality. Conversely, the 18th-century dukes in the castle engage in full debauchery and exploitation of the kidnapped women. Their station does not prevent them from exploring their darkest desires, yet the seclusion in the castle suggests that they recognize their own immorality.

Religion While it could be argued that the critique of the bourgeois is more scathing than that of the Church in the film, it cannot be denied that Buñuel and Dalí take a less than sympathetic attitude towards the clergy and Catholicism. The symbolic bishops either die in their regalia on the rocky shore or are thrown out of the window, and the priests end up playing violins on repeat at the party concert. In the end, the clergy act as performative relics who do not actually impact the world around them. Along with throwing out the clergy, Buñuel also underscores the hypocrisy and repression of the Catholic Church in general. The lovers are never able to fulfill their desire largely due to the interruptions of their conscience or the literal intervening of the clergy. In particular, the female lover is led away by nuns on more than one occasion. The male lover's visions frequently interrupt his concentration on sex, including his focus on the statue's toes and the vision of priests crossing a bridge. The implication is that the Church's teachings overcome their sexual drives to the extent that intercourse never occurs.

POLITICS

Rebellion In a general sense, the lovers and the dukes are rebelling against society's norms of behavior. They are giving themselves over to the desires of their Id (see PSYCHOLOGY below). In addition, there is a reference to an actual rebellion of the bandits—they leave the safety of the shack to fight against the onslaught of the Mallorquins. According to film critic Agustín Sánchez Vidal, the term Mallorquins refer to smugglers who used the island of Mallorca for black market trade. It is little wonder, then, that Buñuel's fellow surrealists played some of the bandits in the early scenes of the film. The bourgeois usurpers arrive on the island, where the residents wish to retain their autonomy. Although it is not named explicitly, there is also some sort of attack on a town in which multiple children die. The Minister's phone call and suicide suggest that the Ministery of the Interior was charged with preventing the massacre, but failed to do so. Buñuel emphasized the consequences of the failed mission by cutting to and from images of the phone call and a mass of citizens fleeing a town square. The rebellion could be interpreted as the people fighting back against a fascist state.

JUSTICE

Crime Multiple murders and indiscretions are depicted or described throughout the film. In most cases, the characters commit the crimes without suffering any consequences; moreover, the characters often display a sadistic delight after committing their violent acts. As the protagonist, the male lover frequently commits immoral acts or outright crimes. He kicks the blind man in order to steal the taxi from him, and he slaps his lover's mother for spilling the wine she brings him. Later, he throws the bishop and the giraffe out the window. When he takes the call from the Minister of the Interior, the male lover scoffs at the report of mass death—even though he was tasked with the secret mission to save "them." In addition to failing his mission, the male lover is also implicated in the Minister's suicide directly after the

call. The implication is that his apathy and selfish lust has led not only to a failed mission, but the murder of many rebels. Infanticide and filicide are also recurring crimes in the film, from the father shooting his son dead to the female lover describing the ecstasy of killing her own children. In the last sequence of the film, the dukes commit kidnapping and rape. In addition, it is unclear whether the Duke of Blangis kills the wounded prostitute after escorting her back inside the castle.

Violence All of the aforementioned crimes contribute to the explicit and implied violence throughout the film. Visually, Buñuel and Dalí pepper the violent moments with bloody or disturbing images, such as the little boy lying face down (and yet still being shot at) or the close-up of the male lover's face covered in blood. There is also an emphasis on injury—Peman's bandaged head, the limping rebels and dukes, and the bandaged finger of the female lover. While the last injury implies masturbation, the others suggest the result of violent acts in war. There is also the suggestion of subjugation through violence, such as the rape of the women in the castle and the male lover kicking the blind man. It should also be noted that the film begins and ends with violence. The first images are those of the scorpions sparring and the rat devouring them. One of the last images is that of the dying woman from the orgy with her blood spilling out onto her white nightgown.

RELATIONSHIP

Sexuality The manifestation of the sexuality usually takes the form of overt or implied masturbation and oral sex. The majority of the male characters carry rifles or knives as symbolic phallus, and sometimes they fire. The female lover's middle finger is bandaged, and she strokes it suggestively right before the party. In two of the most iconic moments of the garden sequences, the lovers suck each other fingers, and the female lover sucks the breast of the marble statue. Despite the perpetual foreplay, the lovers' desire is never quenched; therefore, their desire remains a motivating force throughout the film. The lovers caress, stroke, and suck each other's body parts, but penetration never occurs. This delayed gratification prolongs the erotic tension of almost the entire movie. In the concluding sequence, the viewer surmises that the dukes have actually finished their orgy, which among other sadistic acts, includes penetration in more than one way. In this sense, the dukes are allowed to "finish," but only do so because of their debauched and oppressive behavior towards the captive women.

Sadomasochism The most overt sadomasochism in the film is textual—the title cards describe the orgy at the castle and explain that along with normal sex, the dukes are abusing and committing violence against their female victims. Of course, this description on the title cards alludes directly to the Marquis de Sade's novel *120 Days of Sodomy* (1785). Even before this overly sadistic conclusion, Buñuel and Dalí included several moments when the lovers engage in sadism or masochism. The male lover revels in kicking the blind man, slapping the hostess at the party, and crushing the beetle under his shoe. The female lover enjoys moments of sadism, including her arousal when her lover slaps her mother and her ecstatic phrases about committing infanticide. Both lovers enjoy masochistic moments in the garden, as they stop themselves and each other from having intercourse. In this sense, they are continually delaying their own gratification.

Fetishism As with many of Buñuel's films, *The Age of Gold* routinely features objects invested with erotic meaning. The phallic objects include the multitude of guns and the phone receiver dangling on a chord. Some rifles remain props that are unused, whereas others go off in a satisfying show of violence. Fingers are also stand-ins for penises—particularly the female lover's aching middle finger. Ironically, the breast and nipple of the marble statue become phallic in that the female lover performs fellatio on the breast. In addition to the phallic fetishes, there are also dresses and images of women that become invested with eroticism. When the male lover first walks down a Roman street, he is transfixed by the images of women in poster ads. The add featuring a woman leaning back in a black dress fades into the image of the female lover in the same pose with the same dress. There is also the foreplay of the male lover dragging the white dress with a train down the long hallway. Finally, Buñuel also creates verbal and visual double entendre with his use of dirt, dust, powder, and mud throughout the film. As film critics Guy H. Wood and Javier Herrera Novaro note, the vulgar Spanish expressions for intercourse—*echar un buen polvo* (have a good screw, or literally, throw oneself around in dirt/ powder) and *revolcón* (roll in the hay, but with dirt)—use dirt and powder as signifiers for sex. It is little wonder, then, that the lovers' clothing becomes even more eroticized with dirt and mud stains.

PYCHOLOGY

Id Although the lovers do not ever achieve intercourse or perhaps orgasm, they routinely give into their subconscious or illicit sexual desire and violence. The examination and exploration of the Id and the subconscious mind was at the heart of the surrealist movement, so it follows that Buñuel and Dalí allowed the characters to act out their subconscious desires. The lovers' impulses to roll around on the ground and suck various body parts and objects suggests that they give into their subconscious desire—at least for a few moments. Often, their egos or superegos intervene and make them feel shame or concern, thus interrupting their innermost wishes. In addition to sex, the male lover lets himself engage in impulsive acts of violence that spit in the face of civilized behavior, including kicking the blind man and slapping the female lover's mother. Buñuel and Dalí also used symbolic images to underscore the pull of illicit or primordial desire. The lovers' first attempt at sex occurs in the mud of the "ancient" seashore, and the male lover envisions a bubbling cauldron of lava. When the male lover throws objects and people out of the window, we see the giraffe landing in a roiling ocean. Finally, the nature of the 18th-century orgy suggests that the dukes have hidden in the castle so that they can engage in their darkest fantasies away from civilization.

AN ANDULASIAN DOG

SOCIETY

Cultural References Many film and literary critics have analyzed how Buñuel folds in frequent literary, artistic, and film references into his cinematic creations. This penchant for references and metareferences appears in *Andalusian Dog*. For his part, Dalí tended to recreate images or postures from iconic paintings, including Vermeer's *The Lacemaker* (1670) and Jean-Francois Millet's painting *The Angelus (*c.1859). According to film critics Guy Wood and Javier Herrera Navarro, Buñuel parodies early westerns throughout *Andalusian Dog*. In particular, they argue that the ways in which the Young Man wields his pistols is reminiscent of the quintessential gunslingers of *The Virginian* (1902) or *The Great Train Robbery* (1903). As with many of Buñuel's films after this inaugural short, Buñuel embraces Gothic imagery and stylized gore in *Andalusian Dog*. In particular, Buñuel references a long literary tradition of the grotesque in the art and literature of Spain stretching back to the Baroque era.

Illustrative Moment: Young Girl Reading The camera cuts to an interior shot of the Young Girl reading. When she is startled by a noise, she jumps up and drops her book. The open pages reveal a copy of a painting that looks similar to Vermeer's *The Lacemaker*. The Young Girl looks through her balcony window at the Young Man, who is approaching on his bike. This overt reference to a Vermeer painting early in the short sets up the sense of frames within frames**—**that is, the meta imagery of a painting in a book in a film, which in turn, draws the viewer's attention to the artistic mechanism of creating an image (or frame) in the film. Later, there is an echo of reference to the artistic process when the Young Man approaches the writing desk with a paintbrush cocked at an angle. In both moments, Dalí signals his own subjectivity as a painter within the artistic creative space of the film.

Religion Many of the images in this film suggest a disdain towards the Catholic Church. The Young Man appears early in the film as a sort of travelling nun: he wears a habit-like (white) hat and collar and black dress over his trousers. This imagery juxtaposes the purity of the order with the social subversion of transvestism or gender-bending. When the man is lying in bed, he finds himself dressed again as the nun until the Second Man enters and rips off his nun-like accessories. The implication is that the Young Man may want to experiment with his gender or sexuality, but society (in the form of the Church or men in authority) prevent him from doing so. The most overt references to Christianity occur during the aggressive seduction (or attempted rape) sequence in the Young Girl's bedroom. When the Young Man picks up the ropes, the first objects attached to them are two tablets.

Illustrative Moment: Donkeys or Priests? The Young Man continues to pull on the two ropes and drag the donkeys and pianos slowly across the bedroom floor. However, when the Young Man looks back at his cargo, he sees two living priests attached to the ropes. The Young Girl, conversely, still sees the dead donkeys on the piano. The camera continues cutting between the faces of the couple and the two visions of the cargo. The implication is that the man is pulling the Ten Commandments and he is prevented from having sex due to the mandates of the Church. Although the ropes are initially attached to grand pianos with dead donkeys on them, they become two priests. In this sense, the priests are "dragging the Young Man down" with shame.

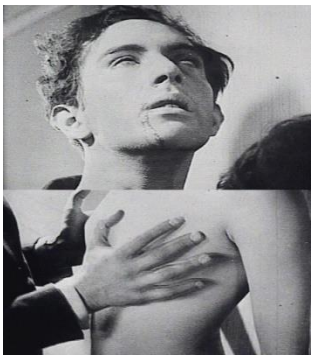
Gender The Young Man's primary motivation is sex. Like many other male protagonists in Buñuel's future films, however, the Young Man never achieves actual penetration. The Young Girl is the illusive object of his desire. The lack of sex suggests not only repression but also an attraction towards queer or subversive forms of gender, sexuality, and desire. The Young Man engages in travestism and literally fights himself, which could indicate an acknowledgement of sexual transgression. This notion of sexual or gender transgression also appears in the way in which the Androgynous Woman dresses. The viewer does not immediately identify her as a woman, and her "transgression" is punished through death by impact. With respect to the Young Girl, she does not appear to be sexually attracted to the Young Man and rejects his advances. She has some transgressive agency in that she rejects one man and comes on to another.

Illustrative Moment: Confrontation Between Men The second man enters the bedroom and sees the Young Man lying on the bed in the nun-like outfit. He approaches and screams at the Young Man, who remains immobile. The second man shakes the Young Man by his lapel, then lifts him to his feet. The second man strips off the accessories and throws them out of the window violently. The camera cuts to shots of the white items dropping down from the balcony window. The Young Man, now dressed in a suit and the striped tie, cowers as the second man continues berating him. In this scene, the Second Man acts as society as a whole in that he is stripping away the fluid or experimental gender trappings of the Young Man in that moment. The "queerness" is literally thrown out the window, and the Young Man resumes his performance of heteronormative / cisgender behavior in his traditional suit.

Sexuality

Id Although the lovers do not ever achieve intercourse or perhaps orgasm, they routinely give into their subconscious or illicit sexual desire and violence. The examination and exploration of the Id and the subconscious mind was at the heart of the surrealist movement, so it follows that Buñuel and Dalí allowed the characters to act out their subconscious desires and fears. The Young Man addresses both continuously—he indulges in sexual fantasies and impulses with the Young Girl, and he acts out violence against "himself" and others. The sudden transference of images to violence (such as shaving to cutting the eye and books to pistols) underscores the subconscious's tendency to create violent scenarios. The implication is that the Young Man both fears and is aroused by sexual and gender transgression, which is why he enjoys seeing the Androgynous Woman hit by the car. All of the main characters express a fear of death, both as the moment of losing life and the ambiguous states of transformation post-mortem. The rotting donkeys and the insects reflect a fascination with putrefaction. Whereas it could be argued that the ego and superego abhor death, dying, and rotting, the Id brings the repressed fears and curiosity to the surface.

Illustrative Moment: Foreplay Harassment The Young Man, now obviously aroused, grabs the Young Girl's waist and breasts. She backs away from him, but he keeps following her around the bedroom and grabbing her breasts. In one moment, he closes his eyes and imagines that the Young Girl is naked. He continues to massage her breasts, then imagines that they are the woman's buttocks. The camera shows his fantasies of the naked body parts. The Young Girl breaks away from the Young Man, and he chases her around the bedroom. The association of violence with arousal indicates that the Young Man is giving into the desires of his Id, hence his explicitly sexual imagination. The impetus to dominate (and potentially rape) the Young Girl also emphasizes the lack of social constraints or superego in this particular moment.



Sadomasochism The Young Man's very first fantasy is sadistic—he dreams about slicing the Young Girl's eye open with a razor. Later, he takes sadistic pleasure in watching the Androgynous Woman hit by the car, then immediately harassing the Young Girl. He is aroused both by the danger of the woman's position in the street and her ultimate violent death. Immediately after she is hit, the Young Man chases the Young Girl around the bedroom and acts as though he might rape her. The Young Girl also has moments of sadism in her desire to punish the Young Man for his crimes, most notably slamming his arm in the door after the attempted rape. As stated above in the Id category, all of the characters "dance with" death despite their fears and revulsions. The Young Man confronts death head on with the duel with himself, and the Young Girl witnesses the dead and dying around the Young Man—she is the one who sees the donkey carcasses and the death moth. Both characters vacillate between a fascination with death and a fear of their own mortality.

Illustrative Moment: Watching the Accident The camera cuts to a shot of the couple in the bedroom looking at the spectacle below from the Young Girl's balcony windows. They comment to each other about the situation below. When the camera cuts back to the street, the Androgynous Woman remains in the middle of the street, clutching the striped handbag. Two cars rush by her, but the woman remains stationary. The Young Man continues to watch and becomes increasingly excited with each near-miss of the rushing cars. Finally, one car hits the woman head-on. She lies dead in the street. The Young Man, whipped into a frenzy, stares intently at the Young Girl. Once again, the Young Man's arousal is stimulated by violence, voyeurism, and transgression. He gives into his subconscious, which then becomes the driving force of most of the film.

Fetishism Remarkably, the ubiquitous foot fetish of many Buñuel films is missing in this particular short. However, *Andalusian Dog* does include several phallic and vaginal references. In addition, clothes and objects are invested with erotic meaning. The most phallic objects are the weapons that the Young Man wields against himself and others—the razor and the pistols. In addition, Buñuel and Dalí placed the paintbrush at the work desk and the rifle in the beach sand at a 70-degree angle, thereby suggesting an erect penis. Conversely, the focus on black hair, mounds, and circles evokes both the pubis and the outer labia of the vagina. It is notable that whenever there is a close-up of the striped handbag, we see a keyhole. The Young Girl is the one person who opens the handbag, even though the Young Man and the Androgynous Woman cling to it tightly. The implication is that the characters wish to open the handbag by penetrating the keyhole, but they are unable to fulfill their desires. Finally, cross-dressing as a practice is framed as fetishistic. The Second Man punishes the Young Man for his nun-like attire, and the Androgynous Woman is punished for not adhering to gender norms in public. Because cross-dressing is framed as subversive, the articles of clothing and props attached to the practice become eroticized—most notably, the striped handbag. The compartmentalization of the body also lends itself to fetishization. The severed hand and the sliced eye are framed fetishistically, if violently. Film critic Sarah Cooper also notes how the final shot of the lovers buried in sand emphasizes the fetishized torso.

Illustrative Moment: Mound and Circle Images The shot of the Young Girl's armpit hair transitions to a hairy black circle (similar to sea urchin) amidst a sandy beach. Then, there is an aerial shot of a figure with short hair using a stick to poke a severed hand. A crowd swarms around the figure. When the camera cuts to a full-length shot of the figure, we see that she is an androgynous woman with slicked-back hair and a tailored suit. There are several close-ups of the severed hand with a bloody stump interspliced with the concerned and angry faces of the crowd. A policeman tries to intervene and prevent the Androgynous Woman's poking of the hand. There is another aerial shot of the crowd forming a perfect circle around the woman. The policeman disperses the crowd and hands the Androgynous Woman the striped handbag. The armpit hair looks like pubic hair, which then reminds the viewers of female genitalia in general. The fragmentation of the body (that is, the parts unnervingly detached from context) enhances the surreal grotesqueness of the film as a whole.

LIFE STAGES

Death Much of the imagery in the film refers to the encroachment of death or the embodiment of death. The characters seem to be simultaneously fascinated and stimulated (sometimes sexually) by death, while also experiencing fear and revulsion. This duality likely emphasizes the psychological struggle between the dirty desires of the Id and the social constructs that the Superego demands. It is unclear whether the Young Man's fantasy of slicing the Young Girl's eye results in death or dismemberment, but his actions suggest a tendency towards violence and murder. The Androgynous Woman is hit by a car early in the film, thereby presaging the untimely death of the Young Man. The Young Man kills "himself," and his body is carted off in a funeral procession. Later, the Young Man assumes the form of a black moth that evokes a feeling of death. All the characters are surrounded by images of death and putrescence. The dead donkeys on the pianos not only constitute literal and figurative weight; they are also reminders of post-mortem rot.

Illustrative Moment: Forest Procession The camera cuts to a shot of the Young Man's dead body in a clearing in a forest. Two men approach and spot the dead body. Together, a group of men pick up the body and carry it across the clearing. There is a shot front the front as the men carry the dead body pall-bearer style. Then, there is a wide panoramic shot of the forest with the men, now small, walking away slowly. This scene acts as a confirmation that the Young Man is, in fact, dead, and his body is being carried away. The recognizable traits of a funeral signal to the viewer that the preceding murder of the Young Man by his doppelgänger was not an imagined psychological exercise, but a literal murder. However, Buñuel subverts his own message by reincarnating the Young Man as the moth and a figment of the Young Girl's imagination. Whether he be literally or figuratively dead, the essence and presence of death is unmistakable.

CHANGE

Transformation Throughout the film, Bunuel and Dalí edit the frames in such a way that the human and animal characters (or body parts) suddenly morph into other entities. The Young Man creates his own double, changes in and out of his "nun" outfits, and turns into a post-mortem moth. The Young Girl's eye becomes the moon in the night sky, and her armpit hair transforms into a black sea urchin. Often, the mode of transformation is ambiguous or sudden, with the result that the viewer cannot track the chronology of change over time. Not only is the logic of the change non-existent, time is often suspended all-together. Yet somehow, the transition is realized through the surrealist editing. The overarching theme of death (see above) also creates a sense of transition. The characters pass from life to death. In addition, the viewer sees the transformation of flesh through decomposition—most overtly with the shots of the rotting donkeys on the pianos and the dried blood on the severed hand. The frequent close-ups on insects also imply decomposition.

Illustrative Moment: Moth Transference The Young Girl returns to her bedroom. When she opens the door, she sees a moth on the wall across the room. There are several successive close-ups of the moth, ending on the pattern on its head. When the Young Girl looks again, the Young Man has replaced the moth. The couple stare at each other from across the room until the Young Man's mouth is obscured by black hair. The Young Girl raises her arm and notices that her armpit is shaved. She makes faces at the Young Man and sticks her tongue out at him. In this sequence, Bunuel creates the literal transformation of human into insect into hair. There is also a transference of power and subjectivity, as the Young Girl remains alive, spurns the Young Man's reincarnated / imagined form, and proceeds to walk arm in arm with her replacement beau.

THE CRIMINAL LIFE OF ARCHIBALDO DE LA CRUZ

SOCIETY

Class: *Social Status* Archibaldo incarnates the rich artist and represents a viable partner for Carlota, whose mother fixates on getting her daughter an appropriate husband. Along with his inherited wealth, Archibaldo represents the successful dandy of mid-twentieth-century Mexico. His family came out of the Mexican Revolution with their wealth intact, and Archibaldo can continue the posh family lineage even with the post-revolutionary disdain for wealth and pedigree. Although Archibaldo proposes to and eventually marries Carlota, he is also attracted to inappropriate women—inappropriate in large part due to their being working class or poor. Patricia behaves in a trashy fashion and is a gambling addict. Lavinia, while classier than Patricia, is positioned in a much lower class that Archibaldo. Her multiple jobs suggests that she has to work constantly to survive, and for the most part, she dislikes her work. In this sense, the women represent the working-class Mexican who did not benefit from the ideals of the Revolution nor from the promises of a thriving capitalistic Mexico at mid-century.

JUSTICE

Crime As the title of the film suggests, the action of the plot is Archibaldo's crimes. Yet, he only manages to commit them in his mind or by proxy. The central question turns on intention. Are Archibaldo's nefarious motivations enough to "convict" him of murder or manslaughter? His attempt to stab the nun certainly supports a charge of attempted murder. It is not so much the "criminal life" of Archibaldo, but rather the psychopathic and homicidal tendencies of all of the male characters in the film. The central crime is that of attempting to control or possess the female characters, then taking it upon oneself to "punish" the rebellious woman who disobeys or leaves her partner. We can assume that Alejandro is incarcerated for murdering Carlota, but Archibaldo escapes without justice for the victims. The judge rules that fantasy does not constitute a punishable crime.

Violence The concept of violence constitutes the connective tissue of the film: the male characters wish to control their female partners to the extent that they are willing to kill them. However, the violence of the murders throughout the film is more implied. Even when Archibaldo rehearses the murder in his mind, it is a largely stylized fantasy without blood, struggling, pain, etc. Unlike other Buñuel's early surrealist films or the later French satires, there are not very many overtly violent images in *Criminal Life*. The one notable exception are the shots of the governess's dead body in the early scenes of the film. We see the blood from her temple (and later, blood gushing out), and her legs lying in a peculiar fashion. This image of the dead governess comes from Archibaldo's young gaze, and we immediately see how he is eroticizing and fetishizing death. This rather mild characterization of violence sets the tone for the whole film as a stylized mystery novel in the vein of Raymond Chandler or a suspense film in the style of Alfred Hitchcock.

RELATIONSHIPS

Sexuality

Desire Archibaldo's desire is not so much about sex, but rather his attraction to the idea of each woman. The lack of actual penetration (either with a weapon or intercourse) could imply that Archibaldo is impotent, gay, a transvestite, or is struggling with a combination of repressed queer desires.

Conversely, we could also interpret Archibaldo's desire for murder as an extension of his sexual attraction to each of his would-be victims. For this reason, his desire takes the form of violent fantasies. Many of the fantasies feature an erotic framing of the dead body—in particular, an emphasis on legs and necks. Archibaldo plays out this particular interest in the neck and legs by gazing at (and ultimately burning) the mannequin that looks like Lavinia. In addition, Archibaldo experiences attraction and arousal through the imagery of fire. His obsession with Lavinia, in particular, ends with seeing her face glowing above flames at the club and manifests itself in the incinerated mannequin. Alejandro, Carlota's lover, actually enacts his revenge by shooting Carlota on her wedding day. Although the other male characters are not as psychopathic or homicidal with their fantasies, they also show an obsessive desire to control their female counterparts. Both Willy and Chucho try to dominate Patricia and Lavinia, respectively.

Erotic Triangles With the exception of the nun in the hospital, each of Archibaldo's would-be victims is already involved with another man, and an inappropriate one at that. Lavinia and Patricia have opportunistic relationships with older men who try to control them. When Archibaldo intervenes as a younger, more charismatic alternative, the women consider him as an alternate for their chosen partners. As film critic Geoffrey Kantaris explains, Archibaldo continually reenacts an Oedipal longing by pursuing the women who "belong" to a substitute father figure. With regard to Carlota, Archibaldo plays the role of the rich, stable partner, with Alejandro as the obsessive and psychopathic lover. Carlota's anxiety originates in her position as the object of desire between two men. Although Archibaldo does not actually engage in the rivalries with the men, his attraction to the women is driven at least in part to the realization that they are already taken and therefore "forbidden fruit." Conversely, the women's partners are threatened by Archibaldo and do try to engage him in a rivalry.

Oedipal Complex It is hardly surprising that Archibaldo has psychopathic tendencies. However, it could be argued that Archi's fascination with murder is a manifestation of an enduring oedipal complex, as film critics Peter Evans and Geoffrey Kantaris, among others, assert. The first scene in the film is that of Archibaldo, as a boy, watching his parents get ready to go out to a party. He longs to hold on to his mother, but she leaves with his father instead. As a result, Archibaldo transfers the longing for his mother into the music box and its supposed magic powers. The power of the music box compels him to buy it from the antique shop as an adult. In addition, Archibaldo enacts a rivalry with the older lovers (Willy and Chucho) of Patricia and Lavinia, respectively. When the women go out with him, it is as though Archibaldo possesses his mother and defeats his father. Rather than sex, the ultimate possession of the women in Archibaldo's fantasies is causing their death.

Fetishism Like most of Buñuel's male protagonists, Archibaldo invests erotic meaning into objects, particularly when those objects constitute substitutes for the women whom he wishes to kill. The most obvious fetish is the mannequin modeled after Lavinia. He looks up the mannequin's skirt, reveals its legs, strangles it, and burns it. When the high-heeled shoe and leg come off of the mannequin, the "body" becomes even more eroticized and fetishized. Lavinia as a flesh and blood woman is also fetishized due to her presentational jobs. As a model, she is the inspiration for her artistic doppelgangers. Even her work as a guide suggests that she presents herself as exoticized version of Mexican womanhood for the tourists to enjoy. The music box becomes fetishized because it acts as a stand-in for Archibaldo's mother, hence his obsession with both the tune and the dancing ballerina on top. Archibaldo also wields weapons that have phallic symbolism: the knives and gun, in particular. Notably, he never gets the opportunity to use the weapons on the female bodies. There is also Archibaldo's walking cane that is largely ornamental; as yet another phallic prop, Archibaldo throws his cane into the woods of Chapultepec Park once he is "freed" of his homicidal tendencies. In this sense, the phallic objects remain impotent and ineffective. Finally, there is an emphasis on commodity fetishism in the modern and capitalistic society of Mexico in the 1950s. The characters buy and sell goods constantly, and they themselves become the "goods" on occasion.

PSYCHOLOGY

Imagination As the primary narrator, Archibaldo weaves his own story (or stories) throughout the film. Much of his narration is a confession of what he imagines, although there is also the attempted enactment of his fantasies. The origin of his psychopathy is the fairy tale that both his mother and the governess tell him. The story becomes the catalyst for Archibaldo's fascination with the music box,

homicide, and the dead body of the governess. In fact, the mere thought of music box melody provokes the mental rehearsal of the murders. During the fantasy sequences, the murder is stylized rather than realistic: there is mist or fog and jarring close-ups to faces contorted in fear or sadism. Because of his vivid imagination and the other factors surrounding the deaths of the women in his life, the judge dismisses Archibaldo's homicidal tendencies as the result of an overactive imagination and reading too many mystery novels. Moreover, Archibaldo's ability to fantasize allows him to pretend as though he is killing Lavinia through the medium of the mannequin. Like a method actor, Archibaldo believes his own imagined circumstances. It could also be argued that Archibaldo's imagination enhances his creativity as a ceramic artist.

Metaperformance and Metanarrative As with many of Buñuel's films, *Criminal Life* plays with the concept of performance and performativity. The original title, "Rehearsal of a Crime," underscores the idea of Archibaldo's murderous fantasies as a performative effort. He is acting out the machinations of each murder in his mind. In the case of the nun and Lavinia, we could say that Archibaldo is performing a run-though that is interrupted by circumstance. The theatrical nature of Archibaldo's fantasies becomes more pronounced with his use of props: weapons, and most overtly, the mannequin. The psychopath "practices" strangulation on the mannequin in a very presentational manner. In the wedding scene, we see Carlota in the "crosshairs" through the lens of the photographer's camera—a frame within a frame. Along with the fantasy rehearsal scenes, Archibaldo's story is stitched together as a series of flashbacks within multiple narratives. In the early scenes, Archi is telling the nun about his childhood, yet the real flashback is "kicked off" by the voiceover Archi showing the book with the violent pictures of the Mexican Revolution. Within the childhood flashback, there is also the governess's story about the music box. Later, the recent flashbacks of Archi's adult life are wrapped up in Archibaldo's meta-narrative to the judge. As the audience, the judge is entertained and does not take the confession seriously. He even compares Archibaldo's story to *novelas de entrega* (mystery novels). The meta reference suggests that Usigli, Buñuel and Ugarte (the writers) admit their own reliance on crime novel or film noir tropes in the creation of the story. In this sense, the narratives and the performances are layered throughout the film.

QUEST

Explore Because Archibaldo is an artist with means, he has the time and energy to fully indulge the fantasies of his troubled psyche. With each rehearsed murder, he is thinking about and planning the enactment of his oedipal complex and id. The planning stage becomes the psychological exploration due to the fact that he never manages to kill his would-be victims. Even his attempts to confess and be punished for the crimes is not successful. In this sense, the quest is for completion or recognition, but neither manifests itself. The psychopathy ends with Archibaldo's supposed conversion in Chapultepec Park, although the viewer may suspect that he will resume his exploration soon enough. Due to his open-ended criminality, literary critic Sydney Donnell likens Archibaldo's lust for murder and hunger for recognition to the imagined quests of Don Quixote. In both cases, the protagonists are men of leisure who are inspired by literature (Archibaldo by detective novels and Don Quixote by chivalric romances and tales), and both suffer from at least mild mental conditions. In addition, both men obsess over objects of desire but maintain a chaste distance. Despite the fact that the characters relinquish their quest at the end of the film and novel, respectively, both men could pick up their crazy adventures where they left off. In this sense, the quest never truly ends.

APPEARANCE

Deception Nearly all the characters wear a social mask that hides their real desires and secrets. Obviously, Archibaldo manages to suppress his murderous fantasies temporarily and play the charming host and suitor. Some critics also suggest that Archibaldo is hiding a latent homosexuality, which is evidenced by his homicidal (but not necessarily erotic) attraction to women, his fetishistic obsession with female clothes and doppelgangers, his strange preference for milk over hard liquor, and his chivalrous attitude towards his girlfriends (rather than sexual conquest or sexual encounters). His performance is convincing in that the women enjoy his company; moreover, Mrs. Cervantes considers him the perfect mate for Carlota. Although Patricia states her desires and complaints overtly, the other female characters vacillate and equivocate. Carlota pretends to be chaste and pious to secure Archibaldo, but she is really Alejandro's mistress. Lavinia performs multiple versions of herself not only for Chucho and Archibaldo,

but also as part of her jobs. She becomes the literal object of the gaze as a model, and she creates a persona that is amenable to the gringo tourists. In the end, both Archibaldo and Lavinia tire of their constant performances and vow to be true to themselves. The implication is that all Mexicans in the post-revolutionary and post-WWII period participate in the fast-moving, capitalistic society of the period, and survival often depends upon deception and a willingness to submit to social norms.

BELLE DE JOUR

SOCIETY

Class As with many of Buñuel's films, *Belle de Jour* satirizes the bourgeoisie. Pierre and Séverine appear to be the perfect couple: they are young, beautiful, successful, well-off, respected, and likely to be fertile and good parents. Séverine's ennui derives from boredom and her masochistic tendencies, and her foray into prostitution provides a break from her bourgeois coma. Ironically, Séverine's "classy" demeanor (buttressed by designer clothes) makes her the most popular whore in Madame Anaïs's brothel. Unlike the prostitute Mathilde, who must turn tricks to survive financially and support her disabled boyfriend, Séverine has the privilege of "slumming it," then leaving when she is slated. When Séverine first appears at Madame Anaïs's apartment, the madame tries to assuage her anxiety by saying that everyone needs money "now and again." The implication is that Anaïs herself is only one step above working class and must keep her regulars happy. Séverine, conversely, expects to hold onto to the comfort and protection of her class, but she learns by the end of the film that she cannot have it both ways. This portrayal of the bourgeois as both repressed and selfish appears in many of Buñuel's French films, as well as in one of his best Mexican efforts, *The Exterminating Angel*. In both *Belle de Jour* and *Angel*, the bourgeois are "punished" for their excesses.

Illustrative Moment: Séverine's First Time in the Designer Dress
Anaïs goes to open the door for the man outside, who she explains to Séverine is their most loyal customer—a candy executive named Adolphe. Séverine grabs her purse and coat and starts to move to the door, but Anaïs intercepts her. Séverine is presented to the john with the other prostitutes, who are named Charlotte and Mathilde. Charlotte sits on Adolphe's lap while he gazes at Séverine. The john compliments Belle de Jour on her classy demeanor and posh dress, and everyone drinks champagne in honor of Belles's premiere. Adolphe gives Charlotte a present that looks like a candy container, but when she opens it, snakes pop out. Everyone laughs except Séverine, and Adolphe approaches her and asks why she is so moody. When he unzips her dress and throws Séverine on the bed, she jumps up and runs out of the room. Although Séverine (now Belle de Jour) is presented with the other two prostitutes, she stands out from Mathilde and Charlotte. All of the characters notice that Belle de Jour is wearing designer clothes that lend her an air of sophistication, although Adolphe remarks that "you can't buy class." Beyond her classy bourgeois appearance, Séverine also has privilege that Mathilde and Charlotte do not enjoy. Because she does not need the money, Séverine can spurn or say no to the johns (which she does on multiple occasions). Even though Séverine misbehaves or is unprofessional, Madame Anaïs indulges her, knowing that her class will continue to attract business.

JUSTICE

Crime From very early in the film, the characters discuss and debate whether prostitution constitutes a real crime. Séverine mentions several times that brothels are illegal, but both her husband and the taxi driver explain that brothels exist and thrive throughout Paris, albeit underground. Madame Anaïs does little to hide her business—the prostitutes work out of an ordinary apartment with johns coming and going all day long. Moreover, Séverine quickly learns that all of the men in her life have visited brothels. Even her upright husband Pierre admits that he has felt the shame of spending a half hour with a prostitute, and Henri openly brags about being a regular. Prostitution seems to be a crime in name only. The real crimes appear in the last third of the film, when Hippolyte and Marcel wreak havoc not only on the brothel, but on Parisian society as a whole. The implication is that Hippolyte is

a Spanish drug lord and Marcel a thief and henchman, and their criminal behavior in the city streets also endangers the brothel. Charlotte, in particular, fears these particular johns. Marcel's crimes escalate to the point that he attempts to murder Pierre, and as the doctors explain later, Marcel had killed before.

Illustrative Moment: Completing the Drug Deal Marcel and Hippolyte wait at a table in a café. Two men enter and join them at the table. They show their displeasure about a deal and complain that Hippolyte keeps upping his cut. One of the men calls Marcel a thug, and Marcel brandishes his knife. Hippolyte tells everyone to calm down and tells his associates that he knows they have "the snow." The men hand over a package of cocaine and leave quickly. This scene fleshes out Marcel and Hippolyte's sinister characters. The viewer already knows that they are thieves with violent tendencies, but this drug deal reveals that Hippolyte is involved in an international trafficking network and Marcel acts as his henchman. Like in other Buñuel films, violent crime interrupt moments of bourgeois pleasure and tranquility, thereby underscoring the larger societal problems in France or Europe as a whole.

RELATIONSHIP

Sexuality

Desire In many of Buñuel's films, the focus on desire flows from the older male gaze and objectifies the young woman, who in turn, either submits to the old Don Juan or rebels and explores her own sexuality with a young man. In *Belle de Jour*, there are a plethora of men (of varying ages, ethnicities, and backgrounds) who gaze at Séverine and desire her. Whether bourgeois wife or prostitute, Séverine is objectified and fetishized through the male gaze. As film critic Michael Wood explains, Séverine is meant to be "looked at but not understood." Henri lusts after Séverine in part because of her cool beauty and in part because he admires Pierre and by extension, the wife that he "possesses." As with many Buñuelian husbands and boyfriends, Pierre suffers rejection and unrequited and unfulfilled sexual drive. However, Buñuel is more interested in Séverine's sexuality and desire in this particular film. She attains some agency and subjectivity as the one who decides her own actions and as the subject who fantasizes. The viewer feels Séverine's desires because she sees Séverine's fantasies as well as her first-hand experiences with the johns. In addition, Séverine chooses to subvert societal norms when she actually goes through with her prostitution (and even learns to enjoy it).

Illustrative Moment: Sex Play with the Korean John and His Insect Anaïs presents Séverine to a portly Korean gentleman who speaks very little French. Séverine kisses his cheek while he and Anaïs discuss the payment. He pays happily and they go together to one of the rooms. The john shows her a black lacquer box that has some sort of buzzing insect inside. He tells Séverine in broken French not to be afraid and gestures that he wants her to keep her bra on but remove her underwear. The john undresses and flexes his muscles, then he performs a ritual in which he shakes little bells. Séverine continues to caress him and giggles at the performance. Afterwards, Pallas goes into the room to check on Séverine and notices that there are small blood stains on towels and sheets. She tries to comfort Séverine, saying that the john scared her, too. Séverine sits up and has a smirk on her face. She says slyly, "What do you know, Pallas?" While this scene offers yet another example of Séverine's masochism (being stung or cut, perhaps), it also explores the dual desires of a man looking at Belle de Jour and Séverine as a person in control of her own sexuality. Belle de Jour is presented to the john as an alternative piece of merchandise (after Mathilde says no), and he directs her to take off her panties but leave on her bra. Nonetheless, Séverine enjoys getting into character and enacting an international encounter. Her satisfied smile at the end of the scene indicates that her desire for adventure, pain, humiliation, and attention has been quenched.

Fetishism The fetishes in *Belle de Jour* are more subtle than in other Buñuel films. Nonetheless, Buñuel does employ his trademark close-ups on hands and feet, and these shots often occur right before an erotic moment or explicit sexual encounter. We see close-ups of the hands of the man molesting the young teenager (who is later understood to be a young Séverine) and the priest's hand touching the host (in Séverine's memory of her first communion), and there are several close-ups of Séverine's hands and

feet. Séverine's bare back is featured in her first fantasy (where she is whipped) and later when she undresses as the chosen prostitute for the professor (the masochistic john). The professor's masochistic fantasies depend upon specific fetishes related to roll-playing, whips, and being stomped on. The stylish clothes of the bourgeois characters, while serving to visually emphasize their wealth, often acquire more erotic meaning. When Séverine finally agrees to sleep with Adolphe, the other prostitutes and the john comment extensively on the beige designer dress that she is wearing, which is emblematic of her status. Like many of Buñuel's horny male characters, Henri talks about his collection of hunting rifles—a clear phallic fetish. This emphasis on phallic pistols reoccurs in Séverine's period fantasy with the duel between Henri and Pierre. Marcel's cane also becomes fetishized when he uses it to separate Hippolyte and Belle de Jour.

Illustrative Moment: Séverine Climbs the Steps to the Brothel
Séverine walks back to the brothel. She walks slowly up the staircase, and the camera closes in on her petite feet in black pumps as she pauses on each stair and even swivels her feet back and forth. When Anaïs opens the door, the madame remarks that she didn't think Séverine would come back. Obviously, this scene is meant to show Séverine's fear and guilt about becoming a prostitute. Once she crosses Madame Anaïs's threshold for the second time, she has crossed the Rubicon. Buñuel uses his trademark foot fetish to heighten the tension. Rather than focus on Catherine Deneuve's stoic face or flashes of emotion, Buñuel stays in a tight close-up of her feet and the carpet on the stairs. Although the black pumps are not particularly sexy or garish, they become metonyms for Séverine's body as a commodity. Later, when Séverine and Marcel have their second liaison in the brothel, the camera pans to Marcel's red socks with holes and the same pair of modest black pumps on Séverine.

Sadomasochism Séverine's masochist fantasies act as lynchpins that elucidate her relationships with Pierre and Henri, among others. In each of her fantasies, Séverine receives both physical punishment and humiliation from Pierre and at least one other man. While she resists the domination initially, Séverine seems to enjoy getting tied up, whipped, and slapped, and she also leans into whatever humiliation is at hand. When the more violent johns try to dominate her, she also gives into their physical abuse—most notably when Adolphe slaps her to get her to submit to him during her first day on the job. Séverine's masochism is mirrored by the professor's sexual proclivities. Ironically, Séverine lacks sadistic talent and even judges the john for enjoying his humiliation and "sinking so low." The majority of the sadism is imagined and reflects Séverine's illicit desires and boredom before venturing into the world of prostitution. In some ways, her short time as a prostitute constitutes her highest point of masochism. According to film critic Stephen Forcer, Séverine also acts as a sadist in that she is punishing iterations of herself and also enjoys the moments when she has control over the men who desire her.

Illustrative Moment: Severine's Western Masochist Fantasy
Séverine imagines a western scene with cattle roaming the vast plains. The camera cuts to Séverine tied to a post (with her right arm raised at a right angle) and wearing a draped, white gown that is reminiscent of a Roman vestal virgin (also a possible reference to the bull arena scene in the biblical epic *Quo Vadis*). Henri and Pierre sling mud (and possibly cow dung) at Séverine's face and torso while Henri calls her a slut and hurls other insults at her. She moves her head slightly but smiles when the mud hits her cheeks. Beyond the requisite humiliation, this fantasy also suggests that Séverine enjoys being sullied. Her beautiful white dress (an obvious symbol of virtue and perhaps virginity) is ruined by the mud-slinging, and she is enjoying the process. This particular fantasy explains why Séverine enjoys her time as a prostitute—she wants to break free of bourgeois purity and experience an alternate life as a slut.

Alternative / Taboo Sexualities As in most of Buñuel's films, the main characters experiment with taboo or alternative forms of sexuality. Often, the sexual proclivities of the characters (in particular, sadomasochism, obsession, and fetishism) point to deeper psychological issues or conditions. On the other hand, Buñuel also implies that alternative sexualities are normal, healthy, and an effective modality for subverting oppressive societal norms. When Pierre suggests that Henri get therapy early in the film, Renée asserts that he does not have any issues beyond being "rich and idle." In the case of Séverine, her psyche is somewhat of a mystery. Both her fantasies and prostitution could merely be antidotes to ennui and her desire to do something outside of her duties as a housewife. However, her duplicity and guilt suggest that she is motivated by latent psychological issues. There are two flashbacks to Séverine's childhood that imply that she may have been molested, and this early trauma inspired both her frigidity with Pierre and her masochistic fantasies. Séverine's distaste, then craving, for sex also mimics a pattern in many nineteenth-century European novels, where the female protagonist suffers from hysteria (in which she swings between asexuality and extreme erotic desire). The portrayal of the tightly-wound governess or wife in Gothic novels of the early nineteenth-century, in particular, are often cited as inspirations for Buñuel's characters and *mise en scene* –not just in Belle de Jour, but in several of his films. Séverine herself tells Henri that she is "lost," but it is possible that the opposite is true—that is, she has finally found her true sense of self as a prostitute.

Illustrative Moment: Rejecting the Host The camera cuts to the brothel door with the address plate. Séverine approaches slowly, and there is an extended following shot of her walking in the streets. She has second thoughts and walks to a nearby park. She sits on a park bench for a few seconds, then returns to the brothel door. As she walks up the stairs to the apartment, the camera cuts to a flashback of a priest giving Séverine her first communion. The camera closes in on the priest's hands as he retrieves the wafer from the goblet, then cuts to Séverine's young face refusing to open her mouth. The camera cuts back abruptly to the adult Séverine at the top of the stairs. This flashback of Séverine's first communion represents a rejection of mandates: she is rejecting the ritual, the authority of the priest, and her submission (either religious or sexual). The fact that this flashback occurs just as Séverine is approaching the brothel indicates that the protagonist is drawn to prostitution because of childhood trauma.

QUEST

Adventure / Imagination Séverine hungers for something beyond her humdrum, bourgeois life. Her foray into prostitution could be interpreted as rebellion, exploration, or reenacting (or exorcising) trauma. Yet, even before she goes to Madame Anaïs's brothel, Séverine imagines another world outside of the house. Her masochistic fantasies take place in the forest or on the plains, in particular. The interior spaces of "real life" are equated with entrapment and suffocation, whereas the outdoors represent freedom, rebellion, and taboo sexuality. Séverine imagines herself as a different person even when she is physically inside. Film critic Jimmy Hay points to the moments when Séverine breaks glass containers or bleeds, both metaphors for shattering societal norms, losing virginity, or ejaculation. Several critics also describe Séverine's fantasies and brothel adventures as allusions to fairy tale worlds: she crosses over into an alternate, psychedelic universe like Alice in Wonderland or Dorothy, she has to leave at the stroke of 5:00 like Cinderella, and she runs into the woods where predators await her like Little Red Riding Hood or Snow White. I would also add that the scene with the necrophiliac Duke frames Séverine as a Sleeping Beauty. In addition, Catherine Deneuve's blonde hair and ivory skin is reminiscent of a Disney princess. The ending of the film also suggests that Séverine is creating a happy ending for herself through her imagination: either she fantasizes that Pierre is back to his old self (and their marriage is still intact), or the entire sequence of her foray into prostitution was all a dream.

Illustrative Moment: Duel Fantasy The camera cuts to yet another shot of the carriage that pulls up to a clearing in a lush forest. A group of well-heeled men in long period jackets assemble in the clearing. Pierre approaches a table with weapons and there is a prolonged close-up of him loading a pistol. Pierre and Henri stand back-to-back, count out, and turn around. There is a close-up of both men shooting. Pierre, supposedly the victor, walks over to Séverine, who is wearing a red dress and is tied to a tree. Pierre smears a drop of blood that streaked down her left temple, and he kisses her passionately. As with many of Séverine's fantasies, she is wearing a scarlet dress, is tied up, and is outside. In this particular fantasy, however, Séverine is not being humiliated, but rather has the excitement of watching two men fight over her. The men's period costumes and pistols lend an air of romanticism to this fantasy, as if she is imagining herself to be a nineteenth-century damsel in distress.

Curiosity Séverine longs to break out of her bourgeois ennui, but her choice of prostitution rather than some other form of sexual or social rebellion is largely due to her curiosity. Once she learns that Renée's friend Henriette works in a brothel, the possibility of this outlet becomes more enticing to her. Rather than investigate on her own, Séverine asks the men in her life to describe the brothel and the prostitutes inside. Her curiosity drives her to cross over into another world, like Alice in Wonderland. Séverine likely also wishes to try out a version of her masochistic fantasies with strangers; she wonders whether she can quench her desire for humiliation and satisfaction through this taboo profession. Despite the film's focus on Séverine's psyche and desires, several of the other characters are also driven by curiosity. Madame Anaïs and the other prostitutes wonder about Séverine's background and motivations, but she refuses to give them even basic information such as her name and address. Many of the johns wish to know more about the new girl, even though her mysterious air is what attracts them to her. Marcel's curiosity turns into obsession as he wants to possess Séverine and get rid of the other man in her life.

Illustrative Moment: Repulsed Yet Enticed at the Tennis Club Séverine has just finished a tennis match at a swanky club, and when she goes into the lobby, she sees Henri. He greets her, and Séverine asks if he has visited brothels. Henri admits his tastes immediately and says that brothels have a special character—especially since the prostitutes are almost like slaves. He also mentions one specific brothel run by the madame name Anaïs. Henri leans in and tries to kiss Séverine. She pulls away, offended. Henri suggests a tryst without Pierre, and Séverine walks away briskly. Henri calls after her, giving her the address of the brothel. Even though Séverine is offended by Henri's advances, she is the one who broaches the subject of illicit sex. She intuitively knows that Henri will answer honestly about his knowledge of the underground. He, in turns, intuits that she wishes to break free from her traditional marriage and stokes her curiosity further by giving her the address and name of the brothel.

APPEARANCE

Deception / Secrets From the very first scene of the film, the viewer understands that Séverine holds secrets from her husband—specifically, her fantasies and the true reasons that she does not want to have sex with him. Once she officially becomes one of Madame Anaïs's girls, she leads a double life and believes that she can keep her world as a housewife separate from her adventures as a prostitute. Séverine naively believes that if she leaves the brothel at 5:00 "without fail," her marriage will stay intact and untouched. Of course, Marcel's violent obsession with her destroys this mirage. Conversely, the men in Séverine's life do not hide their desires or fantasies: Henri admits and even brags about his vices, and he comes on to Séverine in front of Pierre and Renée. Likewise, the brothel regulars do not seem the least bit worried about discretion, nor do they feel ashamed about soliciting sex. Adolphe even reports on the whores he has met during his business travels, and the Korean john is a member of the "geisha club."

Illustrative Moment: Séverine Plays Sick After her first customer, Séverine scurries out of the brothel and runs home. She scrubs herself thoroughly in the shower and burns her bra, pantyhose, and panties in the fireplace hearth. When she hears that Pierre is home, she runs to the bedroom and hops into bed. Pierre approaches and asks if she is sick. She replies that she had a headache but feels better after a warm bath. Pierre kisses her gently and says that he will cancel the dinner date with the Févrets. This scene after Séverine's first job establishes her intention to lead a double life. She literally burns the evidence, and she thinks that if she cleans herself, her relationship with her husband will remain virtuous. It is in this moment that Séverine separates her life into sections: "two different things."

DIAMOND HUNTERS

SOCIETY

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

POLITICS

Power: *Corruption* From the very beginning of the film, the viewer learns that this town in the Amazon runs on a corrupt network of dirty military personnel and informants. Chenco and Djin turn in criminals or dissidents for money on the side, and the captain uses his position to embezzle money, as well. The captain routinely imprisons and executes suspects without proof or a trial, and this lack of due process leads to naming Castin as the leader of the rebellion. In addition, the captain's form of punishment suggests a Machiavellian attitude: he cannot wait until daylight to execute the wounded prospector rebel, and he is willing to shoot villagers if they do not turn in Castin. The military also tries to hoard diamond production and crush the competition. The prospectors are left without a job or place, and this economic exile pushes them to rebel. In addition, there is an implied mistreatment of the indigenous tribes (who were pushed further into the jungle) and the lack of recourse for the miners.

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

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

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

RELATIONSHIPS

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

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

CHANGE

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

are indications that she has matured and could be corrupted (both morally and sexually). It is unclear whether Chark and Maria will become lovers or whether Chark will continue on as a father figure.

LIFE STAGES

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

PHILOSOPHY

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

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

PYSCHOLOGY

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

FLAWS

Greed Most of the characters' actions (even in the jungle) are motivated by greed. Djin, Chenco, and Chark will do anything to get and keep money. The very first time we see Djin, she explicitly tells Chark that money is all that matters to her. Although part of their motivation is survival, they also look for more: Djin pockets Castin's diamonds, and Chenco pursues the bounty on Chark's head. While it is not clear

why Captain Ferrero is arrested, the viewer knows from context that the captain is either embezzling money, skimming off the top, or getting kick-backs. Right after Chark is arrested for the bank robbery, the camera cuts to the captain counting cash from his billfold. When the group comes upon the plane wreck, Djin and Maria long to wear and steal the jewels. In the moments before she is gunned down, Djin steals the jewelry box and revels in modeling the jewels on her body. Even though she is willing to give them to Chark, there remains the glint of greed in her eyes. Maria's resistance to giving back the jewelry box suggests that even she has been corrupted by greed.

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

QUEST

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

DIARY OF A CHAMBERMAID

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.

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 alludes 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.

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 punish 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.

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.

Sexuality

Desire As the protagonist of the film, Celestine' 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.

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' 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.

DISCREET CHARM OF THE BOURGEOISIE

SOCIETY

Class

Bourgeoisie The French couples engage in pretention and gracious hosting. Behind this glossy surface, however, lies the desires and immorality of human nature. The ambassador, in particular, acts outside of an ethical code and manages to get away without punishment. In addition, the bourgeois characters focus on consumption to the extent that they exist in a closed loop.

Working Class In nearly every scene, there are workers serving or laboring for the bourgeois characters, yet they are not respected or acknowledged. Francois and Rafael call in the ambassador's chauffeur just to point out the driver's gauche way of drinking a martini. Inés (the Sénéchals' servant) must keep working despite the revelation that she is 52 and too old to get married. The Sénéchals' gardener quits inexplicably. When the Monsignor presents himself in overalls, the Sénéchals do not believe he is a man of the cloth. This dismissal suggests an overall disdain towards the working class and the the clergy.

Consumption As members of the bourgeoisie, the main characters want to consume food and each other (sexually). However, their appetite is not always slated. This desire to consume constitutes their most bourgeois characteristic, and the fear of not having food or sex motivates them to keep trying. According to critic Sheldon Penn, the main characters substitute visual consumption (that is, travelling and seeing new people and landscapes) for their lost ability to eat.

POLITICS

War In almost all of his films, Buñuel nods at the Spanish Civil War or the Mexican Revolution (or both). In this film, the characters bring up specific wars and discuss the trauma associated with being a soldier. In one pre-dinner discussion, the French women note that a third of American troops in Vietnam are addicts. The Monsignor chimes in by saying that the World War I soldiers who fought at Verdun were extreme alcoholics. The implication is that the only way to bear the horrors of war is through substance abuse.

Fascism in the 1960s and 70s Along with the specific discussions about Word War I and Vietnam, Buñuel also alludes to the wave of Fascist dictatorships and corruption that dominated much of Latin America in the late 60s and early 70s. Although Franco's power had waned in the last years of his life, Buñuel continued to emphasize the lasting effects of 30+ years of dictatorship. This period also marked a turbulent time throughout Latin America, from the Tlatelolco massacre in Mexico City in 1968 to Pinochet's rise in Chile. According to the political conversations before several dinners, the fictional country of Miranda suffers from the quintessential Latin American corruption of this period.

Terrorism The inclusion of the nameless female assassin suggests that the Mirandan government is as corrupt and Fascist as its real South American counterparts. In addition, Buñuel may also be commenting on the terrorist factions that bombed and attacked cities in Europe in the 1960s and 1970s, such as ETA in Spain or the IRA in Ireland and England.

Military and Secret Police The military and police throughout the film engage in violent and oppressive acts, and usually without just cause. The female terrorist is taken away forcefully (and likely tortured or killed), and the youth in prison is shocked repeatedly in order to force him to confess. In addition, the police keep arresting or killing the main characters without cause or due process.

RELATIONSHIPS

Sexuality

Desire In the first half of the film, it is often the sexual desire of the characters that prevents them from gathering at the table and eating. The Sénéchals are so erotically charged at their country home that they sneak off to the bedroom while they are supposed to be hosting their guests. Despite getting dressed, the couple ends up humping in the grass in their yard. There is a similar impetuous sexual drive with Don Rafael. He insists on intercourse with Simone even with her husband right outside, and he inappropriately touches and ogles the female assassin even in the moments where she is about to kill him. Even though the characters are hyper aware of their status and etiquette at the dinners, they are unable to repress their desire.

Adultery Simone and Rafael are having an affair, and they even attempt to have sex after Francois catches them together at the ambassador's apartment. The lovers' brazenness suggests a hypocritical attitude in which the rich perform morality but do what they want in secret.

LIFE STAGES

Youth Aside from Florence, the young characters are not fully fleshed out. However, they are framed as more idealistic (and perhaps more moral) than their bourgeois elders. Florence often contradicts or challenges the politics of the dinner group. The female assassin and the teen bomber, although possibly members of terrorist groups, are willing to sacrifice themselves for their group's causes. Given the ambassador's self-serving behavior and the supposed corruption in Miranda, there is the temptation for the viewer to side with the assassin.

PHILOSOPHY

Performativity and Metafilm Critics often cite Buñuel's tendency towards meta dialogue, references, and shots / editing. The repetition of the same line, shot, or sequence underscores the filmic process and takes the audience out of the world of the film, and jarring cuts or references to performance also remind the viewer that they are watching a movie. The "meta" quality of this film is especially overt. When the guests attend dinner at the Colonel's house, they realize that the chickens are rubber props. This dinner turns into a play: Henri dreams that the dining room has become a stage set for a theatrical production complete with curtain, prompter, and a full audience in an actual theatre.

Absurdism As a vanguard of French and Spanish surrealism, it is little wonder that Buñuel incorporates other avant-garde movements into this film. Along with the absurdity of empty dinners, Buñuel also plays with the absurdist tropes of repetition and circular movement. Although each dinner setup and interruption is different, the attempt at eating is futile repetition, particularly when the action is suspended in multiple dream sequences. In addition, Buñuel repeats the shots of the group walking side by side on the country road. There is no indication of an actual destination; thus, it is a journey without end.

EXTERMINATING ANGEL

SOCIETY

Gender: *Virgins* From the very beginning of the film, the guests' gossip suggests that the only virgin in the group is Leticia. In addition, Leticia's impulsive and aggressive personality earns her the nickname of the Valkyrie. The implication is that Leticia's purity and aggressiveness provides her with the ability to break the spell.

Religion

Science versus Rituals Some guests, particularly Dr. Conde and Colonel Aranda, try to remain calm and find practical solutions for the problems at hand: administering pills, rationing food and water, establishing a routine, and trying to break down a psychological barrier. Others resort to religious measures to survive: sacrifices, incantations, and praying.

Saints On each of the closet or bureau doors in the parlor, there is a painting of a saintly figure: an angel on the door where Sergio's body is stored, Virgin and Child on another door, and a saint on the makeshift bathroom closet.

Class

Bourgeoisie The Nóbiles and their friends are upper middle class or rich. All are well-dressed and conscious of their appearance. The Nóbiles are rich enough to have a big home with multiple rooms and floors, and they have enough money to hire several servants. Many of the guests are professionals and very cultured and educated. For example, Blanca plays the piano at a professional level. Like in many of his films, Buñuel is critiquing the decadence and hypocrisy of the upper classes.

Working Class Although the servants at the house are portrayed as somewhat stupid and clumsy, it is they who are able to leave the party at will. The implication is that the workers do not suffer from as much existential angst as their bosses.

POLITICS

Power

Political Allegory Some critics interpret the guests' imprisonment as either an allegory for the oppression under Franco in Spain (1939-1975) or the decadence of the upper classes right before the Mexican Revolution broke out in 1910. In both cases, the rich find themselves trapped in a dangerous political position.

Anarchy Despite Edmundo and other characters' efforts to maintain order, courtesy, reason, and composure, it is not long before the guests' start to fight amongst themselves. Although the characters are willing to tend to the sick and dying to a point, they also fight to get food, water, and medicine for themselves. If it were not for Leticia's solution, the mob would have most likely killed Edmundo and perhaps others.

RELATIONSHIPS

Sexuality

Desire Before the guests realize that they are trapped, the various couples engage in erotic foreplay after dinner. There is the obvious tryst between Lucía and Colonel Aranda in her marital bedroom, and Eduardo caresses Beatriz seductively the first night in the house.

Adultery Lucía and the Colonel are having an affair, and they even attempt to have sex after Blanca's concert (with Edmundo still close by). The lovers' brazenness suggests a hypocritical attitude in which the rich appear virtuous but do what they want in secret.

Marriage Many of the characters are promised or in established marriages, yet their relationships seem tepid at best. There are old men with trophy wives and supposed marriages of convenience

PYSCHOLOGY

Fear As the situation worsens, the guests' fear rises to the point that they are willing to murder Edmundo in order to escape the parlor. With the possible exceptions of Beatriz and Eduardo, all of the guests fear death and weakness.

Subconscious Many guests have nightmares while they sleep and visions at the moment of falling asleep or waking up. These visions usually have to do with the fears and desires from their Id. The blood and severed hand indicate an obsession with death, dismemberment, and putrefaction, and the visions of mountains and sky suggest an escapist dream.

LIFE STAGES

Old Age While some of the guests are young or middle-aged, the old men in the group represent the fears and anxieties related to death. Sergio, who resents the jokes of the younger guests, is the first to fall ill and die. Dr. Conde and Cristián decide to hide the body so the others don't panic. Alberto, the conductor, has a young wife and clings to an illusion of youth—in particular, by having sex with Alicia after every performance.

Death Death is both a psychological / philosophical construct and a corporeal reality for the guests. The title of the film alludes to several artworks, including a painting by Buñuel's friend and colleague, Salvador Dalí. The depictions of the angel often indicate death during war. In addition, Leticia's moniker—the Valkyrie— is associated with mythic figures who assist warriors passing into Valhalla. Everyone knows that Leonora is dying of cancer, and that brings the specter of death to the party even before their inertia sets in. From a psychological perspective, many of the guests recognize their own deaths as the logical endpoint of the stagnation. This is why Beatriz and Eduardo decide to embrace death in the closet rather than run from it. Physically, there are the remnants of the human and animal corpses—the blood, the severed hand, Sergio's dead body, the chicken legs and feathers, and presumably, the physical remnants of the sacrificed sheep.

Putrefaction Along with the visual reminders of death in the parlor, there is also the constant bad smell: Sergio's rotting body, the stale and stagnant water, and the worsening body odor of everyone. There is also the fear of wasting away from hunger or dehydration.

PHILOSOPHY

Conception of Time The key moment when the guests are unable to leave happens right after Blanca's performance at 3:00 AM. This time in the wee hours of the morning marks the transition from party to nightmare. During the spell, there are certain signs of time passing: day turning into night, increased hunger and thirst, body odor, and the rotting of Sergio's corpse. On the other hand, time is also arbitrary and suspended: the guests lose track of how many days or weeks they have been trapped. If as much time had passed as the guests believed, many more of them would have perished from dehydration and hunger.

Absurdism As a vanguard of French and Spanish surrealism, it is little wonder that Buñuel incorporates other avant-garde movements into this film. Along with the absurdity of the state of inertia, Buñuel also plays with the absurdist tropes of repetition and circular movement. Throughout the film, the characters repeat dialogue and actions two or three times. While they engage in some concrete activities, they are mostly trapped in a vicious cycle with no end in sight. Ironically, it is the repetition of the 3:00 AM activities that finally allows the guests to escape the vicious circle (until they again find themselves trapped in the church).

Existentialism Many critics interpret the guests' inability to leave as the manifestation of an existential crisis. Because the bourgeoisie are comfortable and superficial, their lives lack enough meaning for them to break out of the trance. Conversely, the practical necessities of the working class propel the servants forward and prevent them from being trapped in the parlor.

Abulia Abulia is a psychological and emotional state that is similar to ennui and depression. It was a term used to describe the collective let-down that Spaniards experienced in the early twentieth century after having lost their last "New World" colonies—Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Philippines. Writers of the turn of the twentieth century used the concept as a consistent theme in their melancholy masterpieces, so

it is not surprising that Dr. Conde would make this literary allusion when discussing the guests' predicament.

Phenomenology / Scatology The guests' bodies and their position in space (the crowded parlor) become a key element of their spell. Whereas they initially concern themselves with their fine attire, music, travel, and the food at the banquet, they quickly have to deal with the logistical matters of survival. Some guests use hygiene or drugs to distract themselves from their emotional fragility. All of them have to defecate in the urns and deal with their bad body odor. In the end, the bodily functions and survival trump all efforts at discretion and composure.

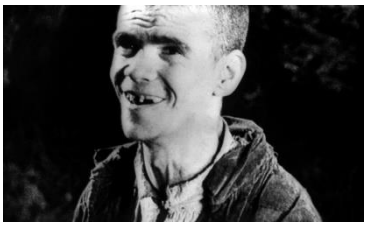
LAND WITHOUT BREAD

SOCIETY

Poverty Unlike other Buñuel films, the focus is not on the bourgeoisie and their servants, but rather on the poorest of the poor in these culturally specific, mountainous rural areas. The poverty of the villagers manifests itself in various forms. The inhabitants can only grow certain crops, and the land is only fertile for one season. The yield of the crops cannot sustain the families through the year; then, the men cannot find supplementary work during the summer. Only a few families raise pigs, and the meat does not sustain them, either. The poverty also extends to poor living conditions: no clean water, few beds, no windows, no barns, and no chimneys. The quasi-documentary style of the film allows the filmmakers to highlight the miserable ripple effects of poverty: starvation, disease, birth defects, hopelessness, and premature death. The narration frequently describes the culture of Las Hurdes as medieval, yet even they do not have the hierarchy of a feudal system. Aside from monks, there is one economic class: the abject poor. The isolation of the village and the relatively barren landscape suggest that not even oligarchs have been able to infiltrate the area.

Illustrative Moment: Drinking from the Dirty Stream The Narrator mentions that there is tiny "miserable" stream that runs through the village, and it is the only source of water during the summer. There are a series of images of children and animals drinking from the stream, including a young girl who holds her baby brother and scoops up water for him to drink out of her hand. There are also shots of women washing clothes and children with the water from the stream, as well as young girls dipping pieces of bread in the water. The Narrator explains that the schoolmaster doles out bread to the children and watches them eat it for fear that their parents will take it from them. The Narrator also asserts that no bread existed in the village until recently. Along with alluding to the title of the film, this village scene encapsulates the lifestyle and peril of the rural villages: the lack of subsistence, the mass contamination, and the general lack of options for the inhabitants of the region.

Disability and Illness As with many of Buñuel's films, there are several featured disabilities and illnesses throughout *Land Without Bread*. Unlike other films, however, Buñuel is not creating a character interpreted by a disabled actor. Rather, the people with disabilities are members of the community of Las Hurdes. Near the end of the film, the filmmakers managed to converse with dwarf shepherds and mentally disabled boys. The narration asserts that these outcasts are the result of incest and poor nutrition. Along with frequent birth defects, there are constant plagues that break out in the village communities. The inhabitants suffer from untreated infections, dysentery, and constant waves of malaria. The Narrator implies that many of the ailments are due to the communal use of contaminated water. Once again, the villagers' problems all begin and end with abject poverty.

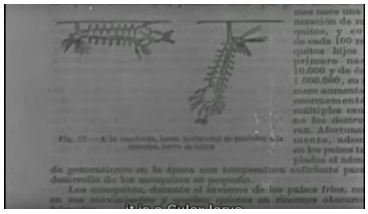


Illustrative Moment: Dwarf Shepherds The Narrator explains that due to extreme poverty and incest, there is a high percentage of dwarves and mentally disabled children in Las Hurdes. The dwarves often climb up the mountain to tend the goats during the day. The Narrator maintains that it was difficult to film the dwarves, and even more so with the small "cretins". The camera cuts to the smiling face of a supposedly mentally disabled boy, who would only agree to be filmed while one of his friends

distracted him. Along with offering case studies of disabled children, this scene also indicates that the disabled Hurdanos are even more marginalized and isolated than the villagers themselves. This double marginalization provides further proof of the need for reform.

Isolation The geography of this particular region of Spain becomes a theme within the documentary. The film begins and ends with majestic shots of the mountains and a description of the difficulties the filmmakers encountered when entering the mountain hamlets. The region is not just rural but isolated and removed from the rest of Spanish society. While the placement of the villages immediately creates logistical problems (much like those of the communities in and around the Appalachians in the U.S.), this geographical isolation is compounded by societal neglect. The villagers live in an almost feudal existence without a lord. They remain starving farmers who try to eek out an existence alongside the medieval monasteries in the mountains. Apart from the paltry subsidies afforded to the school for orphans, the Spanish government largely ignores these communities.

Illustrative Moment: Map with Narration A map of Spain appears with an outline of the province of Las Hurdes in central Spain. The subjective narration explains that the region is not far from Salamanca, but unlike that rich and historical city, Las Hurdes suffers from a primitive and medieval culture. This exposition scene literally gives the lay of the land, but it also serves to prime the viewer for the intense rurality and isolation of Las Hurdes. The narration juxtaposes the intellectual culture of Salamanca (the closest city) to the medieval austerity of the towns in the mountains. The narration also underscores the difficulty in entering the province due to its largely inaccessible and isolated location.



Science Although the crux of the film is the suffering of the Hurdanos and a description of their particular culture, there is also an analysis of the geography and ecology of the area. Buñuel begins the film with a map of Spain and an explanation of Las Hurdes's exact location as if the viewer were a grade school student listening to a lecture. The narration frequently departs from the state of the village in order to classify the species of trees and animals found in the plains and forests surrounding the hamlets. Sometimes the environmental study is meant to elucidate the dangers or benefits of the flora and fauna to the human residents, such as the importance of the cherry trees for food or the strawberry leaves for bedding. Despite several moments of empathy throughout the film, some critics characterize the narrative voice as distanced from the misery of the film's subjects, almost as if the Hurdanos were another species of animals under the microscope.

Illustrative Moment: Scourge of Malaria The camera shows an aerial shot of a dry river bed. The Narrator describes how the summer brings malaria due to dryness and the plethora of mosquitos. There is a shot of diagrams of two different species of mosquitos: the Anopheles, which carries malaria, and another species which is less harmful. The Narrator explains that the Anopheles is prevalent in Las Hurdes and can be recognized by how it lands on the wall at a perpendicular angle. The camera cuts to a man shaking and shivering uncontrollably. The Narrator says that these are the symptoms of a malarial fever. There are several other shots of sick villagers lying in the streets or in bed. Although the film returns to the plight of the human villagers after a few minutes, this foray into entymology and virology seems as though the filmmakers are giving a scientific lecture within the documentary. It is likely that Buñuel's predilection for insects influenced this scene, as the analysis of the species of mosquitos lasts for several minutes.

POLITICS

Socialism As a young communist, Buñuel naturally attributed the miserable state of his fellow Spaniards to the failed policies of oligarchic Spain in the nineteenth century, the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera in the 1920s, and the increasingly popular rhetoric of European fascists in the 1930s. In fact, the textual commentary at the end of the film explicitly names Franco and compares him to other fascists such as Mussolini. The commentary also implies that a socialist government would address poverty

through government assistance. The producer of *Land Without Bread*, Ramón Acín, was an ardent anarchist, and his attitudes towards the Second Republic likely also influenced the tone of the film and the explicit political criticism of the text in the film's epilogue. On the other hand, Buñuel was infamous for his resistance towards embracing a specific ideology, and therefore, the central thesis of the epilogue does not necessarily represent Buñuel's personal opinion. According to film critic Ted Nannicelli, the left-wing rhetoric of the epilogue may constitute a satirical or subversive discourse that parodies the pedantic messages of documentaries. In this reading of the film, Buñuel does not believe that governmental intervention will actually lead to a better lifestyle for the Hurdanos.

Spanish Civil War The sociopolitical commentary throughout *Land Without Bread* not only critiques the Spanish government of 1933 (the Second Republic), but also presages the violence between the pro-Franco nationalists and the socialist Republicans during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). Although the Republicans were in power in the 1930s, the chaos and dissension among various factions of Republicans created a weak and inefficient system. The result was a reactionary nationalism that would lead to the 40-year dictatorship of Francisco Franco. Although the war had not yet begun at the time of the film's debut, it is clear that the filmmakers saw the division among Spaniards and knew that Franco was a formidable force aligned with the other fascists dictators in Europe. Moreover, the filmmakers were already preparing for a potential life in exile. After their stay in Las Hurdes, Buñuel would not return to his homeland until the late 1960s.

Illustrative Moment: Aggressive Political Message An epilogue with text appears declaring that the miserable poverty of the Hurdanos is not a foregone conclusion. The text suggests that with community unity and better social and governmental services, the living conditions in the region could improve. The filmmakers criticize fascist policies, including those of Franco and Mussolini, and they declare that the Popular Front who fights against Franco will promote a better life for the peasants of Spain. The first half of the text exhorts the government to invest in social domestic programs and lift the Hurdanos out of their abject poverty—which are two potential points of the Socialist platform of the Second Republic in the 1930s. The added criticism of Franco underscores the polarization between the two political factions in Spain, which will explode into a civil war shortly after the film's debut.

JUSTICE

Violence While the drumbeat of the film is the slow torture of poverty, Buñuel also accentuates the misery with sudden bursts of violence. In particular, the viewer sees animals suddenly dying by violent means: the donkey succumbing to too many bee stings, or the mountain goat falling to its death. Nature itself becomes a violent victimizer that threatens the life of the people of Las Hurdes, who cannot defend themselves for lack of education and means. Buñuel also uses the focus on animals to create his signature grotesque moments of surrealism. The viewer sees the bees attacking the donkey and then, the rotting head moments later (and this scene was orchestrated rather than captured in the moment). The residents must suffer stings of the viper and malaria infections of the mosquito, and they do not have the benefit of treatment. The ritual in La Alberca speaks to a violence perpetrated by the villagers themselves. In this case, the men are beheading the live roosters as a show of masculine force. This violence is perpetrated as part of a human ritual, and the implication is that the ritual is more savage than predation in nature.

Illustrative Moment: The Perils of Beekeeping The Narrator explains that the Hurdanos tend beehives and depend on selling honey for survival. The camera shows men guiding laden donkeys up a steep hill. The Narrator explains that the beasts carry the hives. There is a quick cut to a white donkey kicking as it is stung by bees. The Narrator describes how the donkey was tied up and knocked over some of the hives. The camera cuts to a close-up of the dead donkey's face with clumps of bees on it. The Narrator reports that many donkeys and men have been killed by bee stings en route to Salamanca. In this scene, the viewer realizes that death and violence are the necessary evils for survival in Las Hurdes. The bees produce one of the few products that can sustains the Hurdanos economically, yet the yield requires that the men and their beasts of burden risk death.

RELATIONSHIPS

Parenthood While Buñuel, cinematographer Eli Lotar, and the other filmmakers present the overall systems of poverty at work in the villages, there is also an attention to the plight of the family unit in these mountain communities. Nearly every shot inside the shacks shows a mother attempting to care for starving children, and one of the last shots is that of a family crammed into a single bed. The narrator documents several methods by which the Hurdanos attempt to survive and provide for their families, including treks to bigger towns in Extremadura, moving and tilling the soil strategically, and moving the family around in a nomadic lifestyle. Despite these efforts, children frequently die of hunger, thirst, or disease. The narration also implies that the rate of incest is particularly high in these isolated mountain communities, which in turn leads to birth defects. The only solution, as the Narrator asserts, is for the government to intervene with aid and education.

Illustrative Moment: Interior of the Houses The Narrator explains that the strawberry leaves also serve as bedding for the floor and as fertilizer after they decompose. The camera cuts to a man dumping a sack of leaves on the floor. The camera then cuts to a woman and two children sitting next to a bowl. The Narrator reports that this scene is a typical interior of a house in these villages. The mother starts to cook, and the smoke pours out of the doors. The Narrator explains that the smoke has nowhere to escape, given that these shacks have no chimneys or windows. This scene is one of many that shows the interiors of the shacks where mothers and children pass many hours. In addition, the father's entrance speaks to the parents' attempts to create some sort of home for the family unit despite the miserable conditions of the villages.

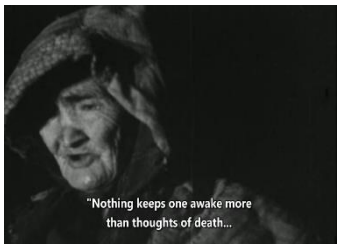
LIFE STAGES

Childhood Many of the film's subjects are children, and very small children at that. The viewer sees babies and toddlers huddled around the hearth inside the shacks and walking through the streets. Two of the most heartrending moments of suffering include the girl dying of a throat infection and the dead infant being passed from man to man as the community marches out to the cemetery. The implication is that childhood as a construct does not exist for the Hurdanos, even if they are able to survive until they are five. They are put to work immediately, and the documentary does not even show children playing. When the filmmakers discuss slightly older children, they emphasize the paltry nature of their clothes and education. The scene of the school lesson suggests that the children can only absorb so much, as they have to worry about survival first. According to the narration, the children only receive bread in school, hence the dark subtitle of the film.

Illustrative Moment: Dead Baby The camera cuts to a shot of a group of adult Hurdanos standing outside the threshold of one of the shacks. The Narrator reports that a child has died. The camera cuts to a shot of a still baby with flies on its face, then there is a close-up of the stoic mother. The father carries the dead baby up the mountain and is followed by a procession of villagers. They pass the body in a cradle across the river. While this scene definitely emphasizes the other key themes of the film (such as poverty and the omnipresence of death), it also speaks to the lack of childhood in this province. Those children who survive the first years of life are condemned to work alongside their parents in misery; therefore, the death march of the cradle becomes a potent symbol of this stage of life in Las Hurdes.

Old Age Due to the miserable conditions of the town, the Hurdanos all seem to be old and worn down. The vast number of dangers and illnesses prevents the adults from reaching old age. The one exception that appears in the film is the wandering old woman who appears for the last night of filming. The Narrator explains that she wanders the streets at night and mourns for lost children. As the oldest member of the town, she incarnates the angel of death or a sort of oracle of misery. In addition, her inability to sleep lends her a supernatural quality as she roams the streets at night. Rather than constituting the last stage of life before death, old age becomes an aberration in the lives of the Hurdanos. Death hangs over the village like a pall.

Illustrative Moment: The Old Woman's Walk As the family sleeps, an old woman roams the streets at night. She chants prayers for the dead and swings a thurible. She proclaims that thinking of death keeps one up at night. These shots of the wandering old woman provide an eerie finale for the film. Whereas the majority of the subjects earlier in the film were children and mothers (who aged prematurely), the old woman is the last Hurdana that the filmmakers capture before their departure. She becomes a symbol of the end of the film and a metonym for the general misery of the province as a whole.



MILKY WAY

SOCIETY

Religion

Dogma While the pilgrimage of the two "modern" wanderers ties the scenes together, the true heart of the film is the debates about the scriptures and Catholic doctrine. Buñuel and Carrière present a number of persistent debates within the Catholic Church, including the viability of the Trinity, the effectiveness of Transubstantiation (the bread becoming the body of Christ), and the corporeal and spiritual characteristics of Jesus and Mary. Although the dominant clergy spell out the agreed upon doctrine for each case (often citing the Council or scholar who settled the question), they immediately undermine their arguments by citing the dissenting opinions of other saints or scholars. In addition, Buñuel and Carrière lean into the theories of the dissecting sects of Catholicism over the centuries: the Jansenists, who preferred predeterminism to free will, and The Jesuits, who emphasized free will. The result is that those who listen and obey are left with more philosophical and doctrinal ambiguity. Even Jesus equivocates and contradicts himself, which leaves his followers with an uncomfortable uncertainty. Despite the nuance and contradictory nature of the dogma, the authorities insist that the people accept and follow the "correct" interpretation. In this way, Buñuel and Carrière effectively satirize and criticize the unstable narratives of the Catholic Church.

Heresy Several authority figures accuse other believers of heresy, and those who commit the crime are punished, banished, or cursed. In the case of the Inquisition, the accused are executed (often burned) and condemned to hell. The nature of the heresy is flimsy at best and varies from period to period. Essentially, those who question the dogma of the period (or the decisions of the Council of Nicaea or Trent) are immediately labeled as heretics. This attitude pervades the various periods of Catholic doctrine, and even the contemporary priests demand compliance. The residue of this 15th-17th century mentality takes form in the recitations of the Catholic schoolgirls at the picnic. As part of a performance for their parents, each girl recites a piece of Catholic dogma and proclaims that he who does not believe is an anathema. This language carries over into the Inquisitorial flashback, where the panel of judges accuses the dissenter of heresy. Buñuel and Carrière also allude to political oppression that goes hand in hand with religious doctrine. The dissenters are punished by both the laws of the Church and the laws of the State. This Inquisitorial attitude is mirrored in the twentieth-century union between the Catholic Church and Spanish dictatorships—in particular, Franco's alliance with the Church in the 1940s and 50s. In this way, heresy covers all manner of dissent, including art made by exiles such as Buñuel.

The Eucharist and Transubstantiation One of the principle doctrinal debates in the film is the concept of transubstantiation—that is, whether the bread of the Host and the wine really transform into the body and blood of Christ. According to the Fourth Council of the Lateran in 1215 and the Council of Trest in 1551, the bread and wine offered in the sacrament of the Eucharist does, by some mysterious power, transform into the body and blood of Christ. Between the two councils, there remained a debate as to the nature of the transformation and importance of the Eucharist, and it is this lingering doubt that the clergy debate throughout the film. Even when the clergy characters are not directly debating transubstantiation, bread appears in several scenes: the characters knead, bake, and eat bread, and some characters also distribute bread to others. Ironically, the sermon in the forest concludes with a modified communion among the priests—even though they had just asserted that the human body is not of Christ, but of the Devil.

Saints The principal focus of the pilgrimage is on two ancient saints of Catholic Hispania: St James, one of Jesus's twelve disciples and the patron saint of Spain, and Priscillian, a Roman-born ascetic who also preached to the Christians in Hispania. St. James's bones were reported to be kept at the cathedral at Santiago, hence its importance as the destination of the medieval pilgrimage. Some of the male characters in the film could be interpreted as incarnations of St. James—most notably the caped man in the beginning of the film. Film critic Alison T. Smith suggests that the caped man could represent either a version of St. James or a version of Christ. His dwarf companion, who magically appears from under the man's cape, could incarnate the Santo Niño de Atocha (the saint that represents Jesus as a small child), or the Son of the Trinity (with the white dove as the Holy Spirit). In any case, both figures set the stage for the doctrinal debates and the reverence of saints throughout the film. Priscillian, conversely, was executed for heresy and sorcery in 380, particularly due to his practice of administering mass outside of Church. When the prostitute explains that Priscillian's bones lie in the cathedral (as opposed to the remains of St. James), Pierre and Jean immediately lose interest in their pilgrimage. Other saints are mentioned as proponents or dissenters of particular dogmas, such as Thomas of Aquinas. There is also a debate as to the nature of the Virgin Mary and whether her purity provided her with a saint-like status. In the end, the reverence towards the saints only lasts as long as the doctrinal logic holds out, with the result that the characters' faith often wanes.

Virtues The clergy characters and philosophers throughout the film comment on and describe virtue, but they rarely enact the good works of St. James themselves. The virtue held is the highest esteem is faith, and in particular, an unyielding belief in the prevailing dogma of the given period. When the discussion moves towards the conduct and nature of women, the priests cite purity as the highest virtue. The priest in the tavern suggests that the Virgin Mary's virtue allowed her to transcend the flesh and become something beyond a human being. The metaphor that Rodolphe uses is rooted in Renaissance narratives of Marianism: the Holy Spirit was the beam of light that "penetrated" the pane of glass (Mary's womb) without breaking it. The priest exhorts the female guest to aspire to Mary's greatness. One of the key seven virtues, charity, is conspicuously lacking throughout the film. The pilgrims frequently ask for money from those they encounter, but the clergy and the police refuse to give them anything. Ironically, it is the servant at the bar and the picnicking couple at the school performance who agree to share their food with Pierre and Jean. Ultimately, the clergymen in the film do not practice what they preach.

Miracles The priests who discuss dogma frequently recount the miracles associated with Jesus and the Virgin Mary: multiplying the loaves and fishes, turning water into wine, transubstantiation, the immaculate conception, amid others. The discussion of Mary's purity in the inn is set off by the hunters' report of seeing the Virgin appear to them. The priest reports that the Virgin has performed thousands of miracles all over the world (and he has the stories to back it up). In the final scene, Jesus acts out the miracle of restoring eyesight to the contemporary blind men on the pilgrimage. Even though the disciples, the viewer, and the men themselves witness the miracle, Jesus asks his disciples not to talk about his deeds. The implication is that the miracles cannot be confirmed, which sows doubt in the doctrinal scholars of other periods. There is also an oblique reference to St. James's miracles, including his reincarnation in the mythical Battle of Clavijo (844), where he appeared in order to restore Moorish-held La Rioja to the Catholic Goths. In this story, St. James wielded an impressive sword and slaughtered the Moors. According to film critic Alison T. Smith, the sword that the Spanish priest drops in the inn may well be alluding to that particular miracle of St. James. Regardless of the source of the miracle, there remains a skepticism as to how and why the miracles occurred. This doubt provides fodder for perpetual debate throughout the film.

Sacrifice and Suffering Although they complain frequently, the pilgrims consider their uncomfortable walk as a purification. Pierre, in particular, suffers from old age, worn shoes, and sore feet. The priests frequently discuss the suffering of Jesus during the crucifixion, which is acted out partially by the nun who submits to stigmata in the chapel. Although the nun asserts that she does not feel pain, her grimaces and sweat suggest otherwise. When the priests debate whether Jesus was a man of the flesh, there is a question as to whether he actually suffered pain or even if he could actually die. The dogma maintains that Christ did suffer and die for humanity's sins, thereby erasing original sin. In the last scene with Jesus and his disciples, the son of God becomes irritated when one of the disciples suggests that He cannot die. Jesus says "Get thee behind me, Satan," thereby suggesting that Jesus was asserting that he was at least partially of the flesh; therefore, he would experience the full suffering of the crucifixion.

JUSTICE

Violence There is both explicit and implicit violence that occurs in nearly every stop on the pilgrimage. Several characters appear bleeding from wounds: the boy at the side of the road, the nun submitting to her own partial crucifixion, and the dead body of the cursed driver in the 1960s sedan. Ironically, the duel does not result in blood, injury, or death, but neither the viewer nor the pilgrims foresee this ending when the Jansenist and Jesuit begin to fight. Pierre and Jean try to help after the fact, but they usually happen upon the violence when it is already in progress. On occasion, there is the petty violence of contemporary disagreements, such as the mentally disturbed priest throwing coffee in the cop's face. Perhaps the most insidious violence, however, is that which results from official verbal condemnation or personal threat. One of the most disturbing scenes occurs during the flashback to the Marquis de Sade's dungeon. The implication is that the Marquis has been raping Thérèse continually and keeps her as his prisoner. Each time a bishop or inquisitor speaks of doctrine, there is an execution of the so-called heretic. Even during the picnic scene, Jean imagines the execution of the Pope via firing squad. While the scene at the inn is more concerned with purity and sexual transgression, there is the reminder of medieval battle in the form of the dropped saber.

QUEST

Search Like the pilgrims of the Middle Ages, Pierre and Jean seek some sort of purification or redemption through the process of walking. However, the characters never talk about the goals of the pilgrimage (or what they will do when they arrive at Santiago). Instead, they describe their physical discomfort with occasional forays into philosophical discussions. Their efforts fail to produce any tangible results, even when they arrive in Santiago at the film's conclusion. Rather than continue to the cathedral, the two pilgrims are distracted by the prostitute they encounter. When they learn that the relics of St James do not lie in the cathedral, the pilgrims immediately give up on their quest. This unsatisfying ending underscores the absurdist nature and satirical tone of the film as a whole. In addition to the pilgrimage, many of the historical figures engage in their own philosophical or rhetorical quest. Whenever a doctrinal debate arises, the clergyman or figure in power attempts to convince or coerce the others involved in the debate. The motivation to secure a certain dogma persists throughout the film, often leading to violence and oppression. Although some figures "submit" to the required doctrine, it is implied that the listeners are not convinced; rather, they kowtow to the authority figure of the period. Those who debate the doctrine are met with scorn or punishment, and they lack answers to their questions. In this sense, both the physical quest for purification and the intellectual quest for clarity, truth, and security in faith fail.

PHILOSOPHY

Science vs. Religion Rather than a binary choice, several characters go back and forth between reason and faith. They often change their minds about their beliefs in the face of a miracle or argument. The most notable example is Rodolphe, who moves from skepticism to belief after seeing the Virgin Mary in the forest. Francois suggests that he was hallucinating, but Rodolphe has faith in the Virgin's powers thereafter. His belief is so strong in the moment that he refrains from propositioning the beautiful virgin in his room at the inn. The older tourist at the end remarks that he may be driven to faith by his abhorrence of technology, which suggests that even an atheist may turn to religion under extreme duress or the fear of death. In addition to a change of heart, some characters suggest that science and religion are not mutually exclusive. In the very first debate in the very first inn, the priest asserts that modern science "confirms" the scriptures. We can see this symbiotic relationship between science and religion with respect to the pilgrimage itself: the pilgrims used astronomy to guide them to the religious shrine. After all, The Milky Way connotes both the path of the pilgrimage itself as well as the beauty and complexity of the galaxy. On the other hand, the application of a scientific or Socratic method often breaks down the accepted dogma, with the result that the dissenter must be executed in order to preserve the religious narrative. It is this muddy relationship between science and reason that creates a satirical framing of Catholic dogma throughout the film.

Free Will vs Determinism This debate occurs when the Jesuit and Jansenist are dueling: while the Jesuit asserts that man has free will and can choose to do good acts (with his Grace), the Jansenist argues that all actions (good and bad) are predetermined by God. This particular argument gains more

weight because Pierre and Jean also discuss this issue while they watch the duel. After hearing Pierre's summary of the Jansenist position, Jean suggests that he cannot control his actions if they were predetermined. Furthermore, Jean wonders why he should strive to be good if God had already chosen the bad action for him. Pierre replies that God's grace helps him to perform good acts, but Jean remains unconvinced. This particular argument, while framed in an 18th-century doctrinal debate, also speaks to the pilgrims' own actions in the film. Pierre and Jean commit various sins by the end of the film: they curse, they lie, they steal, they covet, and they have a threesome with a prostitute. They also perform some good acts, such as helping each other and offering to assist the wounded boy. The viewer can question whether their bad actions were predetermined. They may also wonder why they set out on the pilgrimage in the first place: Do they want to imitate the good works of St. James?

Absurdism The characters often refer to a particular argument or belief as "absurd," but this adjective does not serve the purpose of undercutting the argument. Rather, the absurd conclusion or assertion is often more rooted in logic or reason than the "decided" doctrine. This subjective use of the word absurd underscores the overall absurdism of dogma in general. The argument becomes circular or nonsensical, with a result that the listeners are not satisfied by the answer. This thirst for truth and the inability to arrive at it is a motivating force for the film, as Buñuel himself once remarked. Questions beget more questions, even when the listener wants to believe and asks for the "black and white", as is the blind men's request to Jesus. In addition, the same arguments come up more than once in the film. The nature of the Trinity, in particular, springs up multiple times during various debates in various periods / locations. Moreover, the non-linear movement of the scenes in the film further confuses the viewer and the pilgrims. This use of repetition and circular movement are hallmarks of absurdist theatre, which was particularly popular in Europe and Latin America in the 1950s and 60s. Like the vagabonds in *Waiting for Godot*, the exemplar of absurdist theatre, Pierre and Jean wander around, philosophize, and never arrive at their destination.

NAZARIN

SOCIETY

Gender: *The Fallen Woman* Along with the prostitutes, Beatriz labels herself as a fallen woman. Her guilt and despair derive from her inability to adhere to prescribed gender norms—to be a married woman or in her own words, a "good girl." Her torment leads her to attempt suicide early in the film. When she becomes Nazario's disciple, she believes she can purify herself by proxy. This hope is dashed, however, when she realizes her devotion to the priest is tainted by desire.

Religion

Sin Most of the poor villagers have a sinful nature: they routinely steal from the mission and from each other, they engage in illicit sex outside of marriage, and Ándara has even committed murder. Beatriz in particular wishes to purge herself of sin and be a "good girl," but she has trouble ridding herself of her inner demons. Ándara wants to be a good disciple to Nazario, but her anger often trumps her devotion.

Devotion and Rituals Whereas Nazario puts his efforts toward traditional prayer and charity, the other characters rely heavily on local rituals and beliefs. Ándara practices several rituals throughout the film, from asking favors of the statuette of Saint Anthony to reciting Jesus multiple times for Beatriz's sick niece. The women in the second town believe that Nazario can perform a miracle, and when Beatriz's niece appears to be cured, they invest further in their beliefs. Ándara and Beatriz's yearning to become Nazario's disciples also underscores their devotion to the priest.

Sickness, Injury, and Disability Nearly all of the characters suffer some sort of physical or psychological ailment, and the sickness is often linked to the characters' sin or immorality. Beatriz believes that she is possessed, and several of the women go into trances. Ándara suffers from the stabbing, and Nazario must contend with the beatings in the prison. The priest "cures" or administers to several sick individuals on his pilgrimage. In the last third of the film, Ufo becomes a key figure--he incarnates both a disabled victim and an angel of love / mercy.

Faith Ándara and Beatriz cling to their faith in Nazario as their moral compass. The priest himself relies on his faith to forgive the thieves and prostitutes around him and the persecution of the prisoners in the

last part of the film. He also keeps faith in the charity of others. However, Nazario's final walk as a supposed criminal suggests that he has lost his faith and has become disillusioned with his purpose.

Charity Despite the brutality of many of the characters, there are also moments when Nazario and others give to those in need and sacrifice themselves. Nazario relinquishes or donates his clothes and food to others. He also sacrifices his own moments of self-reflection to counsel Ándara, and he puts his own safety in danger in order to tend to the sick. There are also moments in which the poor villagers help Nazario. When the family is forced to march through the desert, Ufo helps the young girl by giving her bread and water.

Science versus Superstition Although Nazario preaches the gospel to Ándara and Beatriz, he also supports science as a cure for sickness and ailments. This progressive attitude is seen most overtly when the women ask Nazario to perform a curing miracle on Beatriz's ill niece. The priest offers to pray with them, but he explicitly rejects the idea of miracles as heresy. When counseling Ándara, Nazario frequently debunks her superstitious beliefs. In addition, the workers in the opening scene of the film discuss the installation of electricity. This urban improvement was one of the most important technical advances of the late 1800s in Mexico, when the film was set.

Transcendence Whereas Beatriz, Ándara, Pinto and Ufo constantly experience emotions and sensations through their bodies, Nazario manages to transcend his physicality for the majority of the film. Unlike Beatriz and other characters, the priest does not feel overwhelmed by thirst, hunger, anger, or sexual desire. Nazario manages to continue on his pilgrimage despite heat, cold, and abuse, and he takes his suffering in stride until his beating in prison. The implication is that Nazario exists on a higher spiritual plane than that of his flock, and he maintains this position until his faith falters at the end of the film.

Class: *Poverty* Although Nazario has vowed to help and serve the poor, his will is tested by the sins and callous nature of the community around the mission, as well as his "disciples" and persecutors in the second half of the film. Nearly all of the villagers are beggars and regularly ask Nazario for food, money or counsel. Later, Nazario chooses to give up his belongings and become a beggar himself.

POLITICS

Mexican Revolution The action of the film takes place during the second half of the Porfiriato (the period under dictator Porfirio Díaz from 1876-1911), which was a particularly oppressive period for poor Mexican farmers. In the film, we see the precursors to the revolution in the poverty of the peasants and in the violent practices of the military officials and police. When Nazario criticizes the coronel's dismissive attitude towards a passing farmer, Buñuel and Alejandro subtly allude to the agrarian uprising that will constitute a big part of the Mexican Revolution.

RELATIONSHIPS

Sexuality

Desire Beatriz is constantly fighting her desire for the wrong man: her lust for Pinto, and her infatuation with Nazario. She mentions several times that she cannot control herself around Pinto and that she is possessed by demons. Conversely, Beatriz revels in her power to control Pinto when he is aroused, which suggests that he, too, is beholden to his sexual desire. Hugo also experiences an immediate and strong attraction to Ándara. Due to the fact that all of the characters (save Nazario) experience strong physical urges, the ability to suppress desire and sexuality is even more challenging for them. In his counsel of Beatriz and Ándara, Nazario reminds them that sexual desire and emotions are a part of the human experience. He recommends, however, that they focus on prayer, purity, and service.

Superego versus Id Buñuel once quipped that he only read Marx and Engels and Freud. His interest in the latter is apparent, as Buñuel leans into the struggle between chastity and desire in most of his films. If chastity is related to the clergy and the superego, then forbidden sexuality lies in the Id and the subconscious mind. It is this plane of consciousness that the surrealists wished to access. The fight for dominance between the superego and the id is most explicitly portrayed through Beatriz's emotions and actions throughout the film.

Prostitution From the very first moment of the film, the viewer sees that most of the women in town are prostitutes. Moreover, the prostitutes are illiterate, superstitious, violent, and they routinely steal from Nazario and each other. Ironically, the viewer never sees the prostitutes with their clients. Rather, it is Beatriz's erotic imaginings and simulated sex that we see on screen. In this sense, prostitution becomes more of a construct representing sin and poverty, and it is this social construct that Ándara attempts to overcome throughout the pilgrimage. Initially, Ándara's "low" state is underscored by her heavy makeup, relative ugliness, and revolting perfume. While she remains ugly, her appearance becomes more natural and purer on the pilgrimage. In addition, the transition from prostitute to loyal disciple is an obvious reference to Mary Magdalene's relationship with Jesus.

THAT OBSCURE OBJECT OF DESIRE

POLITICS

Power Politically, there is a consistent battle for control of the government / society throughout the film. Buñuel and Carrière write political violence into each destination in Mathieu's life. Even at his country estate, the power is out due to a terrorist attack. We do not learn the context of the terrorist groups' demands—only that they are willing to murder civilians in order to oust prominent leaders. Buñuel and Carrière seem to underscore the fruitlessness of this strategy while also acknowledging various injustices or social problems throughout Europe. With respect to the power dynamic in the relationship, it would appear that Conchita holds all of the cards. She withholds intercourse (specifically, her vagina) as a bargaining chip in order to manipulate Mathieu. She continually arouses him, the rejects him, and he always comes to find her. It is usually Conchita who breaks up with Mathieu, and it is Mathieu who attempts to reinitiate the relationship when they see each other again. Moreover, Mathieu continues to support Conchita and her mother financially despite the young dancer's behavior. On the other hand, Mathieu has a power advantage due to his gender, age, and status. He can use his wealth to support Conchita and her mother—both are poor immigrants who live an unstable life. If he were not so obsessed with Conchita, Mathieu could easily abandon his young lover and leave her (and her mother) to their own devices. Conchita predicts several times that Mathieu will leave her once she has sex with him, and perhaps she is correct.

Terrorism There are five big terrorist attacks in the film: the car explosion in the first scene, the St. Damian bombing, the attack on the power plant, the near-assassination of the Archbishop of Siena, and the presumed blowing up of the Parisian shopping mall at the very end. Another early scene references the trial of some of the bombers, who get off with only a few years of prison time. Symbolically, the explosions could represent the disastrous state of the romantic relationship between Conchita and Mathieu or the explosion of Mathieu's rage and sexual frustration. However, there is a discussion of the threat of actual and specific terrorism throughout the film, including the scenes in which Mathieu is listening to the news on the radio. The viewer learns that there are several different terrorist groups bombing various sites in Europe, but perhaps the most infamous is the so-called RABJ—The Revolutionary Army of the Baby Jesus. While this name is clearly meant to satirize religious fanaticism, Buñuel may also be commenting on the terrorist factions that bombed and attacked cities in Europe in the 1960s and 1970s, such as ETA in Spain or the IRA in Ireland and England.

JUSTICE

Violence There are two parallel threads of violence throughout the film: the violence that is the climax or relief of the tension between Mathieu and Conchita, and the constant terrorist attacks and political violence that often connect one relationship scene to the next. When Mathieu can no longer contain his frustration, he acts violently towards Conchita—shaking her, throwing her on the bed, and trying to rip off her clothes. One of the most violent scenes of the film is Conchita's beating, and this interpersonal violence marks a key moment in the film's trajectory. The violence of the scene is underscored by Conchita's wounds, blood, and bruises. However, Buñuel and Carrière also provide a subtler "soundtrack" of political and social violence throughout the film. There are the explosions (presumably terrorist bombings), two car hijackings with automatic weapons, and numerous news reports and descriptions of other terrorist attacks and wars. Often, Mathieu acts as a witness to violence in real time: he sees his driver beaten by the hijackers, and he and Conchita watch another shooting from their

balcony. Although he is disturbed in the moment, the action returns quickly to his obsession with Conchita generally and sex specifically.

Crime The terrorist attacks and hijackings constitute the crimes that keep repeating throughout the film. The viewer reads and hears the horrific statistics of death and destruction through Mathieu's consumption of the news on the radio and in the newspaper, respectively. Along with the chaos created by the terrorist attacks, there is also the attempt to bring the criminals to justice. Two characters are judges who sentence the terrorists. However, the trial of the RABJ in the beginning of the film does not lead to satisfactory punishment—at least according to Édouard. The implication is that the world, including Buñuel himself, has become inured to constant violence and terrorism. Even at the very end of the film, the mall visitors hear the news about the RABJ's attempted assassination of the archbishop but go about their shopping. The final frame interrupts the relationship drama with one last, devastating attack in the form of explosion.

RELATIONSHIPS

Sexuality

Desire The entire film is centered on Mathieu's obsessive and unquenched desire for Conchita, hence the film's title. Although Mathieu manages to kiss, caress, and look at Conchita's body repeatedly, she always denies him intercourse and oral sex. It could be said, then, that the object of the title refers most explicitly to Conchita's vagina, although there is also the interpretation of the "object" as Conchita's affection, love, or spirit. Mathieu lacks an emotional or physical release, so the desire is recycled in a repetitive pattern throughout the film. It is likely that Conchita also experiences desire, but neither Mathieu nor the viewer can ascertain what the young dancer truly feels. She expresses a yearning for autonomy and agency, but she also implies that she is physically attracted to both Mathieu and El Morenito. In one of the apartment scenes, Conchita insists that she is the one who loves and pursues Mathieu, not the other way around. The Sevillian gypsies seem to concur when they read Mathieu's fortune in front of the cathedral. The implication is that Conchita craves affection, attention, and power, but not necessarily sex. It could be argued that Conchita desires freedom or perpetual purity—if, in fact, she is a virgin. Her name, short for Concepción, alludes to Mary's immaculate conception. Perhaps she aspires to be as pure as her name suggests.

Sadomasochism At its core, the relationship between Mathieu and Conchita is sadomasochistic: they continually hurt each other both emotionally and physically, yet both keep coming back to the toxic relationship and vicious cycle. Although Conchita's motivations for maintaining her chastity are not always clear, she overtly engages in sadistic behavior towards Matthieu. Her typical game is to flatter, arouse, or titillate Mathieu, then suddenly pull away. We see this pattern emerge in an early scene in which she initiates contact with Matthieu by sitting on his lap and kissing him, then she takes offence when he strokes her leg. The teasing becomes more extreme when Conchita gets naked and even mounts Mathieu. Of course, her most sadistic behavior is humping El Morenito in front of Mathieu. Because he cannot stay away from her, Mathieu has a masochistic tendency—that is, until he explodes in anger and lashes out. As film critic Peter William Evans so cleverly puts it, Mattieu is "cursed by recidivism". In some ways, Conchita is also a masochist in that she puts herself in the position to be victimized. She knows that the relationship is toxic, yet she initiates contact and follows Mathieu to Paris with a black eye. Her job as a stripper-dancer suggests that she enjoys being objectified while also wielding erotic power, and she repeats this titillation with Mathieu on multiple occasions.

Fetishism The most overt fetish in the film is Conchita's vagina—it is there but exists only as the titular object of desire, or "obscure" concept that is never attained. Mathieu's ceaseless pursuit of the "object" reflects what Lacan described as the lack—the missing part (usually a phallus) that all individuals crave. Mathieu's psychological obsession with the vagina and penetration is illustrated by his frantic clawing at Conchita's "medieval" underwear and his rapt appraisal of the seamstress repairing the lace in the storefront window. At times, Conchita is broken up into erotic body parts where the focus is on her hair, breasts, legs, hands, or feet. Mathieu strokes Conchita's hair when they are first alone together, and Conchita offers her hair to Mathieu when they are first reunited in Seville. When the lovers are walking on the street, Conchita argues that sex is not necessary given that Mathieu has access to her mouth, breasts, and legs. Her seductive dancing underscores the focus on various body parts, even when she is

fully clothed. A good example of this framing occurs when Conchita is rehearsing her flamenco routine in the apartment. The camera zooms in on her feet, and Mathieu touches her cleavage and remarks that she is sweating. Beyond Conchita's body parts, *That Obscure Object of Desire* does not shy away from investing objects with erotic meaning. Buñuel marks the flashbacks to the love story by cutting to the train in motion. Although it does not go into a dark tunnel, the shots of the train could still be interpreted as phallic. At the end of the film, Mathieu stops to watch a woman sewing up a blood-stained, white, fabric and repairing the lace pattern. The act of sewing, especially with the close-ups on the needle moving in and out of the fabric, remind Mathieu of his longing for penetration. The blood could allude to either the terrorist violence, the violence of the relationship, or refer to Conchita's lost virginity. In any case, Mathieu's gaze creates an erotic aura around the act of sewing.

LIFE STAGES

Youth Conchita and her musician-thief companions are the epitome of youth, and Conchita even states explicitly that she is eighteen. They are thin, attractive, and vibrant with muscles and silky hair. Conchita's willingness to show her body (either in her underwear or completely nude) underscores her youthful beauty and confidence, and also a bit of naivete. Although the young dancer is quite seductive, she also guards her own virginity as a symbol of her youthfulness (and of course, as a bargaining chip and power play). Conchita's youth is also flaunted with her dancing ability—she is able to rehearse continuously and expresses herself with grace and vitality. Although she claims that she prefers older people to young, stupid men, she also praises El Morenito's tight body. In some respects, Mathieu is also framed as young in spirit. His obsession, anger, and strong sex drive seem to be that of a younger man, and the dancers at the flamenco club also comment on his naivete—specifically, that he believes Conchita when she claims to be napping upstairs.

Old Age As foils to the Sevillian dancers and musicians, Mathieu and his companions epitomize both the stability and the foibles of old age. Despite his overall vitality, Mathieu worries that he is too old for Conchita and that she is using him for his money. At times, Conchita suggests that she doesn't care about old age, yet she also rubs in the fact that he can never "have" her fully. Mathieu seems to be worldly and experienced, yet he also admits to his brother Édouard that he usually only sleeps with women when he is passionately in love with them. His age shows up more distinctly in his relationship with Conchita, as he often takes the role of Don Juan conquering new territory. Or, perhaps more frequently, Mathieu becomes a father figure who advises, scolds, and supports Conchita. When he fails in both roles, Mathieu becomes another feeble old man bested by his daughter-lover. This pattern is repeated often in several Buñuel films, and the aging Don Juan is played by Fernando Rey several times.

PHILOSOPHY

Performativity and Metafilm As with many of Buñuel's films in the last third of his career, the director and his crew draw the viewer's attention to the elements and machinations of filming. The most explicit and repeated form of metafilm is the use of two actresses for the same role. The viewer is unable to get lost in the world of the film because the object of Mathieu's desire keeps changing. When the couple go back to Mathieu's country house to have an affair, Conchita (played by Ángela Molina) goes into the bathroom and says that she wants to change. A few moments later, Caroline Bouquet emerges and proceeds to expose her breasts. We then see Bouquet's body through the mirror rather than through Mathieu's male gaze. These moments of double and triple vision remind the viewer that she is watching a film and participating in the erotic voyeurism of the bedroom scenes. This film also features performances within the film: we see Conchita rehearsing and performing her flamenco routines, and we watch Mathieu watch the tourists watch Conchita dancing nude on stage at the flamenco club. Even though each dance performance is enacted by Molina (and not Bouquet), the viewer is reminded that they are watching a performance within a performance. Moreover, the overall story itself is relayed through the flashbacks—Mathieu is telling the story after the fact to the rapt "audience" on the train. We can assume that he performs his own version of the narrative.

FLAWS

Obsession Matthieu is always chasing the object of his desire—not just intercourse, but also the sincere love and affection of Conchita. Rather than leave her for good, Mathieu cannot help but go back

to the pursuit over and over. Even his escape on the train cannot detach him from Conchita. Conversely, Conchita has her own obsession with power and chastity. She uses her supposed virginity as a bargaining chip, but she is also caught up in the idea of remaining pure for herself. This yearning for purity is undercut by her stripping and sadistic teasing, yet she still holds onto an almost Platonic conception of virginity. The erotic obsessions of the main characters find a parallel in the fanatism of the terrorist organizations. The political obsession leads to destruction and death, as reported in the news throughout the film.

SIMON OF THE DESERT

SOCIETY

Religion

Penitence Simón remains on the column because he believes that his sacrifice purifies himself and aids the community. Along with standing on the column, he also punishes himself by refusing to eat or drink well (or regularly). When he falls for the Devil's trickery, he increases his punishment by forcing himself to stand on one leg. Even in the early scene of the film where Simón walks from one column to the other, he denies himself praise from the other monks and affection from his mother. The austerity of the penitence is increased when Simón declares his intention to live on the column forever. Aside from engaging in the purifying punishment, Simón also uses the penitence to test his ability to transcend the physical plane. Although Simón is able to perform miracles and advise his fellow monks, the ambiguity of the film's ending indicates that the monk's sacrifice did not fully achieve his objectives. The frenetic dancing to the song "Radioactive Flesh" smacks of an apocalypse or nuclear fall-out, and Simón is in the basement nightclub with the other sinners. He did not ascend to heaven after nine years of penance, and perhaps it is this disappointing ending that Simón must accept in the last moments of the film.

Seven Deadly Sins The Devil tries to incite desire and resentment in Simón so that he gives up his penitence. She tempts him by provoking his pride, lust, gluttony, and sloth, among other sins. The various visitors also exemplify specific sins. The possessed monk displays anger—not only is he literally foaming at the mouth, but he is also verbally condemning the rituals of the Church. The skipping monk acts out vanity by being overly concerned with the tidiness of his cassock. In addition, the skipping suggests a frivolous nature that does not comport with a monk's duties and sacrifices. Finally, the debating monk inadvertently covets the woman who passes by. In each case, Simón pinpoints the bad behavior and admonishes the monk for flirting with sin. The peasants of the desert indulge in some questionable behavior, such as the goat herder loving his animals "too much." Pride imbues the characters in general as they all seek attention and commendation, and even Simón falls into this trap on occasion.

Rituals As a Jesus-like figure, Simón performs rituals and miracles from atop the column. There are two overt miracles in the film: the first is restoring hands to the thief, and the second is converting the water and lettuce in his food basket into cheese, bread, and wine. The latter miracle is an obvious reference to the Eucharist, as Simón gives the bread to those below. Simón also enjoys blessing his visitors and the innocent animals he encounters. Moreover, the concept of a fast in the desert (and the constant temptation from the devil) references Lent and Jesus's own moments of torment in the desert. The frequent close-ups on the gashes on Simón's calves and shins references both Jesus's wounds and other saints' physical pain/sacrifice. Early in the film, the priests attempt to perform a ritual in order to ordain Simón, but he refuses the honor. However, he encourages his visitors to engage in their own penitence and rituals. From the very first moments of the film, we hear the pilgrims singing a monastic chant that is repeated several times. The pilgrimage to the desert becomes a recurring ritual and one that Simón welcomes. The question remains whether the journey provides the purification or answers that the visitors seek. In some cases, the implication is that neither the villagers nor the priests change their behavior after encountering Simón.

QUEST

Introspection Simón's primary goals are to purify himself and transcend the flesh. His placement on the column separates him from others while also bringing him closer to God and at times, closer to

animals. His meditation is assisted through the desolation and isolation of the desert, although he does interact with his mother below and the daily pilgrims. In addition, Simón denies himself food apart from lettuce, and he even rejects the goatherder's milk. His fasting and isolation brings him closer to nature—in particular, the birds and insects who can fly up to him. Simón also engages in constant prayer when he is not preaching to visitors below. In some ways, this ascetic severity is effective: he builds up his physical and psychological stamina, and he is able to ignore the erotic flirtations and manipulations of the Devil. On the other hand, Simón does not succeed in transcending hunger, thirst, and yearning all together. He is tempted by earthly desires, even though he manages to resist them. Moreover, his nine years of introspection may have been all for naught, as he ends up watching the Devil dance at the end of the film.

ETHICS

Duty While Simón is performing an act of penitence and internal reflection, he also takes it upon himself to interact with the community. His individual purification acts as a purification of those around him, as well. It is for this reason that Praxedes funds a "nicer" column for Simón to continue his service and sacrifice. Simón's interactions with others echo those of Jesus (see **Rituals** below): he performs blessings and miracles regularly, he preaches to the assembled crowd, and he debates with the monks of the old guard. However, Simón's efforts often result in lackluster results. He is never able to banish the Devil completely—she keeps coming back, and she haunts the inhabitants of the desert at night. Simón's chiding of the monks' behavior rarely leads to repentance or change. Even the thief whose hands are restored immediately returns to his bad behavior. The goatherder does not understand Simón's message. The implication is that while the monks and peasants want to visit Simón and receive his blessings, they do not wish to learn or repent. The ambiguous ending also suggests that Simón's nine years on the column did not make a true impact.

APPEARANCE

Deception The most overt deception is that of the Devil: she takes many forms, she lies, and she manipulates. The visual tricks that she uses confuse and distract both Simón and the viewer. We don't always know which character is the devil and why she takes that particular form. Each character has her own accessories that are meant to trick or titillate. For the shepherd character, the Devil wears a beard, and for the schoolgirl, the Devil wears blond pigtails. The physical position of the Devil also changes constantly: one moment, she is on the ground, another moment she is on the column, and another moment she is running in circles or running away. This frenetic movement disorients both Simón and the viewer. Buñuel and Figueroa enhance this effect through their use of jarring cuts and extreme low and high angle shots throughout the film. Along with disrupting the narrative thread, the cuts incite a sort of visual vertigo in the viewer. Finally, we could say that Simón is deceiving himself in that he dreams of an ultimate purification that cannot be achieved. Moreover, his influence on the community and his fellow monks is temporary at best.

PSYCHOLOGY

Alienation As a part of his penance, Simón separates himself from society, "civilization," and even his mother. Even when Simón is on the ground temporarily, he rejects the embraces of his mother. During the dream sequence, Simón yearns for physical contact even more than food or water: he wishes to rest his head on his mother's lap. Both columns are erected in the middle of nowhere so that Simón can reflect and so that the visitors have to take a pilgrimage to get to the isolated destination. Although Simón can interact with visitors, the dynamics of the conversation keep a literal distance between the aesthetic and his flock. Simón must shout down to his visitors, and they must shout up to him or climb the ladder. Simón's status "on high" also alienates him psychologically from the others, and he often takes an imperious attitude towards those below. There is frequent miscommunication, especially when the goat herder is perplexed by Simón's refusal to drink goat's milk. The one character who meets Simón at his level is the Devil, who uses her physical proximity to wound and lick Simón. As a result, much of Simón's sacrifice is being alone on the column.

Isolation Along with the lack of company and conversation, the landscape of the film is one of isolation. The column stands amidst primordial sand dunes and away from resources or people.

Although the pilgrims visit, Simón is eventually left alone on the pillar. Even his mother, who lives in a hut below, can only exchange furtive looks with him. The dunes stretch out for miles in all directions, and Simón is the one who sees from the eagle-eye viewpoint. In addition, the column itself creates a sense of isolation. Simón is so far up in the sky that he exists on another plane. As literary critic Lars Novak notes, the environment around Simón is one of extreme horizontality (the landscape stretching out to the horizon) and extreme verticality (he stands closer to the plane in the sky than to his flock below). Ironically, Simón is still somewhat isolated even when he is transported to the crowded nightclub. Everyone, including the Devil, dances with a partner. Simón is left at the table to contemplate the ambiguous ending, and he cannot even leave.

SUSANA

SOCIETY

Gender: *Mother Versus Witch* In many of Buñuel's films, the female protagonist or main character wrestles with her own desire, even when she attempts to remain virginal or chaste. There is often an internal conflict. In *Susana*, the title character's lack of a conscience prevents her from experiencing any conflicted emotions. As a result, she incarnates a seductive demon that is then juxtaposed with the kindness and purity of Doña Carmen. For most of the film, Carmen's behavior parallels that of the Virgin Mary, even to the extent that she blushes when Guadalupe kisses her passionately. Although Carmen temporarily gives in to her anger and a lust for vengeance, her forgiveness in the last scene restores her position as the paragon of virtue.

Religion: *Biblical Allusions* Susana is a rarity among Bunuel's films in the sense that the Catholic Church and religious practices are not a featured part of the plot and dialogue. However, there are subtle references to Biblical stories and Mexican Catholic culture. Three of the names of the main characters hold religious significance: Guadalupe, Susana, and Jesús. The patriarch's first name refers to the patron saint of the Mexican state, the Virgin of Guadalupe, who also acts as an incarnation of the Virgin Mary. This name is ironic given Don Guadalupe's lust and his foray into adulterous behavior. On the other hand, Don Guadalupe does act as a foundational figure for the prosperous Mexican family of the post-revolutionary (mid-twentieth century) period. Susana is a character from the Old Testament (Book of Daniel) who resists the advances of lecherous old men despite their slander, hence the Hebrew meaning of Susana--"chaste." With her demonic tendencies, the character Susana provides an inverted version of the Biblical story: she pursues the men and is protected from the accurate accusations of Carmen and Felisa. Finally, the ranch foreman Jesús hardly behaves like the Son of God. Nonetheless, Buñuel and the screenwriters make subtle references to the Trinity by the repeated use of threes throughout the film, as the film critic María Pilar Rodríguez notes. There are three orderlies in the reformatory, three suitors, three ranch hands accosting Susana, etc.

RELATIONSHIPS

Sexuality *(Desire – The Male Gaze - Erotic Triangles)*

Desire All of the men in the film are driven crazy by their desire for Susana. No one can resist her—even the ranch hands molest her without Susana actively flirting with them. While Don Guadalupe initially treats Susana like a spoiled daughter, he quickly succumbs to his lust and attraction for her. The obsessive nature of the men's attraction lends itself to the interpretation of Susana as a demon, witch, vampiress, and wild animal. The subtitle of the film, after all, is *Carne y demonio* (or flesh and demon), which evokes not only Susana's seductive beauty but also her sociopathic or even evil motivations. This concept of Susana casting a spell on the ranch is supported by the implication that she herself does not feel desire towards any of the men.

The Male Gaze This theme relates to the desire of the male characters, the overall portrayal of Susana as an object of that desire, Lacanian psychology, and classic film technique with regard to the framing of the female body. Because Susana has entranced the men, they are always looking at her. Like many other directors of the post-war period, Buñuel uses the camera as the eyes of the male voyeur; that is to say, the spectator watching the movie also looks at Susana in an erotic fashion. A perfect example of the emphasis on the gaze occurs during the storm sequence. We only see Susana's silhouette through the

window, but we also see all three men gazing at her lustfully from several angles. Along with seeing Susana from the lustful male perspective, Bunuel enhances her seductiveness through the use of high and low angle camera shots. The men either look up or look down at her, with the focus being on her legs from below or her shoulders and breast from above. As film critic María Pilar Rodríguez astutely observes, Buñuel uses windows to literally frame Susana for the male gaze; in addition, she is placed on the ladder and staircase in an overtly presentational manner.

Erotic Triangles Because all of the male characters are attracted to and obsessed with Susana, she forms the tip of multiple erotic triangles, with each pair of men as the other sides of the triangle: Jesús and Guadalupe, Alberto and Guadalupe, and to a lesser extent, Jesús and Alberto. Near the end of the film, Alberto and his father have an overt confrontation over Susana. In addition, a rivalry between Susana and Carmen develops as the matriarch identifies the young seductress as her competition. Susana does try to drive a wedge between Carmen and both her husband and Alberto. In this particular triangle, Guadalupe and Alberto become the tip of the triangle or the prize over which to be fought. We see this particular eroticism when Don Guadalupe transfers his lust for Susana over to Carmen during the passionate kiss. Because Susana drives the erotic obsession, her banishment from the ranch resolves the rivalries and leaves the integral family unit triangle. Once again, this complex triangulation underscores the emphasis on the number three that persists throughout the film.

FLAWS

Jealousy A large part of Susana's power is that she is able to set the men against each other. Jesús and Alberto are very possessive and combative. Conversely, Don Guadalupe is more contemplative in his assessments, yet he still fires Jesús in large part because of his jealousy. Ironically, it is Jesús's firing that awakens Doña Carmen's own jealousy. She begins to sense her husband's infatuation with Susana, which is confirmed when she catches them kissing. Carmen likely feels jealousy with Alberto, as well, as Susana threatens to take her son away from her. The jealousy and desire between children and their parents suggests latent Oedipal and Electra complexes. The viewer senses this dynamic more overtly in the interactions between Guadalupe and Susana, where the energy is both erotic and also has a father-daughter quality.

Vengeance Despite her pure and virtuous nature, Doña Carmen loses her composure by the end of the film. When she finally decides to throw out Susana, her anger overwhelms her. Carmen gets vengeance by whipping Susana mercilessly, and the viewer sees her anger through the low-angle shot of Carmen's enraged face during the beating. The implication is that even the kind matriarch is contaminated by Susana's spell. Among the men, Jesús shows the most inclination towards vengeance. Although he accepts his firing, he does not relinquish his obsession with Susana. He keeps coming back to dominate the object of his desire, often forcibly kissing and groping her. His body language and verbal threats suggest that he might rape her as a form of punishment for rejection.

APPEARANCE

Deception Susana's game is one of manipulation and deception: along with flirting with all the men, she presents herself as the innocent virgin or damsel in distress. This act is particularly effective regarding her seduction of Guadalupe, as his feelings towards Susana become a dangerous cocktail of paternal affection, lust, and a lover's jealousy. Susana is able to cast her spell on all the men, which is why some critics interpret her character as a witch, vampiress, or the "demon and flesh" of the film's subtitle. She manages to destroy the idyllic character of the ranch and its supposedly wholesome family dynamic. Felisa predicts that the storm will bring the devil, and her proclamation turns out to be true. The concept of the devil shapeshifting and taking on the persona of a beautiful and voluptuous young woman is not limited to this film, but is a trope throughout literature—and is also repeated more overtly in Buñuel's later film *Simón of the Desert* (1965). Although Susana acts convincingly, Carmen and Felisa see though Susana's performance and report on her lies. Still, the men remained transfixed for the majority of the film.

THIS STRANGE PASSION

SOCIETY

Class Like several other male protagonists in Buñuel's Mexican films, Francisco is a member of the rich elite in Mexican post-revolutionary society. Despite the land reforms demanded by rural farmers during and right after the Revolution (1910-1920), Mexican leaders embraced a mid-twentieth century modernism based on unregulated capitalism. As the descendent of nineteenth-century oligarchs, Francisco has managed to hold on to his mansion, his land in Guanajuato, and the dam project. His ability to conquer the rural landowners is paralleled in his attempt to conquer Gloria's mind and body. When he has his psychotic break and enters the monastery, he is effectively giving up his high position in urban society and embracing a retreat into nature. Raúl also lives comfortably, although he is not necessarily a product of inherited wealth. In both cases, the men enjoy the privilege of their class and status, and that allows them to get their way and win Gloria. We never learn who is suing Francisco over the dam, but the implication is that the plaintiffs cannot fight the power of generational wealth.

Illustrative Moment: Family Lands in Guanajuato There is an aerial shot of Guanajuato from a balcony where Gloria and Francisco look out over the city. Francisco explains that his grandfather "acquired" the lands from the natives and that the city should return them to him. This scene is one of several moments throughout the film when Francisco looks down at his subjects from above. Often, his desire to dominate the lower-class Mexicans mirrors his intention to dominate his wife, and it is not coincidental that Francisco surveys his territory during his honeymoon with Gloria. Moreover, the inherited land in Guanajuato marks the origin story of Francisco's wealth and status.

Religion While the relationship among Francisco, Gloria and Raúl takes center stage, Buñuel also chose to begin and end the film in a church during services. His desire originates during the foot-washing ceremony on Maundy Thursday (the Thursday before Easter), and his psychotic break occurs when he imagines the whole congregation (and Father Velasco) laughing at him and mocking him. As a worshipper who takes part in the foot-washing ritual, Francisco is an esteemed member of the church and a friend to Father Velasco. The priest appears at both parties and offers marriage and psychological counseling to both Francisco and Gloria. The overall effect of his presence suggests that the Church and its social mandates are lurking in the back of Francisco's mind, so much so that Gloria thinks that Father Velasco is the one person who can "get to" Francisco and intervene on her behalf. While Francisco's retreat to the monastery is derived in part from a desire to find peace and seclusion, it is also notable that the protagonist uses religious texts and meditation to treat his insanity. In this sense, religion is the cure. On the other hand, Francisco's zig-zag walk in the final frame suggests a small subversion of the literal and figurative religious order; he does not necessarily comply completely.

Illustrative Scene: Ritual of Washed Feet The priests walk down to a bench, where several young boys and men are seated. Two congregants fill a pitcher with water, and one (wearing a sash) approaches the choirs and pours the water from the pitcher into a bucket. The priest kneels before the bucket and the boy sitting on the end, and he proceeds to wash the boy's feet. The camera cuts to a shot of the congregants who watch the ceremony intently. The priest dries and kisses the boy's foot as a male choir sings. In this scene, Francisco is positioned as a glorified assistant to Father Velasco in this well-known ritual. Like the priests, Francisco is serving others, yet he also appears with a sash and is featured as a well-heeled and respected congregant. Buñuel implies that the meaning of the ritual (humility) is contrary to Francisco's ego, desire, and status—both in general and in that moment when he first gazes at Gloria's feet. Francisco's performance as a devout Catholic does not prevent him from abusive and narcissistic behavior later.

JUSTICE

Violence Francisco's abuse takes multiple forms. He physically harasses and stalks Gloria, then verbally and physically abuses her during their marriage. The verbal threats begin on their wedding night and become more violent over time. Francisco likes to exact punishment through physical violence, including tying Gloria up and threatening her with genital "sewing." He nearly kills Gloria at the top of the tower. It is notable that he chooses to inflict the pain of strangulation rather than merely throw her to her death. While his anger is directed mostly at Gloria, Francisco also lashes out violently against his

perceived rivals, including stabbing the keyhole and backhanding Ricardo in the hotel. His final break with reality occurs at the end of the film when he physically attacks Father Velasco. There is also the historical violence of inherited sociopolitical power in Guanajuato. The implication is that Francisco's grandfather took native lands by force (possibly during the Porfiriato, or pro-oligarchic dictatorship from 1876-1911).

Illustrative Moment: Francisco Almost Murders Gloria Francisco and Gloria walk back under the big bell. Francisco notices that they are alone, and he warns Gloria that he could punish her by strangling her and throwing her down below. He does strangle her and pushes her back, but Gloria fights back and manages to break away from Francisco's hands. She runs down the spiral staircase. Francisco stays at the top of the staircase and yells down to her that he won't hurt her. In this moment, Francisco has crossed the threshold from verbal threats and obsessions to a literal attempted murder. As with other moments in the film, Francisco wishes to punish his wife with violence, although his other punishments often manifest as threats rather than executed assault. This time, however, it is likely that Francisco would have killed Gloria had she not wriggled out of his grasp. The attempted murder opens up the possibility that Francisco will kill his wife eventually.

RELATIONSHIPS

Sexuality Francisco is certainly driven in part by his sexual attraction to Gloria. He gazes fixedly at her feet in the church and her hair in the restaurant, and he compliments her beauty on multiple occasions. However, he seems more interested in possessing and dominating Gloria rather than actually having intercourse. The domination and violence against his wife become increasingly eroticized throughout the film. Rather than making love to her on their wedding night, Francisco tries to force Gloria to admit to her sexual fantasies. Later, in a fit of rage, he attempts to "sew up" Gloria as punishment with the implication that he wants to make her vagina inaccessible. Even his near-strangulation is erotic in a sadomasochistic fashion. This obsession with domination and possession could either be interpreted as an extension of Francisco's macho egocentrism or as a form of redirecting latent homosexuality. Conversely, Raúl and Gloria embody more traditional and heteronormative models of sexuality. They are physically attracted to each other, and they end up marrying and having a son together.

Illustrative Moment: Seclusion and Punishment After the party, Gloria attempts to enter an adjoining bedroom but is locked out. The next day, Francisco stays locked in his office until dinner. They eat in silence until Francisco pulls up the tablecloth and looks at Gloria's feet under the table—this time, she is wearing black high heels. Francisco compliments her beauty and says he will forgive everything. Gloria tries to defend herself, but Francisco grabs and kisses her violently. When Gloria fights him, Francisco becomes infuriated and accuses her of liking the lawyer "more." This scene in the middle of the film underscores how Francisco mixes sexual desire and arousal with dominance and paranoia. His admiration of her beauty, along with looking at her feet under the table, sexually arouses him. In addition, he is aroused by the possibility of "beating" the young lawyer, his imagined rival of the moment, by penetrating Gloria.

Desire Francisco is dominated by an obsessive desire for Gloria. Even after he has won her from Raúl, married her, and consummated the marriage, he hungers for total dominance. The desire to possess and control Gloria is paralleled in his determination to control his inherited lands and the dam project. He refuses to give in regarding the dispute over lands despite his lawyer's assertion that he cannot win the case. When he visits his hometown of Guanajuato, Francisco surveys his terrain from above and expresses a desire to lord over his colonial dominion. He also displays a god-like narcissism right before he strangles Gloria—he looks down out the "worms" below and imagines crushing them. As film critic Peter William Evans explains, Francisco's actions derive from an intense egocentrism, paranoia, and a possible latent homosexuality, or perhaps all three. The Spanish title of the film, Él ("He") reflects this concept of the world revolving around the male subject: Francisco. Gloria's desires take a back seat to Francisco's domineering ecocentrism. However, the opening scenes of the film indicate that Gloria is also sexually attracted to Francisco despite her misgivings. She goes back to the church in hopes of seeing Francisco again, and she willingly agrees to leave Raúl. When Gloria marries Raúl years later,

she seems to have fulfilled her desire for husband, family, and stability. However, the couple name their son after Francisco, which indicates that the male family line lives on and Francisco's ego is kept intact.

Illustrative Moment: Returning to the Church Francisco returns to the church and sees the woman who caught his eye in a pew in front of him. She senses that he is looking at her from behind, and she turns to look at him. He approaches and whispers that he has been thinking of her. The organist plays Bach's Fugue in D minor. She gets up to leave, and Francisco follows her out to the vestibule area. This early scene establishes Francisco's controlling and obsessive nature. He stalks Gloria as if she were his prey, albeit willingly in the first part of the film. Both characters are captivated by each other to the point that they are willing to hurt Raúl.

Erotic Triangles The action of the film depends upon the tension created by the erotic triangle of the two childhood friends- Francisco and Raúl--both intent on marrying Gloria. The two characters become rivals because Gloria must choose one over the other. Although Raúl retreats graciously when he realizes Gloria has fallen in love with his friend, Francisco remains fixated on the concept of Raúl as a perpetual threat to his union with Gloria. This obsession with Raúl begins right away (on the couple's wedding night) and persists throughout their marriage. In addition, Francisco creates imagined rivals through his insane jealousy. He is convinced that Ricardo, Gloria's old friend from Argentina, is stalking them and trying to win Gloria. Eventually, Francisco confronts Ricardo in the fashion of a duel—he strikes him across the face with the back of his hand. Franciso even becomes jealous of his lawyer and the way he dances suggestively with Gloria. These rivalries, both real and imagined, become less about Gloria and more about declaring victory over the other man.

Illustrative Moment: Francisco Confronts Ricardo Francisco sees Ricardo in an adjoining room at the hotel and is convinced that he is spying on them. When Francisco confronts Raúl, he strikes the Argentine and demands that he respect his wife. Ricardo punches him and proceeds to kick Francisco on the ground. Gloria runs out, and the staff intervenes in the fight. Along with establishing Francisco's paranoia in general, this scene emphasizes the protagonist's compulsion to create rivalries wherever he goes. Not only does he call Ricardo a Don Juan, Francisco also orchestrates a performance of manhood. In this sense, Francisco looks for, then fabricates, an erotic triangle in which Gloria is the prize.

PSYCHOLOGY

Psychosis (Madness) At first, Francisco's obsessions appear to be the eccentricities of a rich, powerful man who has fallen in love with Gloria. The fixations become perpetual abuse in which Francisco consistently insults, harasses, accuses, and in some cases, physically abuses his wife. At the very least, Francisco's behavior exemplifies that of a paranoid husband (see description below). In addition, the protagonist's inability to restrain his violent outbursts and his near-murders of both Gloria and Raúl indicate an evolving insanity. His hallucinations and visions at the end of the film suggest that Francisco has completely lost his mind. In this sense, Francisco's psychosis evolves from obsession and fetishism to violent paranoia to a complete psychotic break. This diagnosis of Francisco as insane is supported by several observations and comments throughout the film: Father Velasco implies that there is a history of insanity in the family, and Gloria bears Francisco's abuse in part because she recognizes that he "is not well." Along with abusing Gloria, Francisco acts out in increasingly psychotic ways, such as ripping up the staircase and banging on the banister obsessively.

Illustrative Moment: In Pursuit of Raúl and Gloria Francisco runs to Raúl's engineering office but finds that he is not there. He thinks he sees Raúl reading a newspaper on the corner and follows him. Then, Francisco thinks he sees Gloria powdering her nose in a passing car and follows her in a taxi. He sees Raúl and Gloria in front of the church talking, and he follows them inside. However, when he walks over the confront them, he realizes it is another couple whom he doesn't know. Bewildered and agitated, he collapses in the front pew. This scene builds up to the climax of the film and Francisco's ultimate break with reality: attacking Father Velasco. The protagonist's hallucinations only appear in

these last moments of the film and signal to the viewer that Francisco's mental problems extend past paranoia.

Paranoia Several critics mention that the famed psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan used *This Strange Passion* as an exemplar of paranoia for his students. Francisco is paranoid because he imagines that Gloria is unfaithful and that any passing man wishes to pursue his wife. In addition, Francisco presumes to read Gloria's thoughts and draws wild conclusions about her wants and desires. When Gloria denies his interpretation, Francisco refuses to accept her word and continues harassing her relentlessly (to the point of physical abuse). Although Gloria may still have loved Raúl, she shows constant devotion and forgiveness to Francisco and seems to be sincere in her loyalty to him. Francisco's paranoia is not limited to adultery, but also extends to a general mistrust of everyone around him. He thinks Ricardo is stalking Gloria at the hotel, and he is convinced that his lawyer sabotaged his legal claims to the dam and inherited lands. Ultimately, Francisco himself recognizes his own insanity and choose to cloister himself in the monastery. Even when Gloria and Raúl report that they have named their son Francisco, the protagonist relinquishes control and accepts that Gloria has found a new life.

Illustrative Moment: Bad Start to the Honeymoon The camera cuts to the train on the way to Guanajuato. In the train berth, Francisco professes his love for Gloria and kisses her. She closes her eyes, and he asks her what she is thinking. "Of you," she replies, but Francisco's face changes. He guesses that she is still dreaming of Raúl and his caresses, or of other former boyfriends. Gloria denies it, and Francisco keeps on insisting that she is thinking about other men. Gloria turns away, and Francisco vows that he will discover her "secret past" eventually. In the middle of the night, Francisco asks her forgiveness. This first scene in the flashback sequence presages not only Francisco's abusive tendencies but also his impending psychosis. Rather than enjoy his wedding night, Francisco perverts the tender moment with his new wife by insisting that she is thinking of Raúl. He immediately ascribes malintent and adulterous thoughts to his wife' affection, which alerts the viewer to the depth of his mental illness (and Gloria's plight).

Fetishism Buñuel's love affair with foot fetishes is on display once again in *This Strange Passion*. In the opening scene of the film, the camera offers multiple close-ups on the altar boys' feet and Father Velasco's ritual washing and kissing the right foot of the altar boy on the end of the bench. When Francisco first spots Gloria in the front pew, he gazes first at her feet and shoes. The camera takes several seconds to show Gloria's face. Francisco's obsessive desire begins with Gloria's black shoes. The transfer of his gaze from the boy's washed feet to Gloria's shoes suggests a possible bisexuality (or as Peter William Evan discusses, a transferred homoeroticism). While the focus on feet is the most overt fetish, Buñuel also uses close-ups of eroticized or phallic objects. Francisco's pistol has phallic connotations (especially when he shoots blanks directly at Gloria's mid-section). Buñuel also plays with the medieval construct of a chastity belt or vagina dentata in the form of Francisco's desire to "sew up" Gloria. He does not actually do it, but he lingers over the tools for several seconds and touches the needle suggestively.

Illustrative Moment: Obsession at First Sight The camera closes in on the man wearing the sash, who turns his head slowly to the congregation. The camera cuts to a shot of small female feet with modest black shoes. The camera pans up to her face, and the woman looks back at the man looking at her. When the congregants proceed out of the church, the man stands at the holy water font and waits for the woman to pass. As she does so, he offers a finger dipped in the holy water. The opening scenes of the film set the stage for Francisco's obsession with Gloria, and Buñuel creates the uneasy tone through the immediate compartmentalization of Gloria's body. Francisco's gaze lands on her shoes first; the viewer does not even see Gloria's face for several seconds, and this disconnect forces the viewer to see Gloria as an object rather than a full person. This framing of the female through the male gaze is the standard fetishization of female characters in classic noir films.

FLAWS

Jealousy Francisco's perpetual jealousy of other men derives largely from his obsessiveness, paranoia, and eventual insanity (see the **PSYCHOLOGY** sections above). Because Francisco "stole" Gloria from Raúl, the protagonist transfers his own objectives onto the men around him. In addition, he cannot escape the fact that Gloria was in love with (and engaged to) Raúl first. When he marries Gloria, Francisco transitions from the object of illicit desire to the potentially cuckolded husband. He interprets any pleasantry or conversation as erotically motivated towards Gloria. When the couple meet Ricardo in Guanajuato, Francisco immediately marks him as a rival and Don Juan. Later, he directs his rage more directly at Gloria by declaring that she is the one pursuing other men. Francisco interprets Gloria's dance with the young lawyer as flirtation, even though the protagonist himself had asked her to approach him at the party. In many respects, he is jealous of the fantasies in Gloria's head (even when they do not exist). The only way of preventing his jealous imagination is to murder Gloria or literally sew up her vagina.

Illustrative Moment: Awkward Party Francisco pulls Gloria aside at the party and asks her to chat with the lawyer. She agrees and takes over champagne to him. When they start dancing, Francisco looks at them fixedly. Another female guest asks Francisco to dance, and he agrees reluctantly. Father Velasco watches the guests dancing and comments to a friend that the lawyer is dancing too seductively with Gloria, whereas Francisco dances like "the perfect gentleman." Gloria and the lawyer walk out in the garden patio with other guests. When Francisco asks about his wife to Pablo, the butler mentions that they are in the garden. Even though Francisco initiated the contact between Gloria and the young lawyer, Francisco becomes increasingly jealous of the "erotic" way in which his wife is dancing. This jealousy in the moment carries over into his imaginings of Gloria's inner desires—which he cannot access.

TRISTANA

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 Saturna 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 in 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, Saturna 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 Bunuel'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 (Saturna 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.

VIRIDIANA

SOCIETY

Religion

Devotion For much of the film, Viridiana is devoted not only to her position in the convent, but also her role as benefactress of the community. Her insistence on leaving the estate is due in large part to her convictions to stay pure and escape her uncle's desire. When she decides to remain on the estate after Jaime's suicide, she dedicates herself to serving the poor. Despite Jorge and Moncho's protests, Viridiana feels it is her calling to shelter and give counsel to the local beggars. The beggars themselves also show moments of devotion. For example, El Cojo (the lame beggar) paints a tribute portrait to the Virgin Mary.

Sin The most obvious sins throughout the film stem from illicit desire: lust, covetousness, and the several attempted rapes. However, Buñuel also underscores other latent sins of all of the characters. After being given food and shelter, the beggars persecute each other, steal money and property, and show signs of greed and sloth. Even Viridiana is accused of the sin of pride. When the Mother Superior warns her of judging others harshly, she continues to condemn her uncle and others for their sinful natures. The implication of the film's ending is that Viridiana has given up her vows and will no longer remain the bastion of chastity.

Poverty Although Don Jaime and his family enjoy relative comfort, the rest of the town lives in extreme poverty. The scenes shot in the street show not only the hunger and desperation of the poor, but also a sense of hopelessness—they will never be able to ascend socially. This divide between classes is emphasized in the scene where Jorge rescues the stray dog from being strangled while moments later, another abused dog appears tied to a cart under a coach going in the opposite direction.

Wealth*: Land* Don Jaime enjoys the security of a cacique, or rural landowner, while many of the townspeople are homeless. This class divide in the country was a key part of the sociopolitical system in nineteenth-century Spain. The caciques, as oligarchs employing laborers on their land, were expected to control the vote of their peons during an election. As one of Spain's most famous novelists of the nineteenth century, Benito Pérez Galdós frequently depicted the cacique system in his narratives. In his mid-twentieth century adaptation, Buñuel is also criticizing the oppression and repression of Franco's dictatorship in the mid twentieth century. The dictatorship's policies had led to Spain's isolation from Europe and lasting economic problems such as recessions, inflation, and unemployment.

Gender: *Women*

Innocent vs. Seductress As an aspiring nun, Viridiana should uphold the mandated standards of purity, even in the face of male harassment and desire. While she attempts to maintain her virginity and moral standards in her uncle's home, the threat to her future in the convent is imminent from the earliest scenes in the movie. Buñuel places the character in erotically charged environments even as she engages in daily chores. Her milking the cow suggests manual stimulation and ejaculation, and her preparation of fruit in the kitchen alludes to the temptation of Eve in the Garden of Eden. On the other hand, Viridiana also takes on the characteristics of her namesake saint and the Virgin Mary, as she tends to the poor, diseased, and disabled. She also frequently holds and comforts babies. The portrayal of Viridiana as both Mary (pure and virginal) and Eve (deceptive seductress) is a common trope throughout European literature and film.

The Fallen Woman Ramona and Lucía's characterizations are also conflicted, although they align more with the archetype of the fallen woman. Ramona had Rita out of wedlock and engages in sexual relations with Jorge, and Lucía agrees to live with Jorge on the estate without marrying him. At least two of the female beggars are mothers out of wedlock. As the pregnant woman who receives Viridiana's counsel, Refugio does not even know the father of her unborn child.

Sexuality

Desire / Longing Most of the characters in the film crave affection, attention, and sex. Don Jaime's desire partially constitutes a nostalgic longing for his late wife. When he speaks of his wedding night, Don Jaime explains that his bride died in his arms from a heart attack. The implication is that they

may never have consummated the marriage, hence Jaime's obsessive yearning to seduce and perhaps marry Viridiana. Ramona also longs for affection and sex. She does not merely engage in a lustful romp in the attic, but rather shows a powerful attraction to Jorge from the moment they meet. The blind beggar, Don Amalio, yearns for sex and companionship with Enedina. The other male beggars are attracted to Viridiana's beauty and piety, which they ultimately try to sully. Although Viridiana represses her own desire for the majority of the film, she ultimately gives in to her attraction to Jorge.

Rape Although Viridiana manages to avoid rape several times throughout the film, she does experience the violence and trauma of attempted rape. While she is not penetrated, her agency and safety are violated multiple times: first, by being drugged, then by fighting off multiple advances, and finally by being physically restrained and nearly gang-raped by the two beggars in the house. Moreover, the attempted rapes threaten her chastity as an aspiring nun. Along with Viridiana's victimized position, the other female characters also experience affronts to their safety and agency. For example, the poor mother Enedina is pounced on by one of the beggars during the party, and the implication is that she is raped behind the sofa despite her protests.

Incest The three main characters in the film must all fight the temptation to engage not only in illicit sex, but also incest. Don Jaime has transferred his desire towards his late wife to Viridiana to the point that he almost rapes her (and wishes to marry her). Although the notion of an uncle and niece marrying was perhaps not as taboo in the context of nineteenth-century Europe, it was definitely provocative for Spain in 1961. Even after Jaime's suicide, Jorge continues to perpetuate the potential for incestuous desire in the household. When Lucía accuses him of an erotic attraction to Viridiana, Jorge does not deny it, but rather embraces it as a part of "the course of life." All three characters feel reservations about their incestuous desires but are willing to let them take hold.

Fetishism Along with his general obsession and incestuous desires, Don Jaime also engages in fetishism by infusing clothing and objects with erotic power. Not only is he aroused by his late wife's wedding dress and veil; he also puts on her shoes as part of his erotic rituals. When Viridiana agrees to put on the wedding dress, the erotic power of the objects transfers to Viridiana as the unconscious vessel for Jaime's desires. Buñuel also creates a fetishistic gaze for the viewer through his frequent close-ups on feet, shoes, bed sheets, and objects around the estate. The clothing and objects become symbols invested with eroticism.

THE YOUNG AND THE DAMNED

SOCIETY

Class Unlike other Buñuel films, the focus is not on the bourgeoisie and their servants, but rather on the poorest of the poor in city slums. The characters exist on the extreme edges of society where they must vacillate between victim and victimizer. There is literally and figuratively no place for them: no home, no work, no security, and often, no sense of familial identity or origins. For this reason, the characters exemplify the original title of the film: *Los olvidados*, or the *Forgotten Ones*. And, of course, children, women, the disabled, and elderly are even more marginalized and victimized in the urban jungle. The characters cannot even break into the working class, and as a result, they continue wallowing in generational poverty. Some of the characters attempt to find and keep steady work. Julián seems to have found stability in construction, and Marta, Pedro's mother, works as a maid—although she can hardly afford anything. Pedro also jumps from job to job, but each time he is hired, El Jaibo or his abusive boss thwarts his efforts.

Disability, Illness and Addiction As with almost all of Buñuel's films made in Mexico, there are several featured characters in the *Young and the Damned* who have physical and mental disabilities / illnesses. Early in the film, the boys attack a man without legs and rob him. Don Carmelo is blind, which puts him in a unique position of being both victim and victimizer. He is able to earn a living in part because of his disability, and his paternal power leads to the physical and sexual abuse of the children. On the other hand, the children are able to strike back because Don Carmelo cannot see danger approaching: Ojitos almost bashes his skull with a concrete block, and Meche almost stabs him with a knife. Cacarizo's mother suffers from a debilitating disease where she literally cannot get out of bed. Her poverty prevents treatment, so she depends upon Don Carmelo brushing a dove on her back as a

folk remedy. With respect to psychological issues, it is highly likely that the boys will acquire mental problems because of the trauma and violence, and we see this effect in Pedro's angry and violent outbursts. When Pedro beats the chickens on the agrarian farm, he breaks their legs in a striking parallel to the characters who lack limbs or who cannot walk. In addition, addiction runs rampant—as evidenced by Julián's drunkard father. Thus, the "broken bodies" act as stand-ins for a broken society.

Identity Even though the boys and their parents exist on the edges of society, they are still rooted in a distinctly Mexican culture and in the specific urban milieu of Mexico City. Some of the boys identify themselves by their home town or neighborhood—El Jaibo is named for his origins in Tampico, and Ojitos comes from a town in the countryside: Los Reyes. Don Carmelo busks in a marketplace which is likely the Zócalo in the center of Mexico City. The focus on Mexico City (with identifiable shots of its streets and plazas) alludes to its history as the colonial structure built on top of the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlán. This history leads to an interpretation of the characters as representative of various periods in Mexican history. Marta is the Malinche, or Aztec mother, of the mestizo nation (see **Motherhood** below for more context). Ojitos represents the rural peasant farmers under the Spanish colonial system. Don Carmelo alludes to Porfirio Díaz, the nineteenth-century dictator who provided stability. Finally, El Jaibo incarnates Mexican modernity and the failed national project after the Mexican Revolution.

Urban versus Rural Even though the film depends upon the context of the city, there is also a frequent juxtaposition of the urban with the rural. On the one hand, the viewer is bombarded with city images: traffic, food carts, the crowded market, construction sites and blacksmith shops, and of course, the shots of skyscrapers in the opening of the film. However, there are also pastoral settings: Cacarizo's family barn with the cow, and the agrarian reform school filled with hens. Ojitos also retains his rural essence despite the corrupting influences in the city. His position as the pure boy from the country is emphasized visually when he suckles the teat of the cow. In addition, Ojitos shows more compassion, innocence, and morality than the other boys. He attempts to rescue / protect Meche from El Jaibo's assault, which suggests that he has a strong sense of right and wrong. Buñuel frames the rural settings as potential respites from the crime and poverty of the city, although these respites fail to rescue the boys.

POLITICS

Power: *Failed Modernity* As a quasi-documentary, *The Young and the Damned* portrays real social problems of Mexico City in the early 1950s. This period in Mexico's political trajectory marked the end of a nationalist wave that included a reforming of the educational system and an idealized vision of implementing the promises of the Mexican Revolution (which had ended only a generation earlier). During the presidency of Miguel Alemán (1946-52), there was a boom in industry and infrastructure—multiple projects were designed to stimulate the Mexican economy after World War II. In reality, the development led to lower wages and a lack of funding for education. Despite the attempts to improve the lives of the poor and celebrate Mexican culture and heritage, there was still a huge morass of poverty and various economic problems. It is this disconnect between political rhetoric and urban reality that Buñuel underscores in this film. As several critics note, the boys fall through the cracks of a post-revolutionary failed modernity.

JUSTICE

Crime Although El Jaibo is the mastermind of the gang's many crimes, nearly all of the characters commit crimes or immoral acts by proxy. The boys' crimes are constant and obvious: theft, harassment, and of course, murder. The adults also engage in arguably more insidious crimes: rape and pedophilia, in particular. While it could be argued that some of the crimes are committed for survival and are not premeditated, the majority of the incidents in the film show malicious intent. Nearly all of the crimes enact violence or injustice on the weak: the adults try to manipulate or groom the children, the men rape the women, and the boys prey on the disabled. Even when the boys' motivations are pure, their efforts often devolve into crime. For example, Ojitos tries to be an obedient "ward" to Don Carmelo, but the blind man's abusive behavior leads the boy to contemplate murdering him. For Pedro, each of his efforts to work is thwarted by crime, which makes his murder all the more tragic. The viewer suspects that if it were not for El Jaibo's interference, Pedro could have put his life back together.

Punishment The boys receive punishment from law enforcement and parental figures, but the means of punishment are either ineffective, misdirected, or poorly executed. Buñuel's attitude towards police is arguably more empathetic in *Young and the Damned* than in his later satires in which the police, the military, and the military police engage in torture, unlawful arrests, and embezzlement. In the case of this film, the police fail to punish the real culprits: El Jaibo (although he is finally shot in the last minutes of the film), Don Carmelo, and the pedophile who approaches Pedro at night. Pedro's punishment, particularly his stay at the agrarian reform school, could constitute a fair or appropriate solution. Of course, this opportunity slips away as soon as Pedro returns to the streets. Within the familial structure, the boys are punished by neglect: Julian's father is a helpless alcoholic; El Jaibo never knew his parents; and Marta denies Pedro food and affection. In the end, the misery of poverty is the constant punishment.

Violence Violent acts occur almost every minute in this film. Even in the opening scene, the viewer sees the boys acting out a corrida in which the torero / matador mimics taunting the toothless boy playing the bull. There are several attempted and successful murders: El Jaibo kills Julián and Pedro, Don Carmelo kills El Jaibo, and both Meche and Ojitos contemplate or mimic killing Don Carmelo (although they do not actually go through with it). Whereas the moments of murder act as climaxes to the scene, there is also a continuous crescendo of violence: the beating or attempted rape of the kids by adults, and the constant verbal and physical abuse and fights between El Jaibo and Pedro. Concurrently, the aftermath of each violent act also begets more violence. Pedro's anger bursts out in several moments where he throws rocks at or beats animals, including the fight at the farm where he beat the hens to death with a stick. El Jaibo uses violent coercion to cover up his other violent acts.

RELATIONSHIPS

Sexuality

Desire El Jaibo lusts after Meche and Pedro's mother, forcing himself on the former and being somewhat seduced by the latter. In both cases, his sexual encounters constitute a part of his larger crimes against society. Pedro's mother also gives into her yearning for sexual contact when the opportunity arises. Don Carmelo, initially portrayed as a caring father-figure, also tries to coerce Meche into sexual favors. The adults' inappropriate sexual behavior underscores the overall abuse of the orphaned boys. In addition, the boys (and El Jaibo in particular) experience a strong Oedipal Complex. Due to the boys' lack of parental figures, Pedro's mother becomes a target for their latent desire for a mother. The yearning for maternal affection is mixed in with erotic desire, as is evidenced explicitly by El Jaibo's sexual encounter with Pedro's mother. Despite the bleak and devastating tone of the film as a whole, Buñuel infuses some scenes with his trademark eroticism. Marta washes her legs in front of El Jaibo, which sparks the sexual encounter. Meche also lifts her skirt twice: once to rub milk on her thighs, and once to retrieve the knife with which she contemplates stabbing Don Carmelo.

Childhood Sexuality; Rape and Molestation Obviously, the occurrence of rapes or attempted rapes in this film is also a part of the categories of crime and violence. Rape is interspersed with murder and theft: El Jaibo and Don Carmelo try to rape Meche (or at least, sexually harass or assault her), and Pedro nearly falls into the clutches of the pedophile in the city streets. The viewer quickly realizes that even those characters who have parents do not find affection or security. Don Carmelo, who initially appears to empathize with the lost children and provide them with food and shelter, is revealed to have pedophilic intentions later. Along with emphasizing the plight of the weak in the urban jungle, the references to rape reverberate on a psychological and sociopolitical level. We learn that Pedro's birth was a product of rape and that Marta was violated at fourteen. This information signals to the viewer that Pedro will be one of the "damned" and "forgotten", as he is already unwanted / neglected from birth. In addition, Marta's position as the raped mother references Mexico's love-hate relationship with la Malinche (see **Motherhood** below) and Mexicans' problematic relationship to their national identity.

Parenting: *Motherhood* Marta's position as Pedro's biological mother parallels her symbolic and psychological position as the mother not only of all of the boys in the gang, but also as mother of the Mexican nation. Several critics interpret Marta's symbolic position as an allusion to la Malinche, or Cortés's interpreter, lover, and wife during the Spanish conquest of the Aztecs. Like la Malinche, Marta is raped and impregnated by the "enemy," and both women bear and raise the children who are the product of the violence. In some ways, Marta betrays Pedro by turning him over to the police and sleeping with El

Jaibo. So, too, is la Malinche seen as a traitor to the indigenous people even while she is held up as the first Mexican mother. While she aides in the massacre of her people, la Malinche also gave birth to the first Mexicans—the mestizos, or mixed race, who become the foundation of Latin American identity.