Buñuel, Luis (February 22, 1900–July 29, 1983)

Luis Buñuel is the film director most often associated with Surrealism, although his own career spanned many genres, film industries, and nations. Born to a wealthy family in Aragon, he went to university in Madrid alongside such future artists as Salvador Dalí (1904–1989) and Frederico García Lorca (1898–1936), before travelling to France to train in the film industry under such figures as Jean Epstein. His first film, the short *Un Chien Andalou* (1929), declares its “impassioned call to murder” from the first scene, in which Buñuel himself slices open the eye of a woman with a razor. Composed of dreams he and Dalí wrote down over several days, it both inaugurated Buñuel’s long-standing concern with moments or events that cannot be explained or rationalized, as well as inducted him into the Surrealist movement. His next work, the hour-long sound film *L’Age d’or* (1930), while marking a break with Dalí, was even more scandalous in its attacks on the bourgeoisie and the Catholic Church. One of his differences from Dalí was over politics, with the leftist Buñuel feuding with the rightist painter, but even when he took up the plight of the Spanish rural poor in *Las Hurdes: Tierra Sin Pan* (*Land Without Bread*, 1932), it was as much a documentary account of their horrible conditions as a surrealist undermining of the conventions of ethnographic film through staged scenes and inappropriate combinations of sound and image. After the fall of Republican Spain, Buñuel spent a decade in Hollywood and New York failing to realize any significant directorial project, but still honing his skills editing and dubbing films. He returned to the world stage in Mexico, primarily through *Los olvidados* (1950), a bleak, neorealist portrait of slum children that earned him the best director award at the Cannes Film Festival, but also through the production of such films as *Él* (1953), *Aventuras de Robinson Crusoe*(*The Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, 1954), and *Nazarín* (1958) that were enabled by yet went beyond the conventions of Mexican popular film. Buñuel became a central figure on the art film circuit, and directed films in Spain and France, such as *Viridiana* (1961), *Belle de jour* (1966), and *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* (*The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*, 1972)—all of which won major awards at Cannes, Venice, or at the Academy Awards. These films marked a return of his occasionally audacious, occasionally irreverent, but always remarkable swipes at religion and bourgeois values, often through depicting the irruptions of irrational desire. His later films seemed no longer as avant-garde as his first works, but their deceptively assured technical simplicity, marked by long takes and deliberated de-aestheticized visuals, came to show how Buñuel’s surrealism had come to play off a foundational appearance of realism, where his incongruities in sound, music, and mise-en-scène became effective bursts of irrationality because of the supposed rationality of the film surface.

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List of works:

*Un Chien Andalou* (1929)

*L’Age d’or* (1930)

*Las Hurdes: Tierra Sin Pan* (*Land Without Bread*, 1932)

*Los olvidados* (1950)

*Él* (1953)

*Aventuras de Robinson Crusoe*(*The Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, 1954)

*Nazarín* (1958)

*Viridiana* (1961)

*El ángel exterminador* (*The Exterminating Angel,* 1962)

*Belle de jour* (1966)

*Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* (*The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*, 1972)

*Cet obscur objet du désir* (*That Obscure Object of Desire,* 1977)

Paratextual materials:

Un Chien Andalou

<https://archive.org/details/UnChienAndalou_313>

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