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| Un Chien Andalou (1929) |
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| *Un Chien Andalou* (*An Andalusian Dog* [1929]) is a short Surrealist film by Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí. The film’s opening sequence, in particular, is one of the most famous within the experimental film tradition: the image of a thin sliver of a cloud crossing in front of the moon immediately doubled by an extreme close-up of a straight razor slashing open a woman’s eyeball. As Buñuel later claimed, the sequence exemplifies one of the surrealist intentions for cinema: to ‘express the world of dreams, of emotions, of instinct’ (Buñuel 138). For the surrealists, one of the revolutionary goals for art and politics was to liberate both desire and imagination, allowing the spectator to see the world with a new eye unconditioned by repressive bourgeois morality. The rest of the film, which purposefully defies any coherent narrative or definitive interpretation, frequently features images intended to shock and disrupt the spectator’s supposedly safe position: ants crawl out of a hole in a man’s hand; a man pulls two grand pianos with dead, rotting donkeys while two live priests are dragged behind; a beautiful androgynous woman casually pokes at a severed hand with a stick before being hit by a car. Buñuel was incensed that his film was positively received by bourgeois critics as a titillating aesthetic experience, notoriously stating that they ‘found beautifulor poeticsomething that was basically a desperate, passionate call to murder’ (Buñuel 34). While this work would be one of the few uncontested films within the so-called surrealist film canon, its subsequent influence would be felt on diverse and disparate examples. Including the experimental film and video tradition, music videos, and the works of filmmakers David Lynch and Guy Maddin. |
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| Further reading:  (Buñuel)  (Buñuel, Cinema as an Instrument of Poetry (1958))  (Buñuel, My Last Sigh)  (Buñuel and White, An Unspeakable Betrayal: Selected Writings of Luis Buñuel)  (Edwards) |