

Buñuel's Impure Modernism (1929–1950)

Sebastian Faber

'Der Trug, der *ordo idearum* wäre der *ordo rerum*, gründet in der Unterstellung eines Vermittelten als unmittelbar'./'The delusion that the *ordo idearum* (order of ideas) should be the *ordo rerum* (order of things) is based on the insinuation that the mediated is unmediated'. –Theodor W. Adorno¹

'Luis mente, ha mentido siempre'./'Luis lies, he's always lied'. –Max Aub²

I. 1950: A Slap in the Face

A little over an hour into the premiere of *Los olvidados* in Mexico City on 9 November 1950, some members of the audience could not suppress a muffled shriek of disbelief. One of the film's two tragic protagonists, Pedro – a young, open-faced boy whose loveless, poverty-stricken life the film had been following closely – had just looked straight into the camera and thrown a rotten egg at it. Smashing onto the lens, it covered the entire screen in a gelatinous, opaque dribble. Two brief seconds later, the camera had miraculously recovered its transparency and diegetic invisibility, and the film continued its melodramatic narrative arc as if nothing had happened. Yet somehow the movie theatre seats suddenly felt a lot less comfortable.

Pedro's insolent aggression – *What are you looking at? Scram!* – makes us feel like peeping Toms caught in the act. It forces us to rethink our relationship to the film, but also to the reality

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the film claims to represent in all its authenticity: the life of the urban poor.³ By this point we have witnessed several acts of violence, including a murder, from close up; but Pedro's lashing out at *us*, which we immediately interpret as an act of self-defence, abruptly makes us aware of the violence inherent in *our* gaze. The shooting script suggests that the idea for the egg gesture came to Buñuel on the set: it is added in pencil.⁴ And yet it is the most dramatically high-modernist moment in Buñuel's masterpiece, foregrounding as it does the mediation of point of view as a narrative technique instead of adhering to the rhetorical effect of naturalist immediacy.

In the Hispanic literary world, 1950 constitutes a year of modernist effervescence and technical innovation, however belated this date may seem by Anglo-American standards. In 1950 Octavio Paz published the collection of surrealist prose poems *¿Águila o sol?* and his study of Mexican national identity, *El laberinto de la soledad*. His first major collection of poems, *Libertad bajo palabra*, had appeared the previous year; all three books were prepared while he was pursuing a diplomatic career in Paris. Also in 1950 Pablo Neruda brought out *Canto general* while Jorge Guillén, an expatriate Spaniard teaching at Wellesley College who went on to deliver Harvard University's prestigious Charles Eliot Norton Lectures in Poetry, published the definitive edition of his verse masterpiece *Cántico: Fe de vida* in Buenos Aires. Buñuel's return to major film making in 1950, after a ten-year hiatus, should be placed in the context of Hispanic modernism's resilient transnationalism.

Los olvidados recounts the unfortunate adventures of Pedro and *El Jaibo*, two delinquent teenagers in Mexico City at the outset of the country's postwar economic boom. Jaibo, who has just escaped from juvenile detention, hooks back up with his old gang, to which Pedro also belongs. As a first order of business Jaibo looks up Julián, a suspected squealer, to teach him a lesson—but he kills him in a fit of rage. For Pedro, who witnesses the murder, this signals the beginning of a slow downfall that will ultimately lead to his death. All his attempts to redeem himself are in vain. He seeks the love of his young, single mother, but she rejects him (he was conceived when she was raped at fourteen), although she later lets herself be seduced by Jaibo. Pedro finds a job with a blacksmith, but when Jaibo robs a silver-handled knife from the shop, it is Pedro who is accused and fired. Even the benevolent Mexican State is unable to save him. His mother takes him to the police, and he is sent to a modern Farm School whose director is an example of progressive liberalism; but when this director puts Pedro to the test, asking him to run an errand and return all of the change to

him, Pedro bumps into Jaibo, who takes off with the money. Not much later, Pedro and Jaibo get into a fight in which the latter kills his friend. The police track Jaibo down and shoot him. The image of a dying Jaibo is superimposed on that of a rabid dog approaching the camera.

Interspersed in the main plot are other elements worth mentioning. Motherly hens and menacing roosters appear throughout the film. About thirty minutes into the movie Buñuel inserts a dream sequence in which Pedro sees his uncharacteristically loving mother offering him a big cut of bloody meat, which Jaibo, who appears from under the bed, pulls out of Pedro's hands. 'Ojitos' (Pretty Eyes), a mestizo boy from the countryside who is abandoned in the city by his father, ends up working for a blind musician who makes a living performing songs from the time of the paradoxically *liberal* and positivist dictator Porfirio Díaz. The blind man longs for those prerevolutionary years of imagined social order: If it were up to him, he says, he would simply exterminate young good-for-nothings like Pedro and Jaibo, whose gang robs and pesters him. And then there is Meche, the beautiful sister of one of Pedro's friends, who develops a true liking for the innocent Ojitos but who is the constant target of lascivious attention from men of all ages, the camera included. It is Meche who, at the end of the film, helps her father load Pedro's dead body on to a mule and, in one of the most horrifying endings in cinema history, dump it into a trash-filled ditch.⁵

The egg incident, which occurs during Pedro's stay at the Farm School, is not the only sign of Buñuel's continued allegiance, twenty-one years after *Un chien andalou*, to what Astraður Eysteinnsson has called an 'aesthetics of interruption': the insistence, that is, on derailing representational conventions and the public's generic expectations; the 'refus[al] to communicate according to established socio-semiotic contracts'; the 'attempt to *interrupt* the modernity that we live and understand as a social, if not "normal", way of life'.⁶ Until the egg-throwing scene, in fact, the most disconcerting aspect of *Los olvidados* is its constant generic hesitation, if not grating dissonance, between commercial melodrama, progressive social documentary, and avant-garde aesthetics. The film's unhappy ending, half an hour later—with both protagonists dead and no real hope of redemption for the rest of the characters—does little to clear up the public's confusion as to the film's ultimate nature and intent. The tensions that arise from the deliberate assemblage of contradictory elements remain painfully unresolved.

Is the children's deviance an effect of fixable social ills, of basic human instincts, or of sheer genetic degradation? How should

we read the dream sequences that give us brief glimpses into the characters' tortured unconscious? Is this very Mexican story by a non-Mexican, cosmopolitan director really representative of all modern cities, as the film's voice-over prologue claims? What is meant by the movie's opening statement that it is based 'wholly on facts from real life' and that 'all its characters are authentic'?⁷ If Buñuel is trying to move the public to action, why does he insist on showing that even the most benevolent of interventions is ultimately futile? How are we supposed to view a film whose melodramatic and social-realist conventions appeal to our compassion for the poor, while its focus on the characters' uncontrollable drives, moral degradation, and repulsively grotesque features alternates uncomfortably with an unabashed erotic gaze? Should we feel moved, titillated, outraged, or repulsed? All of these mixed signals – coupled with the film's occasional frame-breaking, its subtle irony and bleak conclusion – end up feeling like a series of slaps in our well-meaning middle-class faces.⁸ Barely hidden below the film's melodramatic veneer is a critique of the bourgeois sentimentalisation of suffering as devastating as the one Adorno would formulate one year later in *Minima Moralia*.⁹

II. A Peripheral Modernist

Buñuel had just turned 50 when *Los olvidados* came out; it was his third Mexican film after *Gran casino* (1947) and *El gran calavera* (1949). Born in a small town in rural Aragón in 1900, Buñuel had moved to Madrid to go to university, rooming at the Residencia de Estudiantes, where he met Salvador Dalí and Federico García Lorca and became one of the most colourful members of the large group of avant-garde intellectuals known as the 'Generation of 1927' (or *Arte Nuevo* or *amigos del mirar*), whose most prominent female member was irrationalist philosopher María Zambrano.¹⁰ Shuttling back and forth between Madrid, Barcelona, and Paris, the 1927 writers engaged critically with the work of Miguel de Unamuno and José Ortega y Gasset as well as with disparate literary and pictorial traditions ranging from the baroque to Cubism, from vernacularity and extreme realism to culturalism and abstraction. Through their joint commitment to literature, criticism, and the arts, the likes of García Lorca, Guillén, Zambrano, Luis Cernuda, Pedro Salinas, Vicente Aleixandre, Rafael Alberti, Emilio Prados, and Rosa Chacel formed a creative constellation that bears comparison with American high modernism.

In 1929, Buñuel shocked and delighted the world with *Un chien andalou*, which particularly enthused André Breton's Surrealist Group and the American modernist scene in Paris.¹¹ *Un chien andalou* was followed a year later by *L'Âge d'or*, which caused such controversy that it was promptly prohibited. (Henry Miller, though, was ecstatic and claimed it as a major inspiration for *Tropic of Cancer*.¹²) A similar fate befell Buñuel's third film, *Las Hurdes* (1933), a thirty-minute documentary on one of Spain's poorest regions, whose unvarnished display of rural misery and depravity offended the Second Republic's government authorities so much that they forbade it.¹³ The years 1931–6 saw Buñuel living and working for large movie production companies in Hollywood, Paris, and Madrid, while he sought membership in the French Communist Party and left the Surrealist group he had previously joined at Breton's insistence. Shortly after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in the summer of 1936 he was appointed attaché at the Spanish embassy in Paris. In 1938 he moved once more to the US, where he worked at the Museum of Modern Art and the Motion Picture Division of the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs—producing, among other things, a shortened version of *Triumph of the Will*. In 1944 he worked as a dubbing coordinator for Warner Brothers in Hollywood; in 1946 he left for Mexico, where he lived in exile until his death in 1983.

Un chien andalou and *L'Âge d'or*, both made in collaboration with Dalí, remain among the most frequently cited and anthologised items of Buñuel's filmography in histories of modernism, surrealism, and the avant-garde. Short films both, respectively of sixteen and sixty minutes, but jam-packed with gags, in-jokes, and allusions to everything from Freudian dream analysis to Hollywood slapstick, their power to disturb lies not so much in their images per se—disconcerting as they may be—but in their *articulation*. As Linda Williams and Paul Hammond have shown, the montage in both films ostensibly relies on the conventions of plot and narrative logic—*mise-en-scène*, continuity editing, intertitles—only to subvert them at nearly every turn.¹⁴ For James Lastra, *Un chien andalou* and *L'Âge d'or* are primarily experiments in montage, manipulation, and articulation that seek to combine and recombine various series of dislocated elements from modern life, whether they are physical objects, original scenes, or found footage. The artist's goal is not only to bring out new meanings by inter-relating these elements along metonymic and metaphoric chains, but also to draw attention to their very incomprehensibility, their impenetrable *thingness*.¹⁵

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To Buñuel's great disappointment, *Un chien andalou's* daring experimentation proved less effective than he had hoped when it came to shocking the audience out of its bourgeois slumber and disrupting the normality of a gradually technologised modern life. Paradoxically, it turned out that the film's very strangeness allowed the viewer to classify it as 'poetic' or 'experimental', and – the horror! – enjoy it as a work of art.¹⁶ (Adorno would likely have argued the work was neither *authentic* nor *genuine*.¹⁷) 'What can I do', Buñuel coyly wrote in the preface to the published script, 'about ... this imbecile crowd that has found *beautiful* or *poetic* that which, at heart, is nothing other than a desperate, impassioned call for murder?'¹⁸ Buñuel realised that his work's shock value would in fact be greater if he hewed closer to convention. Feigning normality of genre or form would bring viewers' defenses down, making them all the more vulnerable to the disruption or confusion that the director sought to generate. Consequently, *L'Âge d'Or* features a markedly more recognisable narrative structure than *Un chien andalou*, and *Las Hurdes* is even more prone to being mistaken – initially, at least – for a 'normal' social documentary. But *Los olvidados* bears the palm.

Rather than placing *Un chien andalou* and *L'Âge d'or* at the centre of Buñuel's contribution to modernism, then, I would propose to consider them as exercises toward a more mature and effective kind of modernism that Buñuel began developing in *Las Hurdes* and perfected in the equally low-budget *Los olvidados*. Buñuel's brand of modernism did not reject but *incorporated* the formal, political, and commercial lessons learned in the years of the Popular Front and the Spanish Civil War, including a qualified return to realist narrative and mass popular culture, and a willingness to work within a commercial movie system. All the same, *Los olvidados* – which won Buñuel two prizes at Cannes and eleven Ariels (the Mexican equivalent of the Academy Award) – was his entry ticket back into the prestigious world of international art cinema. It sparked a reinfusion of cultural capital for the Buñuel brand, and turned out to be the opening salvo of an extraordinary late-blooming career – some twenty-seven productions in thirty-three years – that would make him the most influential Spanish filmmaker of the twentieth century. It also brought Buñuel his share of criticism from Communist intellectuals in France and in Mexico. The philo-Stalinist Left rejected the filmmaker's sympathetic portrayal of the enlightened representatives of Mexico's state apparatuses: the policeman, the farm school's director, and the juvenile court magistrate. Meanwhile, Buñuel's thoroughly negative portrayal of the underclass, coupled with his explicit refusal of social 'optimism' (as stated in the film's

voice-over frame), alienated both his Marxist *compagnons de route* and the privileged Mexican elites. In fact, *Los olvidados* could enter the Cannes festival only at the organisers' invitation since the mildly socialist and authoritarian Mexican government did not enter it for the competition. Seen in the context of his previous work, the film also provides a crucial key to understanding Buñuel as one of Spain's most versatile – yet reluctant – modernists.

Calling Buñuel 'influential' conjures various questions that need to be addressed, albeit briefly. Within the framework of 'world' art or literature, any discussion of the relative importance of artists and writers from areas outside of the main metropolises – a vast periphery that includes twentieth-century Spain – runs the risk of reproducing or naturalising the inequalities of access and distribution inherent in the systems that rule the global production of cultural capital. This problem is even more complex for Buñuel's generation of Spanish cultural producers, who helped bring about the so-called Silver Age of Spanish literature and art – the height of the Spanish avant-garde – but whose career was profoundly affected by the Spanish Civil War and its outcome. Some died at the outbreak of the war (García Lorca), some others in its aftermath (Miguel Hernández), while still others faced a life-long internal or physical exile. Although this generation's profile was markedly internationalist and cosmopolitan to begin with – and although the war sparked an unprecedented worldwide interest in the country and its culture – for most Spanish intellectuals the conflict's aftermath implied forms of dispersion, distraction, and disorientation (if not oppression and persecution) that further complicated their admission into the trend-setting French and Anglo-American canon. In fact, many avant-gardistes who had flirted with what philosopher José Ortega y Gasset called honorifically 'dehumanised art' [*arte deshumanizado*] (alternately, *arte desrealizado* because it was anti-naturalist and anti-romantic), turned during the war and in the ensuing years to what poet-critic Dámaso Alonso characterised as the tension between 'rooted' and 'uprooted' poetry [*poesía arraigada* and *poesía desarraigada*].¹⁹ Both were explicitly spiritual and *re-humanizadoras* and therefore also implicitly *anti-puristas*. But while *arraigado* poets agonised over the ravages of war in a world still presided over by the consoling presence of God, *desarraigado* writers faced their existential crises *à la* Camus, without keeping much faith in country, church, or party. Since Dámaso Alonso was an accommodating Catholic conservative who had no problem adjusting to, and prospering, during the Francoist regime, his two labels were a way to justify the centrality of Spain's Catholic tradition while creating

subject positions for the expression of alienation and even dissent without acknowledging the role Communism played in the work of so many of his *engagé* contemporaries. He tellingly treated the baroque poet and powerful courtier from seventeenth-century Spain, Francisco de Quevedo (also a substantive influence on Buñuel), as the precursor of *desarraigada* poetry. Buñuel, the poet of surrealist film, pushed *desarraigo* to its limits, not least because he never fully disavowed Communism.

Still, rather than exploring the main European intertexts found in the Spanish filmmaker's output or *showing* once again the impact of his work on British and American literature and film—rehearsing the familiar list of Alfred Hitchcock, David Lynch, Joseph Flaherty, Henry Miller, and so on—I will resist the temptation to make yet another attempt to shore up the prestige of Hispanic modernism *vis-à-vis* Anglo-American hegemony. Instead, I will offer a perspective on Buñuel's cinematic work between 1929 and 1950 that draws out echoes, connections, and parallels with recent revisions of modernism in a global context, but particularly in the United States. Together with Mexico and France, the US was after all the country with whose culture Buñuel felt the greatest affinity.

Agustín Sánchez Vidal has argued that *Los olvidados* almost perfectly blends the three principal strands of Buñuel's cinematic career: modernism, commercialism, and a politically committed (documentary) realism.²⁰ My argument here will be double. First, that this three-way mix can be traced back to the 1930s; and second, that Buñuel's work invites us to reconsider not only the significance of Spanish cultural production and the Spanish Civil War in the history of modernism, but more generally the importance for its development of the interaction and integration of *aesthetics* (the identification of cultural value with formal innovation and artistic integrity), *politics* (the need or desire to intervene in society or fight for a cause), and the *market* (producing profitable cultural products, and accumulating cultural capital). If modernism is often associated with a quest for purity—a purity linked to notions of authenticity, integrity, high seriousness, and truth—Buñuel stands out as the rebellious champion of a decidedly *impure* modernism.²¹

There is, of course, another equally influential vector of purity that excited debates in France, Spain, and Mexico at the time: the notion of *poésie pure*. Starting with such Parnassians as Théophile Gautier, the tradition of pure poetry reaches into Mallarmé and Valéry, and into Juan Ramón Jiménez (who re-spiritualises it) and Jorge Guillén (like Buñuel and Lorca, a member of Spain's Generation of

1927). *Poesía pura/poésie pure* exiled the emotional, social, and natural contents found in the romantic/naturalist continuum, choosing instead to focus on the aesthetic dimension of handcrafted objects as well as on abstract language and intellectual paradoxes and entelechies. This focus becomes clear in Mallarmé, who was enormously influential in Mexico; his main translator was no other than the polymath and diplomat Alfonso Reyes.

The most celebrated challenge to the hegemony of pure art in the 1930s came from Pablo Neruda just a few months before the onset of the Civil War in Spain. In 'Sobre una poesía sin pureza', published in the magazine *Caballo verde para la poesía* in November 1935, Neruda—who himself came from the ranks of poetic avant-gardism and would not join Chile's Communist Party until 1945—led the fight against the excessive intellectualisation of poetic language and its pretensions to metaphysical depth. 'An impure poetry', Neruda declared in 1935, 'like a suit or like a body, besoiled by food stains and shameful acts, with wrinkles, dreams, sleepless nights, prophecies, confessions of love and hatred, quakes, idylls, political beliefs, rebuttals, doubts, assertions, impositions' ['Una poesía impura, como un traje, como un cuerpo, con manchas de nutrición, y actividades vergonzosas, con arrugas, observaciones, sueños, vigilia, profecías, declaraciones de amor y de odio, bestias, sacudidas, idilios, creencias políticas, negaciones, dudas, afirmaciones, impuestos'].²²

If Neruda's enumeration of polluting agents provides a useful summary of impure art's aims and range, it is the blatant, proud impurity of Buñuel's peripheral modernism, his brazen acceptance of political and commercial contaminants, which explains his work's resistance to incorporation into the modernist critical pantheon. His films have proven especially immune to the kinds of assimilation, appropriation, and commodification that sapped the oppositional and utopian energies of *puerer* modernist projects, including Buñuel's earlier work.²³ In fact, if Buñuel has long proved to be among the more elusive representatives of the modernist canon, it is largely because he never made clear to what extent he took the modernist project seriously. Every single aspect of his public projection, from his earliest work with Salvador Dalí and *Las Hurdes* through his Mexican and French work and his spirited memoir written late in life, is marked by distance and incongruity between expression and intention, ranging from subtle irony and equivocation to blatant lies. Given that integrity, truth, and high seriousness are perhaps modernism's most universally defining traits, it is fair to wonder to what extent Buñuel can be considered a modernist at all.

Buñuel's rejection of modernist purity can be linked as much to his rebellious temperament and cultural identity as to his biographical circumstances: his status as a provincial Spaniard and peripheral European; his long periods of exile in the United States and Mexico; and his chronically limited resources. His work is also decisively shaped by his scepticism about cultural consecration, his embrace of tradition (from folk culture and religious ritual to the nineteenth-century novel) as well as mass and popular culture—including, crucially, Hollywood movies and slapstick.²⁴ Finally, his films are marked by his visceral rejection of poetic transcendence and 'interpretation': what Lastra calls his 'anti-art aesthetic', his 'distaste for abstraction, symbolism, and idealisation', his 'rejection of the elevated and poetic in favour of the base and prosaic', and his refusal to allow the unruly fragments of a cinematic work to submit to any kind of 'narrative assimilation'.²⁵ 'NOTHING in this film SYMBOLIZES ANYTHING', he famously said in 1946 about *Un chien andalou*.²⁶

III. 1936–7: Acts of Self-Effacement

Buñuel was a pragmatist and a survivor, willing to adapt to changing circumstances but not to relinquish his right to ridicule the world. The most dramatic of these changing circumstances was the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, which filled Buñuel with dread: although he was a terrific athlete, boxer, and hunter, he was terrified by armed conflict. All the same, the war allowed him a chance to put his money where his mouth was. In the fall of 1936 he was put in charge of the Republic's foreign film propaganda in Paris. Ironically, one of his first major tasks as government official was to produce a reworked sound version of his own controversial documentary *Las Hurdes*, which he had shot in 1932. A region in the southwest of Spain long known for its backwardness and extreme poverty, Las Hurdes had long been a preferred destination for travel writers, scholars, and social reformers. The documentary was filmed and produced by a crew affiliated with the radical Left as much as with the avant-garde.²⁷ The result of their collaboration was a formally complex, self-conscious film, full of jarring elements: pessimistic, provocatively anti-bourgeois, and scathingly critical of the failed reformism of the liberal Republican governments of 1931–3. Three years later, Buñuel-the-propagandist turned his own work into a straightforward, pro-Republican treatise with a new title, *Land without Bread*, and an unambiguously didactic coda added for good measure: 'With the help of antifascists from around the world, peace, work, and happiness will replace the civil war and make disappear forever

the centers of misery that this film has showed you.²⁸ (This is a different commentary from the more cautious voice-over at the outset of *Los olvidados*, asymmetrically combining stock images of Mexico with New York, London, and Paris: 'Based on real events, this film, is not optimistic and leaves the solution to this problem to society's progressive forces'.)

In its formal complexity and self-consciousness—particularly its constant questioning of generic conventions, its proliferating web of meanings, its incorporation of Buñuel's personal obsessions, and its winks to Bataille—*Las Hurdes* was a modernist provocation as much as a political documentary, a piece worthy of the co-director of *Un chien andalou* and *L'Âge d'or*.²⁹ Indeed, when in the fall of 1939 MoMA's Iris Barry managed to get her hands on a copy of *Land without Bread* and screen it for an audience of fellow filmmakers including Joris Ivens, Robert Flaherty, and Joseph Losey, the film left them flabbergasted. Flaherty's *The Land* is clearly indebted to *Land without Bread*, and Ivens would later identify it as one of his ten favourite films of all time.³⁰

Buñuel's early work is marked by constant disruption and semantic anarchy. How then should we interpret his newfound dedication in 1936 to submit to—indeed, to enforce—a regime of strict message control? How should we read his willingness to suppress his own film's insubordinate modernist energies and recycle it into a toned-down, mainstream piece of antifascist propaganda? Repurposing *Las Hurdes* was an act of self-effacement, to be sure; but it can also be read as an indirect recognition on Buñuel's part of the relative *frivolity* of the entire modernist project—or, for that matter, the triviality of nit-picking struggles within the Left—in the face of political and historical urgencies such as a fascist military revolt. It was a position towards which Buñuel had already gestured in a May 1932 letter to André Breton, in which he explained why he felt compelled to choose Communism over Surrealism, and admitted to be satisfied with forms of expression that may well be 'less pure' [moins pure] but that 'may serve as propaganda and manage to touch the masses directly' [qui puisse servir pour la propagande et qui arrive à toucher directement aux masses].³¹

The letter to Breton, which surfaced after Buñuel's death, not only lends weight to the hypothesis that, by 1932, Buñuel was a card-carrying member of the French Communist Party, despite his later protestations to the contrary; it also sheds a new light on the filmmaker's stint as attaché at the Parisian embassy.³² This period has long posed problems for Buñuel critics and biographers, who, following Buñuel's own lead, have tended to minimise the importance

of the director's hands-on political work. And yet the question the letter raises—what place should we assign to Buñuel's two years in Paris as we assess his life and work?—goes to the heart of one of the more general points I wish to address in this essay: What place should we assign to political work—understood in terms of activity or employment as much as artistic and literary production—in the culture-historical narrative of modernism? The case of Luis Buñuel is perhaps uniquely suited to address this question: of all modernist and avant-garde movements, after all, none grappled as explicitly as Surrealism with translating the revolution of form into the revolution of society, with establishing productive links between modernist art and collective political action.³³ And if the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War marked the most forceful irruption of politics into modern Western cultural history, it was the Spanish intelligentsia who felt this irruption most directly as a duty call, a compelling reason to rethink the nature and importance of their intellectual work, including their relationship to the 'people' or 'masses'.³⁴

IV. Modernism, Politics, Commerce

Telling the story of the leftist political work done by modernists and avant-gardists during the years of the Popular Front has proven challenging, from an art- and literary-historical as much as a biographical point of view (though admittedly not as much as modernists' drifting rightward). While accounts from the Left have tended towards simplistic celebrations of how intellectuals found their true social vocation after years of formalist distraction, historians of modernism have preferred to downplay these intellectuals' mobilisation for political causes as a diversion that marred the artistic integrity and the aesthetic quality of their work, whether written or visual.³⁵ Post-Cold War history, meanwhile, has revived anti-Communist narratives of the 1950s and 1960s, in which a devious and duplicitous network of Comintern spies and operators ensnares scores of well-meaning intellectual stooges.³⁶ Whether these accounts dismiss aesthetics or politics as trivial distractions from the *true* calling of intellectuals, not one of them comes to terms with the *interaction* or *integration* between political action and artistic craft.

To be fair, it is not only the historians and biographers who have insisted on trivialising or demonising the political work of modernist artists from the 1930s onwards. The subjects themselves had a difficult time accounting for it, too. Buñuel preferred in later accounts to gloss over his years at the embassy, the precise nature of

his work, his Communist Party membership, and his involvement in particular projects such as *The Spanish Earth* or *Espagne 1936*.³⁷ 'For his public profile Buñuel did his best to keep both his bread-and-butter work and his political activism out of the spotlight', Gubern and Hammond write, 'while, on the other hand, emphasizing an image of independence befitting a director not subject to any political or commercial commitments'.³⁸ Buñuel was highly aware of and concerned about his public image—however much he liked to feign indifference to his audience, if not outright loathing.³⁹ If he minimised his political work, it was to preserve a particular form of cultural capital: a strategy in a deliberate project of self-fashioning. Indeed, his emphasis on artistic integrity and 'surrealist morality' constitutes a central motif of his career.

If conventional culture-historical accounts have insisted on the same conceptual binaries that the protagonists of the period themselves embraced—modernism versus realism, 'objective' history and journalism versus 'partisan' propaganda, political commitment versus artistic integrity, and artistic integrity versus the market—critical work done over the past ten or twenty years has modified these terms considerably. With regard to the division between modernism and realism in the US, for instance, Michael Denning has argued against the received notion that the 1930s was a time of 'social realism', understood as 'the documentary aesthetic, a rearguard opposition to modernism, and a relatively straightforward representationalism in the arts'. 'In fact', he writes, 'all three aspects are misunderstood: the documentary aesthetic was actually a centrally modernist innovation; the cultural front was *not* characterised by an opposition to modernism; and the crucial aesthetic forms and ideologies of the cultural front were not simple representationalism.'⁴⁰ Along related lines, Jeff Allred rereads the American icons of Depression photography—Dorothea Lange, Walker Evans, Margaret Bourke-White and photo albums such as *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*—as instances of what he calls 'documentary modernism'. In an analysis that strongly resonates with recent critical readings of *Las Hurdes* argues that rather than confirming the public's middle-class hegemony over a pitied, impoverished Other to be redeemed and incorporated into the march of progress, the interaction between the photographic images and the books' texts 'disrupt the identities of reading selves and represented others', refiguring 'the orderly teleology of historical progress as a contingent and unpredictable process'.⁴¹ Instead of being modernism's polar opposite, 1930s documentary is 'intimately implicated with modernism' as it resorts to what we long have identified as modernist

aesthetics—while modernism, in turn, incorporates the traces of the ‘real’ as a tactic of disruption.⁴² (Zervigón and Cuevas Wolf similarly highlight the cross-pollinations between avant-garde aesthetics and radical left-wing politics in the German context, particularly through innovative deployments of news photography.⁴³)

The purported purity of modernist artistic integrity understood as oppositional to or exclusive of commerce, in particular the fast-growing middle-brow cultural market, has also been gradually dismantled. Prominent modernists, it turns out, were actively concerned with their work as a product generating cultural and monetary capital, and benefited from the ballooning cultural industry.⁴⁴ The very image of the ‘pure’ modernist was in fact the result of what we would now call a brilliant branding campaign. The perceived conflict between artistic integrity and leftist political commitment, finally, is perhaps the most persistent of binaries in the conventional critical wisdom on 1930s cultural production—strengthened as it was by the critical logic of a Cold War that enlisted modernism in the fight against Communism.⁴⁵ More recent work on the 1920s and 1930s has helped rethink what has long been construed as an opposition as two sets of drivers that do not necessarily work against each other. In the Spanish context, Jordana Mendelson and Geoffrey Pingree have shown how radical modernists such as Buñuel or Josep Renau were willing to re-signify their own work as the embattled Spanish Republic was faced with the paradoxical need to portray itself to the outside world as both modern *and* traditional, united in its courageous stand against fascism *and* in dire need of foreign aid.⁴⁶

V. Mediation, Manipulation, War

If modernism and the avant-garde ushered in radically new conceptions of the relationship between artists, their work and the world, then the Great Depression and political polarisation of the 1930s compelled cultural producers in the West to rethink these relationships once again.⁴⁷ The outbreak of the Spanish Civil War was also a war of images and narratives.⁴⁸ It intensified this process and sharpened its resultant tensions.⁴⁹ In hindsight it is clear that the supposed binary opposites that shaped intellectual debates—modernism vs. realism, truth vs. propaganda, objectivity vs. partisanship, ivory-tower detachment vs. political commitment—were in fact intertwined and co-dependent.⁵⁰ The same literary texts, let’s say James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922) or Thomas Mann’s *The Magic Mountain*

(*Der Zauberberg* [1924]), can be usefully classified as both the epitome of realism and an example of modernist irony, and as simultaneously concerned with the naturalism of external detail and the naturalism of a neurotic consciousness.⁵¹ Similarly, photomontage—whose large-scale political use was spearheaded by Münzenberg's *Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung* in the 1920s and perfected by artists like the German-born John Heartfield (aka Helmut Herzfeld) and the Valencian Josep Renau—powerfully combines the production methods and aesthetic principles of modernist manipulation, on the one hand, and documentary photojournalism, on the other.⁵² Photography from the 1930s that was long upheld as the quintessence of documentary realism is now understood to have been the product of complex manipulative processes. (Zervigón argues, for instance, that the creative use of photojournalistic images by the workers' crews of the *AIZ* in the 1920s originated in a fundamental *distrust* of the ostentatious transparency of the photographic image.⁵³)

VI. Mixed Messages and Double Binds

Rather than hiding or minimising the political and commercial dimension of 1930s art, photography, literature and film, then, it is more productive to consider how the combination and integration of the political, the commercial, and the aesthetic constituted one of its principal *strengths*. This is, in any case, my argument here: that the very impurity of Buñuel's modernism is what constitutes the enduring power of his work to compel and disturb us. To conclude this essay I will briefly return to *Los olvidados* as a prime example of this trend. I touch on four features in particular, all of which are prefigured in *Un chien andalou*, *L'Âge d'or*, and *Las Hurdes*: the incongruity between signifying elements (such as soundtrack and image); the brilliantly parasitic mobilisation of narrative and formal structures from commercial and mass visual culture; frame-breaking and other forms of self-awareness; and an almost constant ambiguity in appeals to the viewers' sentiment, alternating and combining signals of attraction (erotics, identification, compassion, solidarity) with shock and repulsion (depravity, taboo, the grotesque).

Most unsettling about *Las Hurdes* is its radical equivocation: the fact that the film ultimately does not make clear whether it seeks to *confirm* or *denounce* the image of the poor *hurdanos* as subhuman creatures beyond redemption. In the process, Buñuel's documentary manages to expose and challenge the aspirations, claims, and inherent violence of the documentary genre itself. The film's

‘surprising duplicity’, Lastra writes, ‘serves to undermine the film’s claims to objectivity and, more importantly, our own certainty about where [it] stands morally and politically’.⁵⁴ The film’s equivocation occurs most obviously in the repeated incongruities between image and soundtrack. Music by Brahms accompanies a ritual rooster decapitation; a deadpan newsreel-style narration describes suffering and death. At other moments in the film we are told what appear to be barefaced lies. We see an image of a woman in her late forties; the narrator states that she is thirty-two. We are told that the Hurdanos only get to taste goat meat when an animal accidentally falls to his death—an ‘accident’ that we then witness from two different camera angles, with the smoke of a gun billowing from the edge of the screen. (Gubern and Hammond list a long range of additional in(ter)ventions, including staged scenes and events that are wholly made-up.⁵⁵)

Incongruity between text and image—the modernist ‘violation of the socio-semiotic contract’—is a recurring feature of Buñuel’s strategy of interruption. In *Un chien andalou* and *L’Âge d’or*, this communicative dissonance springs from the non-sequitur title cards. In *Los olvidados*, which lacks both the continuous voice-over of *Las Hurdes* and the intertitles of *Chien* and *Âge*, the incongruity is more subtle, but it suffuses the entire film, which fails to provide unambiguous answers to the three central questions it poses: What are the *causes* of the misery and immorality depicted—who or what is to blame? What, if any, are the available solutions? And what moral position should we, as well-meaning citizens, adopt toward the problems and actions we witness? The story wavers between liberal-progressive optimism and a reactionary fatalism inspired by social-Darwinist notions of social pathology and genetic degeneration; the voice-over introduction incoherently points to a solution in the ‘near future’ while simultaneously declaring its pessimism.⁵⁶ The film is not directly critical of the Mexican State, whose representatives are well-meaning, intelligent and honest, albeit ultimately impotent; nor does it unequivocally denounce the immorality of the poor, whose powerlessness and victimhood are always apparent. A similar tension emerges between the film’s purported commitment to documentary realism (it claims to be based ‘wholly on facts from real life’) and the aestheticism of Gabriel Figueroa’s black-and-white photography, which is expertly lit, heavy on chiaroscuro, and not afraid of unusual camera angles.⁵⁷ Other violations of documentary convention include the insertion of dream sequences; the frequent appearances of roosters and hens not always warranted by the narrative; and a soundtrack more reminiscent of a horror movie than of social-realist drama.

All the same, Buñuel's genre-breaking is remarkably measured. In the years between *Un chien andalou* and *Los olvidados*, as we have seen, he edged increasingly closer to formal convention, precisely in order to boost his films' interruptive force. Still, even *Un chien andalou* and *L'Âge d'or* owed a significant debt to popular-cultural forms, particularly the Hollywood slapstick of Buster Keaton.⁵⁸ *Las Hurdes*, in turn, intertextualised the popular and often sensationalist educational documentaries of the 1920s and 30s, as well as the positivist ethnography of scholars like Maurice Legendre.⁵⁹ In the case of *Los olvidados*, the main source of formal convention was mass-cultural melodrama, with which Buñuel had become familiar as a commercial movie producer in Madrid, Paris, Hollywood, and Mexico. On the face of it, *Los olvidados* features all the requisite pieces for a box-office hit of Golden-Age Mexican cinema: single motherhood, a nasty villain, the struggle for survival, and, above all, the collective presence of innocent, poor orphans and neglected children generally. But once again convention is put at the service of shock and subversion. While the mothers of Mexican melodrama were virginal, abnegated creatures who loved their children unconditionally, Pedro's mother—Marta—rejects her son, refuses him food and love, and casually beds Pedro's outlaw friend Jaibo.⁶⁰ More importantly, *Los olvidados* consistently undercuts the solid foundations of the melodramatic moral universe. Good intentions are shown to be useless; virtue goes unrewarded; love and justice do not prevail; and the public's expectation of a happy ending is squashed without mercy. In Buñuel, that is, we find a threefold resistance to teleological narratives of progress, moral regeneration, and spiritual salvation, which his implementation of a poetics of interruption leaves unfinished.

If the egg incident is the most obvious moment of metanarrative frame-breaking in *Los olvidados*, the movie's self-consciousness is also embedded more subtly in other ways, particularly through the recurring motifs of seeing and blindness, insight and invisibility. The blind man, whose handicap Jaibo and his gang cruelly exploit, turns out to be one the story's most perceptive characters. And while the whole film purports to reveal to the audience what is hidden behind the shiny façade of the modern city, in the end it confronts the viewers with the *impossibility* of revelation—the impossibility, that is, for ideology to be rescued from the vagaries of false consciousness.⁶¹

In the process, the film brilliantly plays a cat-and-mouse game with the viewer's emotions, moving back and forth between affective identification, sexual attraction, and visceral repulsion. When the camera zooms in on Meche's naked thighs as she rubs them with

donkey's milk, the viewer is forced into the uncomfortable subject position of the dirty old man. As in *Un chien andalou* and *L'Âge d'or*—although again more subtly—Buñuel has great fun nonchalantly violating middle-class taboos. While the protagonist of *L'Âge* literally goes out of his way to punt a puppy dog and kick a blind veteran to the ground, in *Los olvidados* Pedro beats a series of hens to death and hurls a baby chick to scare away a menacing rooster; Jaibo and his friends assault the blind man and steal an amputee's roller cart, leaving him wiggling his stumps on the sidewalk.

VII. Conclusion

Buñuel's trademark *equivocation*, evident in all the films discussed here, also marked his relation to high modernism. If modernist art and literature strains the public's process of interpretation, putting up formal roadblocks and hermeneutic challenges, it ultimately aims to be *understood*. Moreover, it associates the public's hard-earned comprehension with a form of truth—that is, with a form of illumination and transcendence. Buñuel, by contrast, not only exhibits a 'distaste for abstraction, symbolism, and idealisation', but appears to do whatever he can to be consistently *misunderstood*.⁶² In fact, it would not be entirely facetious to describe the whole of Buñuel criticism as a long series of hapless misunderstandings, the result of a practical joke of monstrous proportions, with Buñuel still laughing in his grave. (And if the public's and critics' misunderstanding helped generate commercial or cultural capital, all the better.)

If elements of *Las Hurdes* invite the viewer to categorise the Hurdanos as disgusting, subhuman creatures beyond redemption, the same is true for *Los olvidados*. To be sure, it can be argued that films like *Las Hurdes* or *Los olvidados* goad the viewer into a complacently conservative-determinist view of the world with the ultimate goal of provoking a self-conscious rejection of that position.⁶³ But the fundamental indeterminacy of Buñuel's work undercuts even that contorted argument—whose scenario, in any case, would still involve the kind of un-ironic happy resolution that Buñuel always rejected. *Un chien andalou*, *L'Âge d'or*, *Las Hurdes*, and *Los olvidados*, for all their shifts in genre and subject matter, are at bottom a demonstration of the *impossibility* of representing reality—the other, the self, the world of things—in a neatly closed, non-contradictory, politically coherent narrative built on an unambiguous moral framework. By the same token, they are also arguments for the inevitability of *manipulation* in the representation of the other, the self, or the world of things. What

makes the films both jarring and brutally honest is their relentless insistence on this fact. (Seen from this perspective, Buñuel's transition from surrealist troublemaker and radical gadfly of the Second Spanish Republic to commercial film producer to a leadership position in a wartime message control machine is almost natural: his whole career up to that point had been, precisely, about manipulating images.) Truth, for Buñuel, is and will always remain out of reach; and any belief in the possibility of attaining it is inherently suspect. One way to understand the 'Surrealist morality' to which he claimed always to have remained faithful is to define it as a fundamental respect for reality in all its mystery – and a concomitant recognition of the artistic and political power, even the necessity, of the blatant lie. At the same time, Buñuel's life-long adherence to an aesthetics of interruption was driven by the Surrealist aspiration not only to disrupt the viewers' *interpretative* process, but their very *lives*. It is in this sense, and perhaps in this sense only, that his work is unabatedly political.

Notes

1. Originally published as 'Der Essay als Form' in Theodor W. Adorno, *Noten zur Literatur I* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1958); reprinted in *Gesammelte Schriften XI* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2003): 9–33. For the English version, see 'The Essay as Form', trans. Bob Hullot-Kentor and Frederic Will, *New German Critique* 32 (Spring-Summer 1984): 151–71, p. 158.
2. Max Aub, *Conversaciones con Buñuel, seguidas de 45 entrevistas con familiares, amigos y colaboradores del cineasta aragonés* (Madrid: Aguilar, 1985), p. xx.
3. Peter William Evans, *The Films of Luis Buñuel: Subjectivity and Desire* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 77.
4. Agustín Sánchez Vidal, *Los olvidados: una película de Luis Buñuel* (Mexico: Fundación Televisa, 2004), p. 130.
5. The preceding plot summary borrows from a previous article of mine. See Sebastiaan Faber, 'Between Cernuda's Paradise and Buñuel's Hell: Mexico through Spanish Exiles' Eyes', *Bulletin of Spanish Studies* 80. 2 (2003): 219–40, pp. 233–4.
6. Ástráður Eysteinnsson, *The Concept of Modernism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 240.
7. Luis Buñuel, *Los olvidados* (Mexico: Era, 1973), pp. 18–19.
8. Faber, 'Between', pp. 238–9; Ernesto R. Acevedo-Munoz, *Buñuel and Mexico: The Crisis of National Cinema* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), pp. 67–8; Evans, p. 77.
9. Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (London: New Left Review, 1974), p. 28. The original German-language edition was published in 1951.
10. See two of her essays on the topic of ruins as well as Jonathan Mayhew's discussion of her engagement with a philosophically inflected poetic thought (all in this issue).
11. Fernando Gabriel Martín Rodríguez, *El ermitaño errante. Buñuel en Estados Unidos* (Murcia: Tres Fronteras, 2010), p. 122.
12. *Ibid.* pp. 122–36.

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13. Mercè Ibarz, *Buñuel documental: 'Tierra sin pan' y su tiempo* (Zaragoza: Prensas Universitarias de Zaragoza, 1999); Roman Gubern and Paul Hammond, *Los años rojos de Luis Buñuel* (Madrid: Cátedra, 2009), pp. 167–97.
14. Linda Williams, *Figures of Desire: A Theory and Analysis of Surrealist Film* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1981), p. 99 and p. 110; Paul Hammond, *L'Âge d'or* (London: British Film Institute, 1997).
15. James Lastra, 'Buñuel, Bataille, and Buster, or, the Surrealist Life of Things', *Critical Quarterly* 51. 2 (2009): 16–38, pp. 20–1.
16. Williams, p. 111.
17. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, pp. 152–5.
18. Luis Buñuel, *An Unspeakable Betrayal: Selected Writings of Luis Buñuel*, trans. and ed. Garrett White (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), p. 162.
19. José Ortega y Gasset, *La deshumanización del arte y otros ensayos de estética*, ed. Valeriano Bozal (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 2007), pp. 45–85; Dámaso Alonso, *Poetas españoles contemporáneos* (Madrid: Gredos, 1952), pp. 366–80.
20. Sánchez Vidal, p. 12.
21. My thanks to Gijts Mulder, Geoff Pingree, and Román Gubern for their generosity in sharing their work and thoughts on Buñuel; and to José María Rodríguez García for his many suggestions on Neruda and Spain's belated mid-twentieth-century modernism in poetry and criticism.
22. Pablo Neruda, 'Sobre una poesía sin pureza', *Obras completas IV: Nerudiana dispersa I (1915–1964)*, ed. Hernán Loyola (Barcelona: Galaxia Gutenberg/Círculo de Lectores, 2001), pp. 382–3. *Impuestos* is here translated as 'impositions' rather than 'taxes' because the latter term is not called for by the context.
23. Eysteinnsson, p. 223; Williams, p. 111.
24. Lastra, 'Buñuel, Bataille', p. 16; Hammond, *L'Âge*, pp. 37–40.
25. Lastra, 'Buñuel, Bataille', p. 21 and pp. 23–4.
26. *Ibid.* p. 31.
27. Gubern and Hammond, pp. 173–6.
28. *Ibid.* pp. 193–4; Mercè Ibarz, 'A Serious Experiment: *Land Without Bread*, 1933', in Peter William Evans and Isabel Santaolalla (eds.), *Luis Buñuel: New Readings* (London: BFI, 2004): 27–42, p. 27; Jordana Mendelson, *Documenting Spain: Artists, Exhibition Culture, and the Modern Nation, 1929–1939* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), pp. 161–2.
29. Geoffrey B. Pingree, 'Modern Anxiety and Documentary Cinema in Republican Spain', in Susan Larson and Eva María Woods (eds.), *Visualizing Spanish Modernity* (Oxford: Berg, 2005): 301–32, pp. 318–23; Mendelson, pp. 65–91; James Lastra, 'Why Is this Absurd Picture Here? Ethnology/Equivocation/Buñuel', *October* 89 (1999): 51–68.
30. Gubern and Hammond, p. 196; Hans Schoots, *Living Dangerously: A Biography of Joris Ivens* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2000), p. 351.
31. Gubern and Hammond, pp. 117–18.
32. Paul Hammond, 'Buñuel Bows Out', *Rouge* 3 (2004). <http://www.rouge.com.au/3/bunuel.html> (accessed on 16/1/12).
33. Robin Adele Greeley, *Surrealism and the Spanish Civil War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), pp. 1–7.
34. Jeff Allred, *American Modernism and Depression Documentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 7.
35. Greeley, p. 5.
36. Jonathan Miles, *Otto Katz: The Many Lives of a Soviet Spy* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2010); Stephen Koch, *Double Lives: Stalin, Willi Munzenberg, and the Seduction of the*

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- Intellectuals* (New York: Enigma Books, 2004); Sean McMeekin, *The Red Millionaire: A Political Biography of Willi Munzenberg, Moscow's Secret Propaganda Tsar in the West* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005).
37. Aub, p. 72.
 38. Gubern and Hammond, pp. 307–8.
 39. Julie Jones, 'Luis Buñuel and the Politics of Self-Presentation', paper read at CineLit VII, Portland, Oregon, February 2011.
 40. Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (London: Verso, 1998), p. 118.
 41. Allred, p. 7.
 42. Ibid.
 43. Andrés Mario Zervigón, 'Persuading with the Unseen?: *Die Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung*, Photography, and German Communism's Iconophobia', *Visual Resources* 26. 2 (2010): 147–64; Cristina Cuevas-Wolf, 'Montage as Weapon: The Tactical Alliance between Willi Münzenberg and John Heartfield', *New German Critique* 36. 2 (2009): 185–205.
 44. Kevin J. H. Dettmar and Stephen Watt, 'Introduction: Marketing Modernisms', in Dettmar and Watt (eds.), *Marketing Modernisms: Self-Promotion, Canonization, Rereading* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996): 1–13, pp. 4–5.
 45. Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* (New York: New Press, 2000), p. 254.
 46. Pingree, 'Modern Anxiety', p. 316; Mendelson, p. 91 and p. 150.
 47. Allred, pp. 27–57.
 48. Geoffrey B. Pingree, 'Forging Witnesses: Rhetorics of Documentary Representation in the Spanish Civil War', University of Chicago Ph.D. Dissertation, 1996, p. 77; Sebastiaan Faber, *Anglo-American Hispanists and the Spanish Civil War: Hispanophilia, Commitment, and Discipline* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 215.
 49. Marina MacKay, 'Doing Business with Totalitaria: British Late Modernism and the Politics of Reputation', *ELH* 73. 3 (2006): 729–53, p. 730.
 50. Mendelson, p. 149; Fredric Jameson, 'Reflections in Conclusion', in Jameson, *Aesthetics and Politics* (London: Verso, 1977): 196–213; Eysteinsson, pp. 182–91.
 51. Eysteinsson, pp. 189–90.
 52. Mendelson, pp. 125–83; Cuevas-Wolf, pp. 185–205.
 53. Zervigón, p. 152.
 54. Lastra, 'Why Is', p. 52.
 55. Gubern and Hammond, pp. 182–3.
 56. The *New York Times* reviewer considered Jaibo 'some sort of irredeemable psychopath'. See Bosley Crowther, 'Young and the Damned', *New York Times* (25 March 1952): 23.
 57. Sánchez Vidal, pp. 43–5.
 58. Lastra, 'Buñuel, Bataille'; Hammond, *L'Âge*, p. 10, p. 16, and p. 37.
 59. Mendelson, p. 69; Gubern and Hammond, pp. 167–8.
 60. Stephen Hart, 'Buñuel's Box of Subaltern Tricks: Technique in *Los olvidados*', in Peter William Evans and Isabel Santaolalla (eds.), *Luis Buñuel: New Readings* (London: BFI, 2004): 65–79, p. 69.
 61. Hart, p. 77.
 62. Lastra, 'Buñuel, Bataille', p. 31.
 63. Lastra, 'Why Is', pp. 66–8.