

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
Tracie Amend, Ph.D.

The Young One / White Trash / La joven (1960)

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 and hard-hitting dramas, including the featured English-language drama of this essay, *The Young One* (1960). 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 *The Young One* (1960) is a black-and-white drama set in a game preserve. The plot involves the pre-teen girl Evie and her upbringing by three different adult men. The film is very loosely based on a short story "Travellin' Man" by Peter Mathiessen (1957). Buñuel worked mostly with American writers and actors on this film, but he also cast one of his favorite Mexican character actors, Claudio Brooks, as the Reverend Fleetwood.

Background Buñuel shot the majority of the film in a jungle near Acapulco, with some interior shot filmed in the Churubusco Studios in Mexico City. Like *Robinson Crusoe* (1954), *The Young One* was written, produced, cast and edited internationally. In particular, Buñuel worked with black-listed screenwriters from Hollywood on the script, and Mexican Gabriel Figueroa was the cinematographer. The film was featured at the Cannes Film Festival but did not receive any awards.

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Evalyn Stroud	pre-teen girl on the preserve
Pee-Wee	Evalyn's grandfather
Hap Miller	game preserve ranger and Evvie's guardian
Jackson	town resident and Hap's friend
Traver	jazz musician on the lam
Reverend Fleetwood	town priest and Evvie's new guardian

SYNOPSIS

Evalyn Stroud is a thirteen-year-old girl who lives with her grandfather (Pee Wee) on a (mostly deserted) island game preserve in North Carolina. When Pee Wee dies suddenly one night, Hap Miller, the principal game ranger, takes on the responsibility of looking after Evvie. He plans to arrange for her to live in an orphanage or convent in town, but he also finds himself drawn to her as a sexual object and potential wife.

Hap's friend, Jackson, visits the island and informs Hap that the town council voted to develop the preserve and turn it into a tourist resort. Hap decides to travel to town to address the council and find Evvie a place to live, but he leaves Evvie behind on the preserve.

While Hap and Jackson are in town, a black fugitive from the town (Traver) manages to row to the island shore and sneak into the main cabin on the preserve. Traver collects supplies from the cabin and attempts to leave on the boat, but several obstacles prevent him from getting off the island. When Hap returns from town, he tries to shoot Traver for stealing, but Traver evades the attack. Traver agrees to a truce with Hap and lives and works on the preserve over several days. During that time, Traver befriends Evvie, and Hap ends up raping Evvie one night when they are staying in the same cabin.

A few days later, Jackson reports that Traver is wanted for a rape of a white woman in town. The men chase after Traver despite the protests of Reverend Fleetwood, who also shows up at the preserve in order to adopt Evvie. Eventually, Hap helps Traver escape and lets Evvie start a new life in town under the guardianship of the Reverend.

SCENES

Traver's Escape The credits roll over a shot of an island in an ocean while the spiritual "O Sinner Man" plays. We see driftwood and a man with a bandaged head wound rowing across the sea in a boat. He reaches the beach and gets out as the music stops. There is a worn sign on the beach saying that the island is a "private game preserve" and trespassers will be prosecuted. The man drags his boat onto the beach and sits down, exhausted. He touches the bandage on his head and notices that the wound is bleeding through.



Flashback to the Lynch Mob There is an abrupt flashback of the man running down a street in a tuxedo and cap. We hear (but do not see) several men and women yelling after him, including shouts such as "Get him!" The man hides behind a tree and changes clothes as a patrol car drives by. There are a series of quick cuts of the man's escape, including him jumping into a white motor boat. Throughout the flashback, the men in pursuit continue yelling "He's black!" over the barks of the dogs, but the viewer never sees the pursuers. The flashback ends suddenly with the sound of a gunshot and a close-up of a dead rabbit. Another man approaches with a rifle and picks up the dead rabbit. Traver (the black fugitive) hides behind the trees and watches the white hunter.

Pee-Wee is Dead A young teenager sits on a swing outside of a log cabin. She wears a torn white dress and gray jacket. The white hunter approaches from the distance as the girl gets up from the swing. The girl goes into a side dwelling as the hunter enters the main cabin. He notices that the girl has not done the dishes or made the bed, and he becomes increasingly irritated. He goes out to the porch and yells at Evvie to come over. When she does not appear, the hunter walks over to the side cabin and sees Evvie crying and untying a man's shoes. She reports to the hunter that "Gramps is dead." He retorts that everyone dies and that Pee-Wee was close to dying for a while. The hunter sends Evvie into the kitchen to light the stove, and she obeys. He checks on the body and covers Pee-Wee with a blanket.



Chores and Plans for Evvie's Future The black man on the beach manages to stab a crab with his knife and he bites into it, hungrily. The camera cuts to the now-skinned rabbit strung up inside the cabin. The hunter (Hap) and Evvie prepare dinner together, but when Evvie accidentally cracks an egg on his wrist, Hap slaps her and sits down. She goes around slicing ham as he lectures her about her appearance. Hap also suggests that she go live with the clergy at the church, since Pee-Wee did not educate her in reading or in manners. Hap turns on the lamp over the table and devours the ham and eggs. Meanwhile, Evvie brushes and styles her hair on the porch, then goes about her chores, including picking up the man's boots. He bites into an apple and stares at her face. He remarks that she is turning into a "real woman."



Hap Lusts After Eve Hap continues to eat the apple and leer at Evvie. He moves to the bed and grabs her waist, then asks her age. Evvie replies that she doesn't know, and Hap extends her leg and squeezes her thigh. He remarks that girls and hogs "flesh out" when they come of age, and Hap confirms that Evvie has gained weight. Uncomfortable, Evvie crosses the room to do the dishes. Hap follows her and holds her shoulders from behind. He tells her that she should be this presentable when she goes into town, then he leans down to kiss her neck. She hits him and tries to move away. He follows her, and they stop in front of the window. He picks her up and carries her to the bed. Evvie manages to wrest free of Hap and runs out of the cabin to her grandfather's room. She locks the door and musses up her hair defiantly. Then, she makes herself honey toast. Hap strums the guitar and sings a ballad in front of the fire.



Then, she makes herself

Visit and Mandate from the "Mainland" The next morning, a man from the town council visits the cabin, sees Evvie, and asks to speak to Hap. When Hap emerges, the man from town informs him that the town council has voted to build on the preserve and that the Hargreaves (presumably the key family in town) have asked that Hap come in for a discussion. Hap retorts that they have been trying to develop the island since he was the head game preserver. The man from town explains that the surveyors will come out first, then they will start building in a month. Hap takes the news in stride and says that he will enjoy having hot water. The man asks Hap to come into town soon, and Hap agrees—provided that the man help him bury Pee Wee.



Burying Pee Wee The two men emerge from Pee-Wee's cabin carrying his body wrapped in canvas. Evvie follows with a shovel. The man from town asks what will become of the "girl," and Hap replies that he intends to sort that out with the Hargreaves. They walk towards the grave site. Meanwhile, Traver approaches slowly and trips a trap. He remarks sarcastically that these people are "real friendly." At the gravesite, Evvie kneels next to the grave. Hap hands her a bible and tells her that they will ask a preacher to come out and send her grandfather off properly. She takes Pee-Wee's bottle of whiskey and tries to partially bury it by the cross, but Hap tells her it is disrespectful. They walk back, and Hap asks for Pee-Wee's real name. Evvie answers, "Clinton Ignatius Stroud." Hap informs Evvie that she will not accompany him to town. Evvie protests, but Hap only replies "because I said so." She throws the bottle of whiskey at a tree in anger, and the man from town chides Hap for speaking to Evvie disrespectfully.



Traver Approaches Traver creeps through the forest and watches as Hap and Evvie walk back to the cabin. Evvie starts to collect dirty laundry. When she sees a tarantula on the ground, she crushes it with her shoe. Evvie goes on to extract honey from a series of apiaries. Suddenly, Traver rushes at her and puts his hand over her mouth. He releases her and claims that he is a lost fisherman. Traver asks about Evvie's family, and she explains that everyone is dead except for Mr. Miller. Traver begs Evvie to let him eat the honey she just collected, but she refuses. He grabs an apple and gives her a dime as payment. She starts to protest but is distracted by the payment, which she puts in her jacket pocket.



Evvie and Traver Get Acquainted Back at the cabin, Evvie serves Traver a meal and lets him smoke Hap's cigarettes. Traver looks around nervously, but Evvie assures him that no one comes to the preserve unless it is duck hunting season. She brags that she and her grandpa could earn big money during the tourist season. Traver compliments her "soulful" nature and starts to look around the cabin for supplies. He takes dry food, ammunition, and a rifle. Evvie protests his scavenging and tries to wrest the rifle from his arms. In the struggle, the rifle goes off and shoots the rabbit carcass hanging from the ceiling. Traver calms Evvie down by explaining that he needs supplies to escape and that he will give her twenty dollars to buy them. Evvie snatches the bill angrily.



False Start Traver loads up his boat in order to escape. When he throws the rifle in, it goes off and shoots a hole in the bottom. Traver walks back to the cabin just as Evvie is showering in the shed. The camera closes in on her bare legs as the two chat. Neither Evvie nor Traver are phased by the “naked” conversation. Traver asks if Evvie will give him pitch or tar to fix the boat. Evvie wraps herself in a towel and invites Traver to follow her in. She hands him several supplies. Traver starts to ogle her body in the towel and tells her not to walk around “like that.” He puts a jacket over her shoulders to prevent him from staring at her breasts. Traver thanks Evvie for the supplies and leaves hurriedly. Evvie flings off the jacket and brushes her hair.



Predators and Prey While Traver tries to repair the boat, the camera cuts to a chicken coop. A racoon attacks one of several squawking white hens. The racoon fells his prey and starts to rip off its flesh and eat it in the pen. As night falls, Evvie awakens to the sound of Traver playing his slinky clarinet next to the boat. She goes to the window and listens intently.



Hap Returns and Confronts Travel When Hap returns the next morning, he greets Evvie and reports that the orphanage does not take kids over twelve. He pulls back her hair in the style that he likes. Evvie explains that a nice man visited and took all the supplies. Hap vows to chase him down. He grabs another rifle and peruses the beach. Traver runs away from the boat and wades into the lake surrounding the island. When Hap sees the boat, he shoots several holes into it. Traver runs around the island and gets into another boat. He manages to row out several yards, but Hap shoots after him. Traver is forced to swim back and sneak through the woods.



New Dress for Evvie Back at the cabin, Evvie tries on a brand-new dress and high heels that Hap bought in town. He helps her tie the sash and brushes her hair. He also tells her to practice walking in high heels. Hap warns Evvie about older men taking advantage of her in town, but he realizes she doesn't know anything about dating or sex. He asks her to sit on his lap and tries to explain the dangers of lustful old men, but then he himself starts to seduce her. When he leans in to kiss her, Evvie jumps up. Hap spots the twenty-dollar bill on the table and asks Evvie where she got it. He becomes increasingly angry and asks Evvie what she did for the “n-r.” Evvie tells Hap the truth, but he doesn't believe her and sends her to bed. She walks to the cabin unsteadily in her new heels.



Traver Confronts Hap Right after Evvie leaves the main cabin, Traver enters with Hap's rifle and threatens to shoot the white man. Hap accuses him of stealing his supplies, but Traver retorts that he paid twenty dollars for them. Hap sees him leave and wishes him “luck” escaping in his boat. When Evvie enters the next morning, Hap asks her again about the money. When she repeats her answer, Hap hands her the twenty dollars as a reward for telling the truth. Evvie runs out, and Hap fills a grenade with gunpowder.



Hap Confronts Traver The camera cuts to Traver trying to repair the boat once again. Evvie approaches to make sure that Traver is still alive and not wounded. Traver teases her about liking him until Hap interrupts their conversation. Traver points his gun at Hap, who starts making racist comments about his mammy nurse and n-rs acting “fresh.” Traver retorts by reminding Hap that he, the white man, was the aggressor and that Hap is nothing more than white trash. Hap approaches and says “don't call me that!” Traver shoots a warning shot at his feet and tells Hap that he didn't even let his army comrades call him a n-r. Hap also mentions that he was in the army, and the two exchange descriptions of the 5th regiment.



Grudging Agreement Traver manages to repair the boat and comes back to the cabin to return supplies. He and Hap exchange tense words while Evvie harvests the honey and Hap tans a hide. Traver warns Hap not to undo his work so that he can leave the preserve. Hap informs Traver that the boat to the mainland will come over next week, and he suggests that Traver bunk with them and work as his assistant. Traver rejects the offer initially. He explains to Evvie that Hap has the power because a white man can kill a black man with impunity, but he (Traver) can't kill Hap as easily. Hap exits the cabin and tells Evvie to set up a room for Traver in her cabin. Hap asks Traver insincerely whether making Evvie sleep in the main cabin is "racist."

Evvie Enjoys Traver's Playing As she moves her bed out of the secondary cabin, Evvie tells Traver that she heard him playing music the night before. He teases her by telling her it was a witch, but she insists that he play for her again. Traver takes out his clarinet, which he playfully calls a licorice stick, and starts to play a jazzy melody. Evvie slaps her thigh to the beat and smiles. When Hap notices their connection, he pulls the pin on his grenade and throws it into the bushes. Everyone takes cover from the explosion, and Hap remarks that he could have blown up Traver if he wanted. Hap insists that Traver surrender his weapons, and he orders Evvie to come inside with him. Traver keeps playing slyly.



Rape or Consensual First Time? As night falls, Hap puts away his rifles and supplies in the main cabin. Evvie sleeps in bed, and Traver plays his clarinet from the secondary cabin. Hap stops and listens to the music as if entranced. He approaches Evvie's bed and places his hand on her head. She wakes up, startled, and Hap whispers "don't be afraid, Evvie." He leans over to kiss her. There is an abrupt cut to an aerial shot of the island as the sun rises. Evvie exits the main cabin and does not respond when Traver greets her. He looks after her concerned, and Hap chides Traver for not minding his own business. Traver tells Hap that he will leave in his own boat as soon as he can. Hap does not protest and follows Evvie out to the woods where she is washing her feet nearby a stream. Hap sits down beside her and promises to buy her nice clothing now that she is a woman. Evvie does not respond.



Tense Dinner Later that night, Evvie serves both men roasted rabbit. When Traver tries to sit at the table, Hap shoos him away with a jerk of his head. Traver begrudgingly moves his chair away from the table. Evvie asks why Hap won't eat with colored people. Traver describes those times in the army when the owner would throw him out of a restaurant with a gesture, even when there weren't "Whites Only" signs. Evvie reminds Hap that Traver "eats just the same as you do." After dinner, the men smoke and tell anecdotes. Traver explains that he was named after his father's nickname, "Travellin' Man." Hap remarks that some men mentioned a high rate of rape in his hometown. Traver retorts that black men get blamed for all rape and white men pretend to be innocent. He explains that white men can always claim that their victim was a prostitute.



Unexpected Visit from Jackson and the Reverend There is a huge downpour later that night. Jackson and another man, the Reverend, appear wandering around in the rain. Hap invites them into the main cabin and offers them coffee. The Reverend explains that he found a temporary home for Evvie in town and that he intended to leave with her the next day. Hap rejects the plan and insists on taking Evvie shopping. When Hap asks Jackson about the town news, Jackson replies that there was a report of a "fresh" black man from the north raping a white woman a few days ago. Hap proclaims that Traver is the culprit, and the two grab their rifles to go track him down.



Preparing a Bed for the Reverend Jackson and Hap search the second cabin but find it empty. The Reverend counsels them not to search for Traver in the morning in case he is not the rapist. Hap asks Evvie to change the sheets in the second cabin for the Reverend, and Jackson comments that he doesn't want to sleep where the "n-r" slept. As Evvie is making the bed in the second cabin, Hap tells her not to talk about him or "last night" to the reverend. When the Reverend enters suddenly, Hap leaves before explaining. The Reverend helps Evvie make the bed and tells her about her new lodgings, which are designed for children. Evvie retorts that she is a woman according to Hap. The Reverend probes her for more context and realizes that Hap may have taken advantage of the girl.



Evvie is Baptized The next morning, Hap and Jackson go searching for Traver. The Reverend walks with Evvie out to the stream. He explains that he will give her a "key of gold." They wade into the river, and the Reverend dips her backwards into the water. Startled and annoyed, Evvie emerges and climbs out of the water. She flips her hair back and asks "Now can I have the key of gold?" There is a sudden cut to Traver walking through the forest. He walks into a bear trap and cries out in agony. Back at the stream, the Reverend is explaining to Evvie the significance of baptism and that the golden key is a metaphor. Evvie retorts that she would rather have a pistol as a gift. The Reverend chuckles and suggests that they walk back. He also asks her to explain what she meant by saying that she was no longer a child. Before Evvie can reply, the two hear Traver yelling and run over to him. The Reverend helps pry off the trap.



Traver Pleads His Innocence Back at the cabin, the Reverend prepares bandages for Traver's leg. Traver swears that he did not rape the woman from town, but the Reverend says that they have suspicions. As the Reverend wraps his leg and pours alcohol on the wound, Traver tells his side of the story. After his gig at the cabaret, an older woman named Mrs. Brownell invited him into her house to discuss business. When she tried to seduce Traver by leading him into the bedroom, Traver declined politely and tried to leave the house. Offended, Mrs. Brownell started yelling "Rape!," and the neighbors immediately pursued him down the street. When Traver finishes the story, the Reverend agrees that Traver is probably innocent. He vows to help Traver defend himself against the town mob.



Vigilante Punishment Hap and Jackson return and start to attack Traver despite the Reverend's protests. They walk him, limping, out of the cabin. Then, they tie him to a post. The Reverend decries their inhumane treatment, so they lower Traver to a seated position and tie him up that way. Later that night, Jackson checks on Traver and tells him that he doesn't believe black men have souls; therefore, he feels sorry for them. When Jackson leaves, Traver call Evvie over and begs her to free him. She resists, but Traver tells her that they will kill him in town. Evvie goes to the second cabin to fetch her knife. Inside the main cabin, the Reverend asks to speak with Hap alone.



The Reverend Confronts Hap Alone in the second cabin, the Reverend tells Hap that he suspects a "violation of an innocent." Hap evades the accusation but insists that Evvie is a woman. When the Reverend threatens to reveal his crime, Hap confesses but excuses his actions by saying that he has lived on his own without female company for years. The Reverend rejects his excuses and proclaims that sin must be punished.



Yet Another Confrontation The next morning, Jackson realizes that Traver has escaped but knows he can't have gone far on a wounded leg. In the cabin, Jackson shakes Evvie for letting him loose, but Hap intervenes before he can hit her.

Jackson takes his rifle and vows to shoot Traver on site. The Reverend steps in front of Hap in order to avoid him from leaving. The Reverend explains that Traver is probably innocent given Mrs. Brownell's mental problems, and even if he were guilty, the Reverend reminds Hap that no man is judge and executioner. Hap tries to change the subject by suggesting that he marry Evvie. The Reverend says he might not report him, but he would need to consult with the church elders.

Hap Intervenes and Lets Traver Go Hap chases Jackson to the forest and forces him to hand over his rifle. Jackson threatens to come back with more men to finish the job. Hap walks back to the cabin just as a limping Traver also approaches. Travel explains to Evvie and the Reverend that he could not get far with his injuries. Hap fetches oars inside and suggests that Traver use them as crutches. Hap then offers to meet Traver at the shore with a motorboat. Relieved, Traver thanks him and says goodbye to Evvie, who says she hopes she will see him on tv playing his clarinet. Traver jokes that he will send her an autograph, and he starts off to the shore.



Jackson Attacks Traver After a few minutes, Jackson spots Traver and charges him with a knife. Traver uses one oar to defend himself. The two men joust and wrestle each other on the sand. Traver manages to pin Jackson and starts to strangle him, but Jackson breaks free. Eventually, Traver wrests the knife from Jackson and holds it to his neck. Jackson goads him on, but Traver asserts that he won't give the townspeople another reason to lynch him. He lets Jackson go after calling him white trash. Jackson boards one boat with the Reverend and Evvie, who is now showing off her new outfit. She walks along the wooden dock and hops back towards the boat in her high heels.



Traver Finally Escapes We see a side panoramic shot of the beach, the two men, and the boat. Hap helps Traver get in the boat as the spiritual "Oh Sinner Man" plays again. Hap gives the boat a good shove and watches as he speeds away. Hap starts to walk back to the cabins.



CHARACTER ANALYSIS

EVALYN STROUD

Evvie is an obedient pre-teen girl who helps with the chores on the preserve. In some ways, she is a naïve wild child who has no social or sexual experience. In other ways, she is a young woman who is discovering her identity and sexuality. Due to her coming-of-age status, Evvie is both innocent and defiant.

Innocent Despite her many skills, Evvie is innocent in the ways of the world. She does not fully understand the concept of losing her virginity. Because she has never been to town, she remains free of southern racist constructs. As a result, she eats and chats with Traver without fearing him or putting him down.

Obedient Evvie almost always does what Hap tells her. She cooks and cleans faithfully, and she backs off of any topic when Hap chides her. She willingly puts on the new outfit and practices in her heels.

Defiant Although Evvie is mostly obedient, she also has key moments of defiance. She flings the whiskey bottle against the tree, and she refuses to let Hap kiss her in several predatory moments. In the end, Evvie agrees to cut Traver loose even though she knows Hap and Jackson will punish her.

TRAVER

Traver is a black jazz musician and carpenter who flees town after having been accused of rape. He is old enough to have served in World War II but young enough to be strong and vigorous, as shown by his

industrious and resourceful nature on the island. As a constant victim of systemic and overt racism, Traver adopts a defiant attitude towards Hap and society in general.

Industrious Despite his laid-back beatnik style as a musician, Traver has worked in many jobs over his lifetime. He mentions that he used to be a carpenter and an electrician, and he manages to repair the boat quickly and efficiently. Because Traver is so hard-working, Hap offers to hire him as his assistant.

Resourceful Traver is resourceful as a worker (as explained above), but he is even more resourceful in his efforts to survive. Traver manages to escape the mob in town, deprivation and isolating in the forest, Hap's initial pursuit, the bear trap, and Jackson's attack. He uses oars as both crutches and weapons, which saves his life at the end of the film.

Defiant Traver continually fights back against the southern racism that he encounters. He refuses to let Hap dominate him verbally or physically. He also teaches Evvie about the systemic racism of America and urges her to keep an open mind.

HAP MILLER

Hap is the principal game preserve ranger who has lived on the island for years, if not decades. He incarnates the toughness of both his job and his experiences as poor "white trash." As a conflicted character, Hap vacillates between thinking of Evvie and Traver as human beings with rights and agency and giving in to his racist and sexist mentality.

Tough In order to survive on the preserve almost by himself, Hap has to be tough physically, emotionally, and psychologically. He knows how to hunt game, cure hides, and use his bare hands to do chores. He is able to fight off any trespassers, and he wins many of the confrontations with Traver and Jackson. For the most part, Hap knows how to be content with himself, although he yearns for contact with a woman.

Racist Throughout the film, Hap spews not only racial slurs but a litany of racist tropes and stereotypes about black men. He thinks of Traver as a threat, then his servant, then a criminal. In particular, he believes the idea that black men are prone to rape white women, which is why he suspects that Traver paid Evvie for sex in his absence.

Conflicted Despite his ingrained "white trash" attitudes, Hap grows considerably as a person throughout the film. The Reverend is able to convince Hap that a) Traver is likely innocent; and b) Hap does not have the right to be judge, executioner or vigilante. Hap eventually respects Traver enough to help him leave the preserve. In addition to ameliorating his racism, Hap also is conflicted about his relationship with Evvie. His sexual desire is at odds with his duty to find Evvie a home in town and act as her transitional guardian.

THEMES

SOCIETY

Race Due to the story's setting (the Deep South) and time period (mid-twentieth century), race and racism are absolutely at the heart of the story and the conflicts among all of the adult characters. Traver flees town because he knows he is automatically condemned the moment Mrs. Brownell shouted rape. Were he to stay in town (or if he killed Jackson during their struggle at the end of the film), Traver would immediately die at the hands of a lynch mob. This assumption persists when Hap and Jackson take it upon themselves to arrest and punish Traver for the alleged crime. When they tie him up, Jackson remarks that the seated position is likely Traver's favorite, which underscores the racist trope of black men as lazy. In addition, Hap meets Traver with hostility despite his attempt to buy supplies and explain his position. The two men often talk past each other, with Hap placing Traver in the category of uppity northern n-r, and Traver dismissing Hap as quintessential white trash. Jackson escalates the racist tension by going so far as to claim that black men do not have souls. Neither white man values Traver's life, as evidenced by the musician's observation that Hap could kill him with impunity. This overt racism punctuates the systematic struggles with race that Hap describes during his time at the reserve, from segregation to animalization to stereotypes about jazz musicians.

Illustrative Moment: Traver and Hap Have a Standoff and Exchange Epithets

The camera cuts to Traver trying to repair the boat once again. Evvie approaches to make sure that Traver is still alive and not wounded. Traver teases her about liking him until Hap interrupts their conversation. Traver points his gun at Hap, who starts making racist comments about his mammy and n-rs acting “fresh.” Traver retorts by reminding Hap that he, the white man, was the aggressor and that Hap is nothing more than white trash. Hap approaches and says “don’t call me that!” Traver shoots a warning shot at his feet and tells Hap that he didn’t even let his army comrades call him a n-r. Along with shouting racial slurs, this confrontation underscores the baked-in racism of the Deep South in this period, including a reference to the minstrel caricatures and the notion that blacks need to stay in their place.



Nature Versus Civilization Like in *Robinson Crusoe*, Buñuel takes advantage of the island setting in *The Young One* in order to indulge his fascination with flora, fauna, and of course, insects. Buñuel films several animals on the preserve, including a rather long sequence in which a racoon kills and eats a hen in the chicken coop. Hap tracks game throughout the film, and Evvie loves to explore the forest and streams on the preserve. Evvie also regularly uses nature for sustenance, including her frequent trips to the apiary to extract honey. Because Evvie and Hap are immersed in a natural setting, they themselves become wild creatures and a part of the environment. Hap even compares Evvie to a hog that fattens up when she is fertile. Although Traver appears to have more of an urban background, he also uses nature to survive, as when he kills and eats a crab. Later, Hap and Jackson tie up Traver as if he were a dog or a pig himself. All three characters change their behavior as inhabitants of the isolated island, and Hap even uses his rural lifestyle and Evvie’s wildness as an excuse for raping her. Despite their interactions with nature, the effects of civilization slowly invade the preserve and the characters’ lives. The Reverend wishes to bring order, education, and religion to Evvie’s upbringing, and the town council wants to develop the preserve by providing modern conveniences. Traver’s stay with the other characters exposes them to the world of jazz, which becomes symbolic of the north and the cultured world. Although Hap partially wants to keep Evvie as his wild child and lover, he also recognizes that he must teach her to dress and behave like a woman once she gets to town.

Illustrative Moment: The Racoon Attacks and Traver as Pied Piper Traver tries to repair the boat, the camera cuts to a chicken coop. A racoon attacks one of several squawking white hens. The racoon fells his prey and starts to rip off its flesh and eat it in the pen. As night falls, Eva awakens to the sound of Traver playing his slinky clarinet next to the boat. She goes to the window and listens intently. This short transition scene references Evvie’s transition from wild child to woman. On the one hand, she is about to fall prey to Hap’s sexual advances. On the other hand, she also has the opportunity to explore the world outside of hunting and cooking. For Hap and others, Traver’s jazz symbolizes not only dangerous black culture, but also education and urban, civilized life.



Power Dynamics One of the key themes of the film as a whole is the power hierarchy created by differences in race, class, age, and gender. As explained at length above, Traver remains at the mercy of the racist perceptions of the town, Hap and Jackson’s misplaced vigilantism on the island, and the systemic racism under Jim Crow. Due to her age and gender, Evvie must obey the adult “father figures” in her life, and she has little control over her own actions or destiny. On the island, Hap becomes a seducer-rapist who “initiates” Evvie into the world of sexuality and imposes his male dominance over her generally. Traver also has the potential to assume this role, but his conscience and the crushing weight of racist injustice prevents him from physical contact with Evvie. Even the Reverend initiates Evvie into the Church, which will act as an agent of power over her. As ignorant of her sexuality and indeed the world at large, Evvie is at worst a brutalized victim and at best “passively initiated” into a new role as a woman in society (see also **Coming of Age** below). Despite his position of power on the island, Hap also contends with a lack of control over his own destiny. He remains an exile from civilization who, nonetheless, must answer to the town council. He will also likely lose his job if the resort development comes to fruition. In this sense, all three characters incarnate victims on the margins of society.

Illustrative Moment: Rape and the Fallout the Next Day As night falls, Hap puts away his rifles and supplies in the main cabin. Evvie sleeps in bed, and Traver plays his clarinet from the secondary cabin. Hap stops and listens to the music as if entranced. He approaches Evvie's bed and places his hand on her head. She wakes up, startled, and Hap whispers "don't be afraid, Evvie." He leans over to kiss her. There is an abrupt cut to an aerial shot of the island as the sun rises. The next morning, Hap follows Evvie out to the woods where she is washing her feet nearby a stream. Hap sits down beside her and promises to buy her nice clothing now that she is a woman. Evvie does not respond. These two scenes--the moment of the rape and the morning after-- exemplify Hap's power over Evvie. She is unable to resist or show fear at the moment of intercourse, and then Hap tries to control her processing of the incident the next morning. Hap tells Evvie that she is a woman, yet Evvie does not have the context to comprehend this transition. As a result, she remains under his control until the Reverend moves her off of the island.



RELATIONSHIP

Fatherhood Although Evvie is technically an orphan, all of the adult characters act as a father to her in one way or another. Pee Wee raised her and shared a cabin with her, Jackson defends her against Hap's harsh treatment, the Reverend baptizes and advises her, and Traver gives her companionship and teaches her about social issues and culture. For the short period after Pee Wee's death, Hap becomes the authority figure in Evvie's life. However, the ranger's lust for her complicates the relationship so that every interaction between them vacillates between instructional and sexual. Hap himself varies his behavior towards Evvie, changing from a counselor trying to prepare her for civilization to a lover and sexual predator. In this sense, fatherhood becomes a pathway towards incest. Ultimately, Hap hands Evvie over to the church where she can receive education, which suggests that his fear of punishment and his paternal instincts trump his longing to have a wife and sexual partner. Her father becomes the church and God.

Illustrative Moment: Evvie Tries on a New Dress Back at the cabin, Evvie tries on a brand-new dress and high heels that Hap bought in town. He helps her tie the sash and brushes her hair. He also tells her to practice walking in high heels. Hap warns Evvie about older men taking advantage of her in town, but he realizes she doesn't know anything about dating or sex. He asks her to sit on his lap and tries to explain the dangers of lustful old men, but then he himself starts to seduce her. Hap sends her to bed, and she walks to the cabin unsteadily in her new heels. The tone and subject of this scene vacillates between paternal and sexual. On the one hand, Hap uses the new outfit and grooming mandates as an opportunity to prepare her for her new life in town. He also gives her orders and advice as if he were her father. The sexual nature of the advice, however, immediately subverts Hap's paternal instruction. Nonetheless, Hap's initial motivation in this scene (and others) is to act as a temporary father to Evvie and facilitate her adoption.



Orphanhood Although Evvie does have multiple father figures in her life, they all act as temporary (and often predatory) stand-ins for real biological parents. The viewer does not learn the backstory of Evvie's birth or her biological parents. Her origins remain somewhat of a mystery throughout the film, which lends itself to her characterization as a wild child or a creature of nature untouched by social norms. Evvie's name is an overt reference to Eve in Genesis: both are innocent / ignorant, desirable, wielding apples, and literally and figuratively naked. Evvie is a blank slate until Traver educates her, Hap steals her virginity, and the Reverend baptizes her. We assume that Pee Wee was Evvie's biological grandfather, but his alcoholism prevented him from actively raising Evvie. The implication is that Evvie acted as her grandfather's caretaker, just as she acts as a servant to the men who live or stay in the cabins. At times, the men abuse her naivete in order to keep her as a loyal servant and companion in rags. In this sense, Evvie's characterization also evokes Cinderella and Rapunzel, both of whom experience orphanhood through the lens of imprisonment.

Illustrative Moment: Evvie as Fairy-Tale Princess in the Woods Traver creeps through the forest and watches as Hap and Evvie walk back to the cabin. Evvie starts to collect dirty laundry. When she sees a tarantula on the ground, she crushes it with her shoe. Evvie goes on to extract honey from a series of apiaries. Suddenly, Traver rushes at her and puts his hand over her mouth. He releases her and claims that he is a lost fisherman.



Traver asks about Evvie's family, and she explains that everyone is dead except for Mr. Miller. Traver begs Evvie to let him eat the honey she just collected, but she refuses. He grabs an apple and gives her a dime as payment. She starts to protest but is distracted by the payment, which she puts in her jacket pocket. As with many of Buñuel's films, the director places an ingenue or young girl in the woods, where she can be victimized by men with less than virtuous intentions. In this scene, Evvie incarnates any number of orphaned, fairytale princesses: Cinderella (relegated to constant cleaning and chores), Little Red Riding Hood (a young girl carrying treats who is accosted by a wolf), and Rapunzel / Snow White (the princess locked away from the world until a prince manages to "penetrate" her tower of solitude). Although she is afraid for a minute, Evvie ends up enjoying the tutelage and friendship that Traver provides. He acts as father, brother, teacher, and boyfriend, if only for a few days on the island.

PSYCHOLOGY

Desire and the Male Gaze The male characters' desires are focused squarely on sexual urges specifically and freedom in a broader sense. Both Hap and Traver lust after Evvie (see **Sexual Taboos** below), with Traver containing himself and Hap attempting to seduce and rape Evvie on multiple occasions. We, the viewers, become complicit in this male-driven desire due to the ways in which Buñuel displays and fetishizes Evvie's pubescent body. We also gaze at Evvie when she is showering or partially naked. Buñuel offers several fragmented close-ups of Evvie's breasts, legs, feet, and eyes in such a way that the viewer ogles the girl through the perspective of the lustful men. These shots fetishize Evvie's body—in particular, Buñuel's favorite cinematic fetish—a woman's feet in black heels. This sort of fetishization of the female body occurs in most, if not all, of Buñuel's films. A key difference in *The Young One*, however, is that Evvie does not experience her own sense of desire. She remains blissfully unaware of her body. Whereas other Buñuelian vixens toy with the men's affections, show off their legs and cleavage, and even take on the role of aggressor, Evvie remains a child-like victim throughout the film (see **Power Dynamics** above). Beyond the overt presence of immoral sexual aggression, all of the characters yearn for freedom: Hap wants companionship and an escape from the drudgery of his job, Traver wants respect and the freedom to play his clarinet, and Evvie longs for the opportunity to live in town.

Illustrative Moment: Traver Looks Lustfully at Evvie in Her Towel Traver walks back to the cabin just as Evvie is showering in the shed. The camera closes in on her bare legs as the two chat. Neither Evvie nor Traver are fazed by the "naked" conversation. Evvie wraps herself in a towel and invites Traver to follow her in. She hands him several supplies. Traver starts to ogle her body in the towel and tells her not to walk around "like that." He puts a jacket over her shoulders to prevent him from staring at her breasts. Traver thanks Evvie for the supplies and leaves hurriedly. Evvie flings off the jacket and brushes her hair. There are several uncomfortable predatory exchanges between Hap and Evvie in the main cabin, all of which smack of harassment, incest, pedophilia, and rape. This "shower scene" between Evvie and Traver underscores taboo over crime. Traver feels discomfort with his own lustful gaze because he knows that sex with a white minor constitutes multiple social transgressions. As a result, Traver fights his sexual attraction by leaving the cabin altogether.



Sexual Taboos Obviously, the greatest sexual sin and crime throughout the film is Hap's ogling, harassment, and statutory rape of Evvie. By lusting after his pre-teen ward, Hap dabbles in pedophilia and incest. When he finally forces himself on her, Hap commits rape and also, as the Reverend puts it, defiles an innocent. While all the characters agree that sex with Evvie is immoral, there is more than one taboo at play by looking at her as a sexual object. Although the Reverend sees Evvie only as a child, the other male characters consider her a young woman and a wife-like servant to their own needs. Hap himself suggests that he marry Evvie in order to "offset" the sin of taking her virginity, and neither he nor the Reverend view Evvie's age as an impediment to this patriarchal solution. The crime seems to be the rape of a virgin rather than pedophilia, although Buñuel does make the viewer uncomfortable about framing Evvie as a sexualized object. When Traver also begins to lust after Evvie, there is another layer of taboos at play. Traver has already been accused falsely of the rape of a white woman. After this brush with white southern society, Traver knows he cannot indulge any fantasies about Evvie. His pedophilia would be exacerbated by the fear of miscegenation, which was literally a crime in the Deep South.

Illustrative Moment: Traver Tells His Side of the Story As the Reverend wraps Traver's leg and pours alcohol on the wound, Traver tells his side of the story. After his gig at the cabaret, an older woman named Mrs. Brownell invited him into her house to discuss business. When she tried to seduce Traver by leading him into the bedroom, Traver declined politely and tried to leave the house. Offended, Mrs. Brownell started yelling "Rape!," and the neighbors immediately pursued him down the street. When Traver finishes the story, the Reverend agrees that Traver is probably innocent. He vows to help Traver defend himself against the town mob. When Traver tells the Reverend his side of the story, the viewer infers that the supposed rape victim, Mrs. Brownell, tried to seduce Traver because she was excited by social transgressions--namely, interracial sex and adultery. More importantly, the construct of black aggressor and white victim forms the basis upon which Traver is banished to the island in the first place. In other words, the taboo encounter with Mrs. Brownell sets the whole plot of the film in motion.



LIFE STAGES

Coming of Age Although a key through-line of the film is Traver's fate as a victimized black man, the central plot of the story involves Evvie's partial transformation into a young woman. As a quasi-orphan raised in the wilderness, Evvie's behavior does not reflect her age. On the one hand, she has been thrust into womanhood prematurely, as she has to do all of the cooking and cleaning for the men who live in the cabins. At the beginning of the film, the viewer infers that Evvie also acted as the primary caretaker for her grandfather, who suffered from debilitating alcoholism. In addition, the rape introduces her to sexuality in a toxic way, but she is too naïve to understand her loss of virginity. Conversely, Evvie is also suspended in a perpetual childhood in that she has not interacted with other children, gone to school, or enjoyed modern comforts. She incarnates the Spanish title of the film: the young one. Ultimately, the Reverend's intervention results in Evvie literally and figuratively crossing over into adulthood. She will leave the island and experience the world for the first time.

Illustrative Moment: Evvie Walks on the Dock in Her High Heels Jackson boards one boat with the Reverend and Evvie, who is now showing off her new outfit. She walks along the wooden dock and hops back towards the boat in her high heels. In this penultimate scene, we see the Reverend taking on his position as Evvie's new guardian and Evvie's realization that she is finally moving into town. Buñuel visually punctuates Evvie's new life by showing that she not only wears the adult outfit, but now feels comfortable walking in heels. The implication is that she is becoming a woman. In typical Buñuel fashion, however, the director undercuts this visual message when Evvie essentially plays hopscotch in her heels. In this moment, the viewer realizes that Evvie must leave the island in order to complete her transition into womanhood.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Who is the protagonist in this film adaption: Evvie, Hap, or Traver?
2. The titles of this film include *The Young One*, *White Trash*, and *Island of Shame*, and the title of the original story is "Travellin' Man." How do the various titles change the interpretation of the story?
3. Given that Traver almost certainly did not rape Mrs. Brownell, why did Buñuel play the song "O Sinner Man" when Traver arrives and leaves the island?
4. What is the effect of focusing on dead animals, carcasses and meat?
5. What is the effect of the sequences with live animals and insects?