

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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DAUGHTER OF DECEIT / La hija del engaño (1951)

Luis Buñuel (1900-1983)

OVERVIEW

Auteur Luis Buñuel is known as one of most influential surrealist filmmakers of the mid-twentieth century. Although he was born and raised near Zaragoza, Spain, he spent a large portion of his life and career as an exile in Paris and Mexico City. One of his earliest short films, *Le chien andalou* (1929), or the *Andalusian Dog*, became an iconic representation of eerie surrealist art in which Buñuel presented the audience with a series of unsettling, violent, and even erotic images plucked from a dream. Buñuel would continue in his surrealist style with such films as *L'Age D'or* (1930), or the *Age of Gold*. During his long exile in Mexico, Buñuel wrote and directed a handful of commercial films, including the featured drama of this essay, *Daughter of Deceit* (1951). The middle period of Buñuel's career was also characterized by three satirical dramas loosely based on nineteenth-century Spanish novels: *Nazarín* (1959), *Viridiana* (1961), and *Tristana* (1970). In the 1970s, Buñuel returned to his hyper-erotic and surreal style in such films as *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* (1972) and *That Obscure Object of Desire* (1977).

Film *Daughter of Deceit* (1951) is a black and white film set in Mexico City in the 1940s. The titular daughter is a young woman who eventually reunites with the father who abandoned her as a baby. Buñuel and fellow screenwriters Luis and Janet Alcoriza adapted Carlos Arniches's theatrical farce about a cuckolded husband, *Don Quintín el amargao, or The Embittered Don Quintín* (1935). Despite the farcical inspiration, Buñuel's interpretation constitutes more of a tragic melodrama that focuses on the plight of the young daughter. The film stars established Mexican actor Fernando Soler, who played beleaguered fathers in many of Buñuel's family dramas. Some of the more humorous and slapstick moments of the film are courtesy of the highly popular character actor of the period, Fernando Soto, known by his moniker Mantequilla (Butter).

Background Due to a long exile in Mexico, Buñuel's films in the 1940s and 1950s were often shot in and around Mexico City. *Daughter of Deceit* was no exception: it was filmed in the famed Churubusco Studio and in the streets of Mexico City. The screenplay was one of the first scripts Buñuel wrote with his longtime collaborator Luis Alcoriza, who would later co-author one of the director's most acclaimed films, *Exterminating Angel* (1962).

MAJOR CHARACTERS

<i>Quintín Guzmán</i>	Cuckolded husband and father to Marta
<i>Marta</i>	Abandoned baby who becomes attractive young woman
<i>Lencho</i>	Marta's abusive adoptive father
<i>Toña</i>	Marta's adoptive mother
<i>Angelito</i>	Nightclub director and Quintín's whipping boy
<i>Home Run</i>	Gangster turned casino bouncer and detective
<i>Jovita</i>	Toña and Lencho's biological daughter
<i>Paco</i>	Mechanic who courts, then marries, Marta

SYNOPSIS

Quintín Guzmán, an amiable travelling salesman, comes home from work to find his wife María in bed with her lover. The enraged husband chases and shoots at the lover, then throws his wife out of the house. María shouts that Quintín is not the father of their child, so he drives to a shack outside of town

and leaves the baby on the porch. The couple inside (Lencho and Toña) debate whether to raise the child, and Toña vows to raise the adopted baby alongside her own little girl.

A few months later, Quintín has left his job as a salesman and has purchased the casino that he once denounced as a shady business. When María visits him there, she pleads with him to give back the baby. She explains that he is actually the baby's biological father. Quintín throws her out but decides to send Lencho a stipend for raising the child.

The action jumps ahead twenty years to show Marta, a beautiful young woman, living in the shack with her cheeky sister and abusive father. Toña has died, so Marta and her sister Jovita have to run the house with no food and constant beatings from the severely alcoholic Lencho. Marta vows to leave but is temporarily distracted by the courtship of a handsome young mechanic named Paco.

When María is on her deathbed, Quintín visits her and realizes that Marta most likely is his biological daughter. He decides to meet Marta, but when he shows up at Lencho's shack, Marta has already run off with Paco. Furious, Quintín commands his employees at the casino to search all of Mexico City while he lashes out at the world for his perpetual "bad luck." After multiple failed searches and humorous misadventures, Quintín finally finds Marta in the city. The young woman forgives him, and the two begin to build back their relationship.

SCENES

No Electricity There is a close-up on a suitcase as Quintín packs. The house is dark from a blackout. Quintín lights a candle and picks up his robust baby girl from her crib. While he cuddles and comforts her, his wife María enters the bedroom and scolds him for not paying the utility bills. Quintín remarks that he has had bad luck with his recent jobs and projects, but he will try to make a steady wage soon. María retorts that he will never make good money as a travelling salesman and his insistence on being an "honorable" man. Quintín asserts that he will never take a shady job—especially the one that he was offered at the casino. María exhorts him to take what he can get.



Off to Puebla Quintín's associate, Julio, enters to take the salesman to the train station. Both men kiss the baby goodbye, and Quintín remarks to Julio that this gig had better yield money for the family. The camera cuts to a sign saying Puebla at the train station. Julio tries to cheer up Quintín by saying he is the best man for the job. Quintín muses that despite money problems, he should be grateful for his family. The salesman boards as the train departs. However, a clerk on the platform receives a note that indicates a landslide—and that all routes are postponed for the day. The clerk calls to tell the engineer to turn back.



Unexpected Betrayal Frustrated by the long train delay, Quintín walks home from the station. When the neighbors ask why he has returned, Quintín tells them about the landslide. The camera follows him as he climbs the stairs to the apartment. When he enters and lights a candle, he notices that the baby and the crib are in the living room. He opens the door to the bedroom and sees María and Julio in bed together. Julio jumps out the window as Quintín grabs his gun from the bureau. Quintín shoots out the window, then turns to María. The two struggle over who gets to hold the baby, but Quintín pushes María out into the hall. The neighbors coalesce and watch the fight. Quintín vows to take the baby, but María cries out that the baby is not his.



Time to Make a Decision Quintín reenters the apartment alone and examines his daughter. He sits down and continues to gaze at the crying baby. The camera cuts to an old Model T driving down a desert road. Inside a shack, Toña, Lencho, and another baby girl awaken to a noise outside. Lencho looks out and sees the baby left on the porch. He picks her up and takes her inside. Toña notices that the baby is hungry but well dressed. Lencho suggests that they leave the baby on another porch, but Toña vows to raise both girls. Lencho gives in as Toña nurses the new baby.



Dust-Up at the Casino The camera cuts to a bar at a casino, where a heavy gangster orders a drink. He refuses to pay the bartender, then walks around the roulette table and steals chips. When the other players protest, the heavy points to his gun and asks “Do you want a homerun?” Two attendants at the casino watch the customers and note two problems: the bullying gangster and a young man who cannot pay his losses. One employee asserts that the boss will not give the young guy a loan. Angelito confronts the gangster and tries to throw him out. The gangster resists and threatens him, and the two have a standoff with guns until Quintín arrives. The gangster claims that Angelito won’t give him his winnings and that he is too macho to let it go. Quintín agrees to give the gangster his winnings in order to avoid a scandal.



The Young Man Asks for a Loan The young man follows the gangster, Angelito, and Quintín as they enter the manager’s office. The young man waits a few seconds outside, but does not see the gangster when it’s his turn to speak to Quintín. The young man explains that he is engaged and needs his money back. Quintín refuses to help him and warns him that he will have trouble getting a job. When the manager mentions jumping off of a cliff, the young man replies that he might just do it.

The Heavy Comes To After the young man leaves, the gangster emerges slowly from behind the couch in the manager’s office. He has the frame of a chair around his neck, which indicates that Quintín knocked him out right before the young man entered the office. Quintín remarks that he had forgotten about him and to get out. The gangster offers to be a bouncer for the casino given that he knows the criminal mind.



María Begg to See Her Daughter María enters the office begging to know information about her daughter. Quintín refuses to tell her anything. María says that she is repentant for her guilt and that she lied about the baby’s father. She swears that the baby is his. Quintín throws out María and tells the heavy he can have a job if he keeps María away from the casino. Left alone in the office, Quintín contemplates whether his daughter is truly his.

Lencho’s Windfall The camera cuts to an interior shot of the shack with Toña and Lencho. Lencho reads his wife a letter that offers the couple 60 pesos a month to continue taking care of the baby in secret. The couple are excited about the extra money until Toña realizes that Lencho had already drunk a good portion of the first payment. They proceed to fight about how to use the money as the screen goes blank. The viewer hears Toña’s cries as Lencho slaps her.



Twenty Years Later in the Shack The black screen lingers for a few moments until the viewer hears Marta’s voice asking about groceries. When the camera comes back on, an extremely drunk and belligerent Lencho is shouting at Marta, now a beautiful young adult. Marta confronts her father about how there is nothing to eat in the house and how he beat her mother. The viewer realizes that Toña has died, Lencho’s addiction has worsened, and the two sisters have tried



to survive their father's abuse. Lencho grabs a whip hanging on the door and tries to beat Marta for her insolence, but Jovita restrains him.

The Sisters Complain and Dream Once Lencho has left in a drunken stupor, Marta declares that she will run away. Jovita tries to comfort her and cheer her up. Marta worries about living in perpetual hunger and abuse, but Jovita says that one day they will have plenty of money and wear fox furs. Jovita dances around the kitchen singing and tells Marta of her dream of being on the stage. Marta continues fretting about groceries, and Jovita suggests that Martha ask for credit at the store.

Near-Wreck Meet-Cute Marta walks to the grocery store down the middle of the road. When a car approaches, she does not see it until almost the moment of impact. There is a close-up of her startled face right before she jumps off into the shoulder. The car crashes on the other side of the road. Both the driver and Marta limp to each other while the driver shouts at her for walking in the middle of a highway. Marta goes to check on him and softly touches his head. The driver softens when he sees how beautiful and caring his near-victim is. They flirt with each other, and they arrange to go on a date on Sunday afternoon.



Paco and Marta Make Plans for the Future A drunk Lencho walks home with one of his bar friends. As they pass the field, Lencho notices that Marta is spending more and more time with her boyfriend. The camera cuts to the lovers walking among the trees. Marta complains that Paco is always caught up at work and arrives late to their dates. Paco vows to open his own mechanic workshop so that he can control his own hours and destiny. He declares his love for her by saying "I love you with all eight cylinders."



Angelito and the Mademoiselle The camera cuts to the dancefloor of the casino where Angelito is dancing seductively with a French woman but butchering the sweet nothings in French. He bids her farewell and goes to check in with the gangster. The two complain that Quintín is in a bad mood and even mistreats customers. When a priest arrives looking for the boss, Angelito scrapes and bows, then tries to clear out the sexy showgirls who are practicing in the hallways.



The Priest's Visit The camera cuts to Quintín playing poker with associates and complaining of an upset stomach. He agrees to go meet with the priest, who tells Quintín that he has something "grave" to discuss with him. The camera cuts back to the poker table, where the gangster is guarding the chips. The other players complain that Quintín will do anything to win—even bring in the clergy.



María's Deathbed Quintín waits in a living room. The priest emerges from the bedroom and tells him that María only has hours left to live. He also exhorts Quintín to be understanding. When Quintín enters, María tells him that she has repented and confessed her sins to the priest. She begs Quintín not to abandon his daughter, and she vows again that the baby was his. Quintín tells María that he believes her and that he knows he has been consumed with bitterness for twenty years. The priest pushes Quintín to forgive, but he refuses.



Angelito is Inappropriate Back at the casino, the swing band plays as the showgirls dance poorly. When the dancers run off stage, Angelito gropes them until Don Quintín arrives.



Marta is Imprisoned Inside the kitchen, Jovita does the laundry while Marta primps for Paco. Jovita scolds her for choosing an unreliable boyfriend and leaving her with all of the chores. Marta hears a horn honking and starts to leave the shack. Lencho appears, having returned early from the bar. He insults Marta by calling her a bitch and slut for spending so much time with Paco. Lencho grabs Marta and throws her in her bedroom. She climbs out the window and runs toward the field.

Marta and Paco Elope Marta runs to the field where Paco is waiting for her. When she describes the most recent abuse, Paco vows to take her away to a secret location until they can get married. Marta agrees and declares her love to Paco and her distress that she never knew her real father.



Quintín Looks for His Daughter The camera cuts to an exterior shot of the shack, where Quintín, Angelito and the gangster enter and ask after Marta. Once Lencho realizes that Quintín is Marta's father, he flatters his benefactor and claims that he took good care of Marta. Jovita emerges, and Angelito immediately praises her beauty. Lencho clarifies that Jovita is his daughter and that Marta is missing. A boy from town runs in and explains that Marta has run off with her boyfriend because she couldn't stand the constant beatings. He also reports that Marta warned Lencho not to abuse Jovita. Incensed, Quintín charges Lencho and turns over the table while the others hold him back. Quintín frees himself and starts shooting at Lencho as he runs out of the shack.



Search Party and Deductions Angelito and another associate gorge themselves in the dancehall of the casino. Quintín approaches them and asks them for an update on the search for his daughter. Angelito claims that they have been looking all over Mexico City, but the only thing they have to go on is the woman's name—Marta. Quintín becomes frustrated and declares that no one will eat or sleep until they find Marta. Angelito realizes that Marta's sister may be the key to finding the lost daughter, and Quintín agrees with the plan to return to the shack.



Courting Jovita Angelito visits Jovita at the shack and asks for news of Marta. They report to each other that they do not have clues. Angelito ogles Jovita and compliments her "four cardinal points." Jovita poses in front of him and shows off her body. She tells Angelito of her dream to be either a movie actress or a cabaret showgirl. Angelito promises to get her a job at the casino nightclub, and he gives her a card. Jovita notices that the club is named "The Inferno," but Angelito assures her that he is the angel who will protect her from hell. When he kisses her, Lencho appears and chases him around the room. Angelito runs out of the house and Lencho chases him down the road with a baseball bat.



Don Quintín's Horrible Temper Angelito and Home Run drink beer in a bar and complain about the boss's abuse. The bartender asks why they put up with it, and they explain that they feel sorry for their boss. Quintín enters, despondent, and reports that the earth has swallowed up his daughter. The bartender asks for his order and reminds him that his employees have been faithful friends to him. Quintín retorts that they are only dogs that follow him for scraps. When another customer turns on the juke box, Quintín demands that he turns off the music. A brawl ensues with Quintín pointing his pistol at all the customers. Everyone runs out in a panic. Quintín sits back down with his associates and reveals his greatest worry—that Marta is walking the streets as a prostitute.

Marital Squabble The camera cuts to an urban neighborhood within Mexico City. Marta stands in the street, fuming, as Paco drives up in a Rolls Royce. He gets out and flirts with her, and she resists. When he grabs her arms and threatens to throw her in the car, the passersby become alarmed. As the neighbors approach to rescue her, Marta shouts out that the man is her husband and that she is carrying his child. Paco, astonished, embraces her. The neighbors soften and congratulate them on the pregnancy.



Another Fight in the Bar Quintín, Home Run, and Angelito drink at their favorite table and have the bar to themselves. When another customer enters and orders tequila, Quintín forces him to drink the whole bottle, then throws him out. Quintín reminds the bartender that he always wants the place to himself. Marta and Paco enter a few seconds later, and the waiter tries to get them to leave. As the couple waits for their sandwiches, Quintín starts to throw olives at Paco. Marta begs Paco to ignore them and leave. Quintín hits Marta in the eye, so Paco returns to confront him. Paco insists that Quintín eat the olive and that Angelito eat the pit. When Paco leaves, the bartender asks why Quintín backed down. The boss replies that he saw “death in his eyes.”



Hunting Down Paco The camera cuts to Angelito and Home Run in the bathroom. They run around and splash each other with water in order to convince Quintín that they having been running around the city. When they enter his office for a report, Quintín insists that they keeping looking for the man who insulted him. Angelito begs his boss to let it go, given that two months have passed, but Quintín leaves in a huff.



Angelito Warns Marta Angelito sees Marta emerging from her apartment and approaches her. He warns her that Quintín, the guy with the olives, is determined to hunt down her husband. She replies that she knew the conflict would escalate. When Paco appears, he shouts “Coward!” at Angelito and begins to chase him. Marta intervenes and explains that Angelito is trying to protect them. Paco vows that he will confront Quintín.

Jovita Gets Her Big Break Jovita enters the club hoping to be hired as a singer. Angelito is flustered when he realizes he has to make good on his promise, but he has a brilliant idea and snaps his fingers. When he enters the office, he tells Quintín that he has hired Marta’s sister to be an act in the club. Quintín goes to strike him, but Angelito explains that Jovita will act as a decoy to attract Marta to the club. Angelito delivers the good news to Jovita and proclaims that they will hang huge publicity posters in the streets.



Jovita’s Debut The action moves forward to Jovita’s opening night. Angelito goes backstage to ogle Jovita and wish her good luck. Jovita paces nervously in her strapless dress and asks if she is missing anything. Angelito quips that he is missing his breath and embraces her. The camera cuts to the entrance where Marta and Paco look for a seat. Jovita appears in the spotlight and sings a flirtatious song to all the men in the club; she also spots Marta and squeezes her hand. Angelito and Home Run also notice Marta and Paco, and both start to panic. When Marta and Paco go backstage to congratulate Jovita, Angelito and Home Run intercept them and usher them out of the club. Don Quintín spots them and runs after them. Angelito, Home Run, and Jovita also follow with Angelito promising that he will explain everything on the way to Marta and Pedro’s apartment.



Father and Daughter Finally Meet Don Quintín walks the street looking for Paco. Marta sees him and confronts him. She explains that she never knew her mother or her biological father; therefore, Paco is her whole world. Quintín calls Paco a coward for hiding behind his wife. Marta continues her aggressive language and swears that Quintín will have to go through her to get to Paco. Paco and Quintín spot each other and Quintín points his gun. The others arrive on the scene and break up the fight. Marta curses Quintín viciously, and Home Run explains that she is his daughter--and that he has reaped what he has sown. Don Quintín walks around the neighborhood, crying.



A Changed Man When Quintín returns to his office, he finds Marta waiting. The two embrace, and Quintín asks for forgiveness. Marta and Paco accept his apology, and Don Quintín declares that happiness has changed him. In order to prove that he has left behind his bitterness, Quintín dares Angelito to kick him. Angelito does so, and Quintín charges him. Angelito begs for forgiveness and quips that the boss can't kill him before his marriage to Jovita. Paco and Home Run distract Quintín by telling him that he has a grandson. Quintín demands to see the baby, but Marta explains that he hasn't been born yet. Frustrated, Quintín turns directly to the camera and says: "Bad luck again! You see, nothing ever goes my way."



CHARACTER ANALYSIS

QUINTÍN As a doting father and husband, Quintín initially appears to be a working-class hero for whom the audience has sympathy. When he casts out his wife and abandons his baby, he becomes a villain, or at least, an anti-hero. For most of the film, Quintín acts as a violent and tyrannical boss who controls the casino and the town. Eventually, he finds redemption through Marta's forgiveness.

Bitter Quintín admits that he cannot let go of his rage towards his wife and the world in general. His vengeful nature propels him to give up his daughter for twenty years and leave her in an unsafe place. Even when María is dying, Quintín partially admits to a tyrannical nature but still refuses to forgive. He runs the business with an iron fist and no sympathy. In addition, his bitterness literally eats away at him, as he continually complains of ulcers or an upset stomach.

Obsessed Quintín initially fixates on punishing his wife and becoming rich. Despite the passage of months and years, Quintín remains motivated by vengefulness, spite, and as an extension, greed. When he eventually decides to meet Marta, he becomes obsessed with finding her at all costs. He insists that Angelito and Home Run cannot sleep or eat until they find his daughter.

Selfish As soon as Quintín learns of his wife's adultery, he fixates on himself: his vengeance, his wealth, his power, and eventually, the control of his adult daughter. By separating María from her daughter, he denies both the right to foster a relationship. Quintín also forces Toña and Lencho to raise his own child. He believes his bitterness allows him to control the lives of others.

MARTA Like a Mexican Cinderella, Marta exudes a beauty and purity that contrasts with her unforgiving surroundings. She also shows a fiery determination.

Defiant Although Marta can be soft and affectionate, she also fights for her own autonomy and voice. She stands up to Lencho multiple times, with the result that he beats her frequently. She also confronts Paco when he mistreats her or reneges on his promises. Finally, it is Marta who openly condemns Quintín's tyrannical behavior.

Forgiving While Marta frequently has to defend herself, she is also willing to forgive. She supports Paco even when Jovita criticizes him. Marta forgives Quintín despite his many sins, and she even manages to sympathize with his years of suffering.

ANGELITO Angelito is first and foremost the director of the nightclub inside the casino and Quintín's top minion. He also exemplifies the Falstaffian stereotype. In many respects, Angelito acts as the comic relief for this quintessential melodrama of the 1950s. Despite his goofy antics, however, Alcoriza also gives the character some depth.

Gluttonous and lustful When the camera cuts to shots of the casino or nightclub, the scene usually begins with Angelito eating with gusto or chasing around after the showgirls. When Quintín threatens to cut off his meals at the casino, Angelito quickly finds a solution for finding his lost daughter. Angelito also turns his lustful gaze, complete with amusing quips, to Jovita.

Compassionate Despite his Falstaffian urges, Angelito acts as a loyal employee to Quintín. He manages the casino effectively, and he helps scour Mexico City for Marta. He also bears Quintín's abuse

for years. In addition, Angelito sympathizes with the other characters' plights—particularly Marta and Jovita's difficult upbringing. He also proposes to Jovita rather than seduce her.

THEMES

SOCIETY

Class Most of the main characters are working-class Mexicans who are trying to provide for their families. Initially, Quintín fails to make a steady wage as a travelling salesman, yet he persists in the hope that his luck will change and he will make a big sale. María's lack of satisfaction with her husband is due in part to his lack of ambition and his virtuous character. When Quintín goes to the dark side (that is, running the casino), he only cares about keeping money and power. His success in moving up in class and in the city constitutes his revenge against María and society as a whole. Ironically, Quintín's second-act fortune does not serve to raise his daughter out of poverty. Marta and Jovita remained trapped without food or resources, and their father (Lencho) also prevents them from pursuing careers or husbands who can support them. Quintín's stipend for the family is wasted on Lencho's alcoholism, which, along with other factors, keeps the family in poverty. In addition, Paco also represents the young working-class Mexican who struggles to improve his station in life.

Illustrative Moment: Paco's Dreams of Success The camera cuts to the lovers walking among the trees. Marta complains that Paco is always caught up at work and arrives late to their dates. Paco vows to open his own mechanic workshop so that he can control his own hours and destiny. He declares his love for her by saying "I love you with all eight cylinders." Like the lovers' Sunday afternoon dates in the forest, Paco's dreams of success constitute an idyllic reverie. Marta also longs to escape her own family's poverty and addiction, so Paco's plans are especially enticing to her. Once the couple moves into the city, it becomes even more difficult for them to gain economic security.



JUSTICE

Injustice Although Quintín feels justified in his punishment of María, his actions create multiple injustices to those around him. Arguably the greatest injustice is the victimization of the female characters throughout the film. Quintín's abandonment of Marta places her in a state of poverty and abuse from which it is very difficult to escape. As the title implies, Marta is punished for the sins of her mother—the fruit of adultery. However, Buñuel and Alcoriza also point to the abuse of the other female characters: Jovita and Toña suffer domestic violence and poverty, and María loses all autonomy and any chance to even see her daughter. Outside of the family, Quintín also dominates his employees and customers in a cruel way that makes everyone walk on eggshells. The protagonist acts as judge and jury of the world, but his punishments are rarely proportional. Moreover, he is not held to account for his own crimes, which range from physical abuse to shady dealings in the casino.

Illustrative Moment: Quintín Throws María Out of the Casino María enters the office begging to know information about her daughter. Quintín refuses to tell her anything. María says that she is repentant for her guilt and that she lied about the baby's father. She swears that the baby is his. Quintín throws María out and tells the heavy he can have a job if he keeps María away from the casino. At this moment in the film's timeline, María and the baby have already been separated for months, María has lost her apartment and her dignity, and Quintín has already abandoned the baby on Lencho and Toña's porch. In this sense, he has acted as judge, jury, and executioner, and he completely lacks mercy or compassion. The viewer realizes that along with having all the power, Quintín's justice is unjust.



RELATIONSHIPS

Marriage There are no successful marriages throughout the film, although Buñuel does provide a happy ending with Jovita and Angelito getting engaged. Quintín and María's union fails because of adultery, scorn, and neglect. Quintín's punishment of María and Marta completely deconstructs the family unit, which leads to misery for everyone involved. Quintín's disavows marriage as a social construct all together, as when he implies that the young man who lost his money at the roulette table should kill himself rather than marry his fiancée. Toña and Lencho foster an abusive relationship fueled by the stress of raising two small girls and by Lencho's increasingly severe alcoholism. While Marta views Paco as a protective future husband who will allow her to escape her father's abuse, she soon realizes that love does not sustain a marriage after the honeymoon. All three couples fight over economic strain, and the children are denied a stable upbringing as a result.

Illustrative Moment: Don Quintín Still Does Not Believe in Marriage

In order to prove that he has left behind his bitterness, Quintín dares Angelito to kick him. Angelito does so, and Quintín charges him. Angelito begs for forgiveness and quips that the boss can't kill him before his marriage to Jovita. Quintín releases him and calls him an idiot for getting married. While this final scene is meant to provide comic relief, it also underscores the truth about Quintín's character—he will always doubt the fidelity of those around him. Even though he buries the hatchet with Paco, there remains the suspicion that the mechanic may not be good enough for his daughter. These pessimistic final moments subvert the happy ending and leave the viewer wondering whether the two young couples will have successful marriages.



Parenthood Due in part to the complete lack of familial infrastructure, the characters suffer continuously. Marta, in particular, experiences a psychological orphanhood from her biological father's abandonment and the complete and permanent separation from her biological mother. Her adoptive mother dies early, and she takes on the role of the parent as Lencho refuses to provide for the family. As a result, Marta looks for stability and a father figure in Paco, but that substitution fails, as well. If it were not for the affair, Quintín would have continued to be a loving and engaged father, yet he completely abandons his duties after the affair. Jovita also experiences a lack of parental guidance or affection, which likely contributes to her dream of getting attention and money as an actress.

Illustrative Moment: Bruises and No Bread

The black screen lingers for a few moments until the viewer hears Marta's voice asking about groceries. When the camera comes back on, an extremely drunk and belligerent Lencho is shouting at Marta, now a beautiful young adult. Marta confronts her father about how there is nothing to eat in the house and how he beat her mother. Lencho grabs a whip hanging on the door and tries to beat Marta for her insolence, but Jovita restrains him. This abusive interaction is the first time the viewer sees the adult Marta, and we know instantly that she has suffered years of abuse and neglect. Like many of Buñuel's young characters in his 1950s films, Marta exemplifies the victim of both her immediate family and society as a whole. On the other hand, the most direct cause of her suffering remains Quintín's abandonment and Lencho's abuse.



FLAWS

Ambition Several characters end up putting their work and their greed above their families and morals. From the very beginning of the film, María criticizes Quintín for his lack of ambition and his inability to support the family financially. After discovering María's betrayal, Don Quintín buys the casino and runs it with an iron fist. However, his success only exacerbates his misery. His ambition becomes tied to vengeance and dominating others. Paco neglects his relationship with Marta in order to climb the social ladder. Lencho wastes the stipend on booze rather than investing it in the family's well-being. Jovita longs for fame, but her ambition leads her to work in a shady club rather than the movies. Angelito

and Home Run want to move up by staying in Quintín's good graces, but they are unable to get anywhere.

Illustrative Moment: María Criticizes Quintín's Economic Failures

Quintín remarks that he has had bad luck with his recent jobs and projects, but he will try to make a steady wage soon. María retorts that he will never make good money as a travelling salesman and if he keeps insisting on being an "honorable" man. Quintín asserts that he will never take a shady job—especially the one that he was offered at the casino. María exhorts him to take what he can get. This early marital squabble sets up Quintín's transformation perfectly. In the first scenes of the film, Quintín values honor over money and being a good father and husband over power. His lack of ambition becomes a primary rift between the couple (and possibly what instigates María's cheating). Immediately, Quintín becomes Mr. Hyde and allows his ambition to roll over everyone else in his life. In addition, the boss completely abandons his principles in one fell swoop.



Obsessive Bitterness One of Don Quintín's obvious flaws is that he cannot forgive. This inability to move on from the adultery poisons all of his business endeavors and personal relationships. For twenty years, he remains obsessed with his dishonor to the point that he sentences both María and Marta to their respective punishments. He views everything, from marriage to food, through a dark lens. His obsession derives in part from a belief that he always suffers from bad luck, and everyone is out to get him. Quintín avenges himself on the world through verbal condemnation and physical abuse. Conversely, the subjects of his abuse see the world through a more optimistic lens. Marta cherishes Paco as her emotional anchor, and Angelito and Home Run manage to find their own happiness despite abusive working conditions.

Illustrative Moment: Attacking Customers at the Bar Quintín, Home Run, and Angelito drink at their favorite table and have the bar to themselves. When another customer enters and orders tequila, Quintín forces him to drink the whole bottle, then throws him out. Quintín reminds the bartender that he always wants the place to himself. Marta and Paco enter a few seconds later, and the waiter tries to get them to leave. As the couple waits for their sandwiches, Quintín starts to throw olives at Paco. The scenes at the bar illustrate Quintín's inability to sympathize with others or even think outside of his own blind hatred of everybody. Unlike the customers at the casino, Quintín does not have a financial or reputative stake in the bar. He stirs up conflict merely to be hateful and to punish the world.



APPEARANCE

Dishonesty There are multiple manifestations of dishonesty throughout the film. The catalyst of the plot is the deceit of the title—María's adultery, followed by her lie that Quintín is not the baby's biological father. Later, several characters manipulate the system for their own personal benefit. Lencho misuses the stipend meant to help feed Marta, Home Run tries to get free drinks and chips at the casino by threatening the employees, and Quintín uses his muscle to dominate the bartender. Initially, Quintín refuses to work at the casino because he believes it to be an immoral profession. This perception of the casino and nightclub is supported by the case of the young man who loses a fortune and the dubious condition of the showgirls, not to mention the name of the club—Inferno. Although Angelito ultimately agrees to marry Jovita, his initial plan is to lie about his position in order to seduce her. Most of the male characters engage in deception and graft.

Illustrative Moment: Home Run Acts the Gangster The camera cuts to a bar at a casino, where a heavy gangster orders a drink. He refuses to pay the bartender, then walks around the roulette table and steals chips. When the other players protest, the heavy points to his gun and asks "Do you want a homerun?" Angelito confronts the gangster and tries to throw him out. The gangster resists and threatens him, and the



two have a standoff with guns until Quintín arrives. The gangster claims that Angelito won't give him his winnings and that he is too macho to let it go. This early scene at the casino establishes the shady nature of gambling in general and Home Run's criminally dishonest behavior, in particular. Although Home Run receives a beating for his threats and scams, he ends up getting a job as a bouncer and slowly becomes Quintín's favorite minion. In this sense, crime and deceit do pay.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Does Don Quintín deserve sympathy? Is he the victim or the victimizer, or both?
2. Does Don Quintín find redemption? What about María?
3. Much of the tone of the film is that of a melodrama, yet there are also moments of slapstick comedy and musical numbers. How does the mixing of genres affect the film's message?
4. How do you interpret the title *Daughter of Deceit*? Given that Marta was Quintín's biological daughter all along, the title is factually incorrect, so is there a subversive or symbolic meaning?
Note: the title of the play on which this film is based is *The Embittered Don Quintín*.
5. Is the ending truly happy? How do you interpret the tone of the film in the last scene?