*Viridiana* (Luis Buñuel, 1961)

*Viridiana* is a special work in the filmography of Luis Buñuel’s because, along with *L’Âge d’or* [*Age of Gold*, 1930], it was the film where the director himself said he had enjoyed the most freedom in production. It was the first film he had made in Spain since going into exile in 1939. In this dark tale of sexual drive and death, Viridiana, a novice about to take her holy vows, must leave the convent to visit her uncle Don Jaime, who has paid for her studies. During her visit, Don Jaime tries to convince her to stay, but fails and then commits suicide, causing Viridiana to resign. She stays at the mansion to practice Christian charity, accepting a group of beggars in the estate. Finally Jorge, Don Jaime’s natural son, arrives and definitely changes her fate. The script utilizes a recognizable logic interspersed with scenes of surrealistic dark humour, such as when Viridiana, at Don Jaime’s request, wears his dead wife’s wedding dress, or when the beggars sit around the table in the same arrangement as Leonardo da Vinci’s *The Last Supper* (1495-1498) accompanied by music from Handel’s *Messiah* (1741). These scenes are a kind of Deleuzeian “impulse-image” which induce in Viridiana an existential shift from God to mankind. In fact, one of the most interesting aspects of the film is the modernist and irreverent manner in which Buñuel treats elements connected to Catholicism. It is the first Spanish film to win the Palme d’Or at the Cannes Film Festival.

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Paratextual material

<http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra/halma/>

Original version at Biblioteca Virtual Cervantes of *Halma*, a novel by Benito Pérez Galdós (1895) on which the film was loosely based.

<http://www.criterion.com/current/posts/423>

“*Viridiana*: The Human Comedy”, film essay by Michael Wood for the Criterion edition (May 22, 2006).

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=39FOhlrTnLs>

Original trailer.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sx7h_MeFX54>

“Regreso a *Viridiana*” (Pedro González Bermúdez, 2011) a documentary on the film by TCM.

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