

THE DRUMS OF CALANDA
OR LUIS BUÑUEL'S SPAIN

They asked him:

—Don Luis, where are you from?

Buñuel replied:

—I am Aragonese, (like Beethoven).

Luis Buñuel

The search for information about the past in the work of an intellectual reveals traces of his personality, his cultural character. We are, in part, our past, our childhood, our adolescence, and not just for psychological reasons but because experience begins to form during these first years of our lives. The case of Luis Buñuel cannot be explained in any other way. Luis Buñuel was clearly influenced by his hometown, his family, and his religious education among the Jesuits and at the Residencia de Estudiantes. In great part, his intellectual formation and personality evolved from life in his hometown (Calanda, February 22, 1902). Although his family moved to Zaragoza when he was just four months old, Buñuel's presence in Calanda was almost constant. He spent his summers there with his parents in villa Mariana, a house with a painted roof, green blinds and various corners with signs of aging. Whenever possible, Buñuel would return to Calanda to remember his childhood and listen to the beating of the Holy Week drums. His first interests, the years in Zaragoza and especially, his stay at the Residencia de Estudiantes in Madrid (which he entered on October 6, 1917), shaped a great part of his life's passion, his cinematographic work: "My memories of that period are so rich and so vivid that I am absolutely certain that if I had not lived in the Residencia my life would have been very different" (Buñuel, 59). The bleak lands of Teruel, located, as Buñuel said, in a state of temporal standstill, as if the Middle Ages had not ended, his childhood games, his sometimes primitive pastimes, the very harshness of the landscape, all these elements contributed to Buñuel's way of portraying the crude reality of *Tierra sin pan*, that "land without bread" which is Las Hurdes. The same dry realism produced those marauding bands of street children, children of the streets of Mexico City, in one of the most intriguing movies of his Mexican period, *Los olvidados*.

It is clear that, if Buñuel had not stayed at the Residencia de Estudiantes, the extravagant and surrealist fiction of the Aragonese director would not have been possible in *Un perro andaluz* and *La edad de oro*. Nor would he have been in contact with the intellectuals, artists, writers whom he met in Madrid: Federico García Lorca ("talkative, charming, inclined to elegance, his glance dark and brilliant, he had a magnetism which no one could resist... He wasn't the least bit effeminate nor was there the slightest affectation in him... while he did not believe in God, he conserved and cultivated a great artistic sense of religion..."), Rafael Alberti ("...one of the greatest figures of our group. At first we thought he went in for painting..."), Pedro Garfias ("a man who could spend two weeks searching for an adjective..."), José Moreno Villa ("talented painter and writer"), José Bergamín ("skinny, sharp, from Málaga. Along with a fondness for 'preciosismo' he cultivated word games and paradoxes, as well as some old Spanish myths such as the Don Juan or bullfighting ones"), José María Hinojosa ("as modern and daring in his poetry as he was conservative in his ideas and political behaviour"), Salvador Dalí ("in spite of the admiration that a great part of his work still inspires in me, it is impossible for me to forgive him his fiercely egocentric exhibitionism, his cynical adherence to Francoism and most of all, his declared hatred of friendship"), Manuel de Falla ("rather like a sacristan, but a good person"), Valle-Inclán ("what is admirable in him is the language: archaisms, neologisms, Mexicanisms, Valleinclan-isms..."), Gómez de la Serna ("perhaps the most famous figure in Spanish letters"), Gutiérrez Solana ("crude, very interesting. He had a great booming voice"), Unamuno ("he was a famous person, very serious, rather pedantic, and without the least bit of humour") (García Buñuel, 61-62). If Buñuel had not known all these individuals or the other classmates and people who passed through the Residencia or whom he met during his stay in Madrid, surely his life would have followed another quite different creative path.

During this period, Buñuel enjoyed himself with his fellow residents. Together they invented "los putrefactos" (a mocking name for anything bourgeois and conventional), surrealist poetic games such as anaglyphs, as well as the fartometer. Rafael Alberti described this last invention as a square wooden box with a candle inside. A string was hung inside the box at a certain distance from the flame but at the same height. The merit consisted in the intensity of the air that each contestant was able to expel into the orifice. A powerful fart was needed in order to make the flame bend and light the string. They also created the Order of Toledo. Buñuel declared himself "Condestable" on the day it was founded, March 19, 1923. Pepín Bello was Secretary and founding members were García Lorca and his brother Francisco, Garfias, Centeno, Uzelay, Sánchez Ventura and one woman, Ernestina González.

Some of the members were named Knight of the Order, among these were Alberti and María Teresa León, Jeanne Rucar, Dalí (later “demoted”), Hinojosa, Ugarte, Lulú Viñes, and then there were squires. To be a knight one had to love Toledo without reserve, get drunk for at least one night and wander along her streets; those who went to bed early remained squires. On the way back from that fervent drinking expedition through the taverns of Toledo (preferably in the Venta de Aires) with Yepes wine, they would stop at the tomb of Cardinal Tavera, sculpted in alabaster by Berruguete. The face of this sculpture appears in the movie *Tristana*, when Catherine Deneuve leans on it. One of Buñuel’s inventions was to throw water from the balconies of the Residencia and douse the people passing by, “spring showers” they called it. Buñuel recreated this habit in a scene in *Ese oscuro objeto del deseo*, when Fernando Rey throws a bucket of water on Carole Bouquet.

As we can see, Buñuel’s childhood and youthful adventures are repeated as “winks” in his movies. They form an anthology of oddities and magical realities that have nothing to do with symbols but rather with actual occurrences or ones dreamed up by an overwhelming, ironic, and whimsically transgressive intelligence concordant with Buñuel’s cultural personality.

Most of the Spaniards who gave the country prestige in this century spent time at the Residencia. The entire Generation of ‘27 (Bergamín called it the “Generation of the Republic”) passed through there. Buñuel’s relationship with members of the Spanish *avant-garde* was more important than all the readings of Surrealist manifestos or his fervent friendship with André Bretón, the champion of Surrealism. In this sense we can affirm that Buñuel was already a Surrealist before the defining characteristics of this movement were established in films.

The same thing happened with a great deal of his later films, based on experiences or readings on internal conflict and are an indication of a fanatical reality which originated in his childhood and adolescence in Spain. The adventures of Father Nazario in Mexico (adapted from Galdós’s *Nazarín*), have a feeling of methodology of doubt, which in Buñuel always functioned as a phenomenal device not for rhetorical discussion, but rather digression and unease. In other words, what was *Viridiana* if not an innocent albeit powerful blasphemy, capable of rocking the foundations of the most obsolete Vatican theology, a sort of disbelief in his religious education? What about the Parisian bourgeoisie that Buñuel knew so well and depicted in his magistral *Discreto encanto de la burguesía*? What was it but the denouncement of the absurdity of an endogamous and drowsy micro-society lacking stimulus or response?

Where do most of his films’ “winks” come from, the rebellious Buñuelesque itinerary, the coarseness, if not from his childhood adven-

tures? Blind men in *Los olvidados* and *Viridiana*; there was also a blind man in Calanda whom the children used to insult and throw cow patties at. He responded by wildly brandishing his cane and hitting anyone he caught unawares. The family kitchen in *Diario de una camarera*. The dead donkeys, rotting, like that dead donkey in Calanda that Luis Buñuel had seen lose an eye to the birds feeding on the carrion. This scene made a deep impression on Buñuel but he was unable to repeat it in *Abismos de pasión* because, according to Pedro Christian García Buñuel, the Mexican vultures failed him. Donkeys in *Un perro andaluz* and in *Las Hurdes*. Shouts, boys, and girls jumping rope, the miracle of Calanda. Or is Buñuel different from Goya or Gutiérrez Solana, in a black Spain that survived, coexisting with the intellectual *avant-garde*?

No one can free himself from his childhood, from that childish culture painted in black, developed in black and white, between life and death. Buñuel said: "The thought of death has been familiar to me for a long time. From the skeletons paraded through the streets of Calanda in the Holy Week processions, death forms a part of my life" (Buñuel 17). That is the way he talked of death, with a true critical naturalness, almost always free from symbolism, as different pseudo-scholars of film criticism and psychoanalysis have thought: the mutilations of eyes, *Viridiana's* leg, the insects, the snails, the cows... and the drums of Calanda in *La edad de oro*, *Nazarín* or *Simón del desierto*. The emotion of hundreds of *calandeses* playing the drums between noon on Good Friday and two o'clock of the following afternoon, the time that elapsed between the death and the resurrection of Christ, produced a profane emotion in Buñuel, an echo of his infancy. According to someone who knew him well, when he was away from Spain he always played the drums at the same time as the *calandeses*, surprising his neighbors, because of the time difference, in whatever country he was living.

From where did he get the education, the attempt at a Jesuit education, of which there are complex traces in his cinematographic "scandals"? It is thus that the literary Buñuel, in his writings, screenplays, and films, harmonized his own national episodes, what he saw, enlarging a world which seemed small and unknown until a totally free eye made him see it and he proceeded to show it to us in all its realism.

Buñuel's life, the source of his cultural life, is to be found in his childhood and youth. Nevertheless, today we might say that because of his intellectual daring, his transgressive personality, his uncontrollable and unsubmitive conscience set in permanent rebellion, Buñuel's genius went further than the road he traveled (even though it was the land and peoples of Spain, their culture and the countryside, which gave the first glint of brilliance, the first drum rolls, to the encounter that would last his whole life). He is currently considered a true revolutionary of cinematographic ideas, a filmmaker between Classicism

and the *avant-garde*. In this sense, we could affirm that any movie of Buñuel's, could be considered today, a masterpiece in harmony both with the present time and the future of filmmaking. This is the modernity of the ideas and of the works sprinkled with the genius of the artist who on his first trips to Paris already knew what perspective his future work would take.

Even though it is unthinkable to study Buñuel without knowing his concept of Spain, which clings to the soles of his shoes in his explainable wanderings, it is not simply the past of a creator that shapes him. The keenness of his intellectual vitality, of his own efforts, also plays an important part. As pointed out in Luis Buñuel's letters to Francisco Rabal (Guerrero Ruiz, *Querido sobrino*). Buñuel had Spain at his heels. But we also see in him the fusion of his life in Paris, the knowledge of the artistic and social *avantgarde* movements (that is, the Surrealist movement, to which Buñuel belonged, and the Communist movement), in a Europe in crisis and a Spain in lethargy starting in the 40s, after the Fascist victory in the Spanish "Uncivil" War.

Buñuel was always involved in the *avant-garde*, withdraws when that vanguard forgot Man as a free individual, becoming unsubmitive, carrying in his ideological baggage a special form of Iberian anarchism, a detachment from dogmas, a rejection of the position of the masses led by saviours of ideas or of countries. "Against Franco we were better off" (Guerrero Ruiz, *Querido sobrino* 83), he had read on a wall in Madrid, and thus he ended his days, mistrusting the disideologized movements of transition, between the vanguard of his own ideas, his own religion and the vitality of a critical, alert, *avantgarde* and sceptical spirit.

Spain is always in Buñuel and in his cultural personality, so is the Spanish Civil War, his exile and return to Spain to see his ill mother. Thanks to the good offices of Paco Rabal he was able to obtain a visa. Also present in Buñuel are the memories from Mexico, of time spent with Garfias, Rejano or León Felipe, and his stays in Madrid, at the Torre, and the Viana café, with Barros, Bergamín, Saura, Rabal or Justo Alonso.

Spain at his heels, as Julio Alejandro Buñuel's scriptwriter who died forgotten by, with the Mediterranean at Jávea, would say in his "Testamento oral", a cassette conserved by Francisco Rabal in which Alejandro informs Rabal about aspects of the life and thoughts of Buñuel and his relationship with the actor from Aguilas, Spain in the shaping of his personality, in his dreams, in the dispersed and different gags, in the intimacy of his inhabited celluloid geography, in a new film, in a poetic film, in the new poetry, in the fight for a new form of expression within a complex industry. Admired by Man Ray, Aragón, Bretón, Giacometti, Huston, Hitchcock, Billy Wilder, John Ford; rewarded in Cannes, in Hollywood, in Berlin, a victim of a deafness caused by pis-

tol shots (one of Buñuel's inexplicable hobbies, as was boxing), genius of ellipsis, of documentary films, of transgression, of denouncement; recognized internationally as the best director of Spanish filmmaking-only Spanish? He was not a good patriot because he was not a flag-waving patriot; prodigal son of the Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church, expelled from the United States because he was a Communist and an atheist, according to Dalí. And *Tristana*, his last Spanish movie, which he was able to make because of an old Republican from Lorca, Rafael Méndez, who spoke with Fraga Iribarne so that Buñuel could film in Spain after *Viridiana* was denounced by the Vatican as heresy, a blasphemy against the Catholic Church.

Buñuel's Spain is also the place of his dreams, his experiences and his wild imagination. In his dreams he spoke with his deceased mother and he saw her lost among the shadows, as he would later show in a sequence in *El discreto encanto de la burguesía*. He also had dreams of animals and insects. And Buñuel following the old custom of Spanish children, dressed-up in disguises of monks and nuns, bandits and waiters, priests or Franciscans. The amusing and surprising Buñuel.

Between April and May of 1932 Buñuel filmed *Las Hurdes*, which, given sound in Paris in 1937, was first mutilated and then forbidden by the censors at the height of the Republican period. This tremendously crude movie, considered one of the most important documents of realist film, reveals an isolated region, where its incredibly underdeveloped inhabitants suffer illnesses, the consequences of cretinism, congenital problems and live barefooted in squalid houses. Poverty, hunger, misery... Buñuel was able to film all this thanks to his friend Ramón Acín, who won the lottery and gave him the money, as did some other friends, to make the film. The Spain that Buñuel presents is the real one, the human geography of a truly harsh documentary, the final product as harsh as the two months during which he was filming and living among the people of Las Hurdes. His return to Spain after a long exile in Paris, the United States and Mexico is due to Francisco Rabal, whom he met in 1958 and with whom he had filmed *Nazarín*. Knowing that Buñuel liked Spanish wine and that he collected antique pistols, Rabal took him a bottle of wine and a seventeenth Century pistol. At their first meeting they decided to call each other uncle and nephew. Rabal tells it thus:

"On my fourth day in Mexico, Barbachano takes me to Buñuel's house, a small villa at number 27 on Cerrada de Félix Cuevas Street. There lived the director, who was 58 years old at the time:

How are you, don Luis?

Fine, and you? But don't call me don Luis.

It's just that I respect you a lot...

— Good, good, Paco — Buñuel then laughed. Very Spanish, I like

that respect thing. Look, from now on you will call me uncle (and use usted) and I will call you nephew (and use tú). So, from now on, uncle and nephew.”(Rabal 198-90).

By then Buñuel was already going deaf. Paco Rabal would listen to Buñuel talk to himself each morning in order to see if he could hear himself and thus know how his deafness was progressing. Buñuel was an extraordinarily interesting person. He was contagious and would let you act and improvise; very sharp, affectionate and always joking around, according to Rabal. Later, in 1959, when Rabal was making *Sonatas* with Bardem in Mexico, he often visited Buñuel. There he met Juan Rejano, Pedro Garfias and León Felipe, among other Spanish exiles that were friends of the director. The encounters with the Murcian actor were to talk about Spain.

From 1960 to 1982 Buñuel wrote some 30 letters to Rabal, as well as two telegrams and several notes. They indicate the profound and intimate memory that Buñuel had of Spain, as well as the contempt he felt towards certain Hispanic attitudes and the cultural situation that was nothing else but an extension of the political situation. Here is a transcription of two letters and a note from Buñuel to Rabal in which we can see the steps taken by the actor so that Buñuel could return to Spain.

The first letter reads:

Mont Fleury Hotel

(handwritten on the right hand side of the letter)

I can see my hopes of sitting down to a card game at Doña Salvadora's house drifting away again.¹

Cannes, May 8, 1960

Dear nephew,

Thank you so much for you very effective intervention. The consulate in Paris did in fact notify me that the visa was ready. But the next day I received another telegram saying exactly the opposite because apparently certain "formalities" hadn't been taken care of. They say that they will let me know when everything is in order. I don't know if it will take them a day or a month. What I do know though is that if my visa isn't ready by the 15th then I'm going back to Mexico. At any rate, your activity, interest, seriousness, and INFLUENCE² have sped up the process in

¹ According to Rabal, Buñuel means to say "Doña Julia", in Madrid.

² Ever since the filming of *Nazarín*, Buñuel had told Rabal about his desire to return to Spain. He felt very close to Spain, both physically and culturally. In Cannes he told his actor friend: "If I could enter Spain, it's so close.... I'd go to Zaragoza, to see my mother who is very sick. See if you can arrange." The actor, with the help of his brother Damián and Justo Alonso, spoke with Enrique Llovet, a diplomat with a friend who worked in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and dealt with the exiles who wanted to return to Spain and were required to present an enormous amount of paperwork.

this matter which not even Rodríguez,³ Pepín,⁴ Dominguines⁵ nor anyone else could move along even a centimeter before your help.

I received Ricardo's⁶ telegram, give him a big hug. I hope I will be able to do so myself soon.

Lots of kisses for my niece and my little grandchildren⁷ and the same for you. Your Uncle Luis.

(handwritten addition)

My film⁸ was shown in a gala session yesterday. A great success. (Guerrero Ruiz, Querido sobrino 17)

In the second letter Buñuel says:

*Mont Fleury Hotel
Cannes, May 10, 1960*

Dear Paco,

Most active nephew, helpful and influential,⁹ I can't believe that you exist. Three days ago the Consulate notified me that this time it was serious and I have the visa that will save me from being jailed in Spain. All this thanks to you.

Cesareo,¹⁰ whom I did not know personally, gave me your card yesterday after the showing of "Los golfos" when I went to give those two wonderful boys, Portabella and Saura¹¹ a hug.

Juan Luis¹² talked to you on the telephone today because I cannot hear anything.

Along these lines Rabal comments: "Thanks to Llovet's friend, who turned out to be a great admirer of his [Buñuel], and the Spanish Consul in Paris, who was a friend of his, Buñuel did not have to wait for months and months as I was afraid he would." (Rabal, 197). So, the process for Buñuel's return to Spain was expedited. He heard the news while in Cannes presenting *La joven* (a story about racism and eroticism). In Cannes, Buñuel met Carlos Saura who was showing *Los golfos*, a film Buñuel liked.

³ Eduardo Rodríguez. According to Rabal, he was a friend of Buñuel's and tried to help him return to Spain.

⁴ Pepín Bello.

⁵ The Dominguín brothers: Domingo, Pepe and Luis Miguel.

⁶ Ricardo Muñoz Suay. He had invited Buñuel, as a member of Uninci, to film in Spain. The director refused the offer, on that occasion, for political reasons.

⁷ Here he refers to Paco's wife, María Asunción Balaguer, and their children, Teresa and Benito.

⁸ Buñuel refers to *La joven*, which was shown at the Cannes Film Festival.

⁹ The underlining here is copied from the original.

¹⁰ Cesareo González, the producer.

¹¹ Buñuel met Pere Portabella and Carlos Saura at the Cannes Film Festival.

¹² His son, Juan Luis Buñuel (1934). He worked as assistant director in *Diario de una camarera*, *Ese oscuro objeto del deseo*, *La joven*, and *Viridiana*.

I leave on the 15th for Paris.¹³ I'll pick up my visa on the 16th and leave on the 17th for that unknown land, —sadly, it is not the land I knew— called Spain.¹⁴ I'll go to Barcelona to see my sister, then I will spend seven or eight days in Zaragoza¹⁵ and then you will see me in Madrid around the 1st of June.¹⁶ I will let you know the exact details of my arrival.

I would like to see the great sentimental-cynic Ricardo¹⁷ in Paris, I will be in that city on Monday the 16th. Send me a telegraph to CIMURA¹⁸ letting me know where he is staying so that they can give me the address.

Many, many hugs from Luis B.) (Guerrero Ruiz, Querido sobrino 29).

Once in Spain, Buñuel comments the following in a note to Rabal:

¹³ According to Rabal, Buñuel journeyed to Spain directly from Cannes (Rabal, 198).

¹⁴ It was not the Spain that he had known. Luis Buñuel served the Republic in the Civil War. According to his friend, José Luis Barros, Buñuel's great adoration for Spain sometimes caused him to lose objectivity when he talked about some of the unforgettable things of this country, such as the people. However, Buñuel did not feel Spain in a patriotic sense, which is also the case with Rabal. For Buñuel, love of God and country brought repression and blood. According to Carlos Fuentes (*ABC.es*, "Centenario de Buñuel", Carlos Fuentes, March 5, 2000) "patriotism, chauvinism, political ideologies are counted among the things which Buñuel did not tolerate. On the other hand, he used to clarify his anarchist imperatives. For Buñuel, anarchism was a wonderful but unworkable idea. Its only throne was thought. As an idea, blowing up the Louvre Museum was a splendid one. As a practice, it was atrocious. The wise Buñuel distinguished the freedom of the imagination from the restrictions of reality" (2).

¹⁵ His mother (María Portolés), two brothers and three sisters lived in Zaragoza.

¹⁶ About his return to Spain, Carlos Saura says: The country had been profoundly modified after a terrible civil war and a no less terrible post-war period. I lived through his persistent search for his past through the streets of Madrid and Toledo, and saw how reminiscence appeared constantly. At the same time I was a witness to his sadness upon seeing how so many things had disappeared or had changed. In the sixties we still suffered the severity of Francoism, sometimes with extreme virulence. Returning to Spain was an act of bravery and a challenge. From Mexico the criticism intensified: he was called a traitor, he was harshly attacked in Republican circles. Those of us who knew him here know about his doubts and hesitations, his deafness and his emphysema, which worried him so much. On more than one occasion he was about to catch a plane and return to Mexico (...) But soon he would brighten up, especially when he could hear better, because his deafness was temperamental. He liked to eat and drink with his friends and his conversation was pleasant and entertaining. He was an old-fashioned conversationalist, a "tertulian". He commented on the divine and the human, always with his Aragonese slyness and that surrealism that has been mentioned so often, but which, in my opinion, was nothing else than a constant of his personality with anarchist outbreaks and a youthful and provocative aggressiveness that was present in his films and in his daily life as well, a resource inseparable from his personality. His quick remarks had a special wit. He enjoyed breaking the established order, the accepted norms, the commitment acquired by the contrivance of laws, but at the same time he adopted an ethical posture against hypocrisy and conformity" ("*Surrealismo ibérico y mordaz*", in "*El Espectador*", February 20, 2000, supplement of *El País*)(11).

¹⁷ Ricardo Muñoz Suay.

¹⁸ According to Rabal this was the agency that represented Buñuel in Paris.

Zaragoza, May 24, 1960¹⁹

Dear nephew Paco,

I will call you at your house next Sunday, the 29th, at 11 am and if you are up we'll get something to eat together.²⁰

Big hugs. Buñuel.) (Guerrero Ruiz, *Querido sobrino* 31)

Later on, the relationship between Buñuel and Spain, whether in letters or in visits he made, would always be filtered through his adopted nephew, the actor Paco Rabal. Rabal, along with his family and some friends, including José Luis Barros, Carlos Saura, José Bergamín, Pittaluga, Luis Miguel Dominguín, Fernando Rey and Damián Rabal (the actor's brother), knew everything that was going on. Francisco Rabal kept him informed about all the important events.

¹⁹ Handwritten note. Buñuel arrived in Port-Bou on the 17th. His sister Conchita was waiting for him there "in order to warn him of any incident or possible arrest. But nothing happened." (Buñuel, 273). Buñuel spent eight days in Barcelona with his sisters Conchita and Margarita. Then he wrote to Paco Rabal on the 24th from Zaragoza where he was with his mother. He indicated that he would arrive in Madrid on the 29th. Buñuel's mother trusted her son greatly and had assisted him economically during 1947 and 1948 when he was without work in Mexico. She also loaned him money to make his first movie, *Un perro andaluz*. She now had Alzheimer's disease and Buñuel told Paco that she had not recognized him but instead had said very politely:

"-Please come in sir and have a seat. Oh good, well, anyway, here we are. How are you?"

Every now and then he would say:

-Mother!

And then she would look at him with tenderness in her eyes, take his hand and say:

-My son...

But then she would change the topic and would forget again..." (198). At the beginning of *Mi último suspiro* Buñuel discusses the importance of memory loss, its different levels and the situation it produces. Buñuel's biography *Memoria* commences with these words: "During the last ten years of her life my mother lost her memory little by little. Sometimes when I would go to see her in Zaragoza, where she lived with my siblings, we would give her a magazine which she would look at carefully from cover to cover. Then we would take it away from her and give her another one that was actually the same one. She would look at it with as much interest as the first. She reached a point where she did not even recognize her children. She did not know who we were or who she was. I would go in, give her a kiss and sit with her for a bit. Physically my mother was very fit, quite agile for her age. Then I would leave the room and come in again. She welcomed me with the same smile and invited me to sit down as if she were meeting me for the first time and did not even know what my name was." (9)

²⁰ Even though Buñuel was staying at the Torre de Madrid, he went to Paco Rabal's for lunch. "He came in teary eyed, full of emotion. According to Rabal, Buñuel said:

-What good people there are in Spain, Paco. You can't imagine how good the taxi driver who brought me here is, how honourable... The only thing I don't understand are the horrible Spanish colds: *uff, uff, jum, jum*, they cough like this and spit in the streets. I don't like that at all. But for everything else, they are very good people." (Rabal, 198).

After his movie *Viridiana*, which Bollero called “that necessary and inflammatory blasphemy” (Guerrero Ruiz, *Francisco Rabal*, 74); Buñuel had problems filming *Tristana*, problems that were later resolved. *Viridiana* had created a tremendous stir in the Franco era. Produced by UNINCI and UNIESPAÑA, it made it past the first censors, only to have the Franco regime repudiate it as a Spanish film and fire the General Director of Cinematography, José María Muñoz Fontán, after he received the Cannes Palme d’Or in 1961 for this film. This happened because the voice of the Catholic Church, *L’Observatore Romano*, had, the day after the projection of the film and its receipt of the prize, published an editorial in which it called the movie “blasphemous” and said that it was inconceivable that Spain had participated in its presentation.

On March 18, 1963 Buñuel wrote to Paco Rabal from Mexico: “Indeed, I am going to make TRISTANA. It is quite an adventure. I have spent months selecting this subject (...) In this case my objective has been to make a movie that is perfectly reactionary in its form. My intention is to make it so that even a court of bishops will find nothing to cut. What’s more, I would like one of the prelates to say: ‘stop the projection, we’re reactionary enough for everyone’” (Guerrero Ruiz, *Querido sobrino*, 47). In this ironic fashion Buñuel tried, once more, to outwit the Franco censors, but the prohibition against filming *Tristana* was not lifted until 1969.

To explain the life and works of Buñuel, in relation to Spain and during the 60s until the death of the director from Teruel, we need to turn to his correspondence with Rabal. This correspondence is important to understand his cultural interest in Spain and its myths. In a letter that he wrote to Rabal from Mexico on July 29, 1967, Buñuel expresses his opinion about the different versions of *Don Juan*:

I have been rereading all the theatrical Don Juans that have been written, starting with the first one: Tirso (horrible), Moliere (some lines are acceptable), Goldoni (mediocre), Dumas (well, that version’s the father of Zorrilla’s, it premiered six years before Don José’s), Rostand (foul), Pushkin (inoffensive). Don’t you think that from a cultural perspective it would be good for the T.N.P. to put on Dumas’s Tenorio before Zorrilla’s, to show how one author is inspired by another and manages to surpass him, as is the case of Zorrilla’s Don Juan and Dumas’s? (Guerrero Ruiz, *Querido sobrino*, 66).

In his letters to Rabal Buñuel goes on to tell him what his projects are and asks that Rabal inform him about happenings in Spain. He wants to make a movie with him in France, asks if they cut out the laughing Christ in the premiere of *Nazarín* and wants to know what Rabal thinks of the situation in Spain.

On October 23, 1979, he writes from Mexico and asks Rabal: “When will we see each other? For the first time in many years I am not going

to Europe this fall and winter, much less to Spain. The political situation disgusts me. Right now my only political party is the one whose slogan is: 'Against Franco we were better off'" (Guerrero Ruiz, *Querido sobrino*, 83). Many years have passed and Buñuel, not only in these moments in which he writes but also until the end of his days, is very far from all understanding of partisan wishful thinking. He repeats these ideas in 1982, in *Mi último suspiro*: "I don't like politics. In that aspect I have been free of any false hopes for the past forty years. I no longer believe in politics. Two or three years ago I noticed this slogan carried by Leftist demonstrators through the streets of Madrid: 'Against Franco we were better off'" (Buñuel, 271).

Luis Buñuel returned to Calanda on Holy Thursday of 1980. He went to the town square, looked for his friend Tomás Gascón and said to him: "Tomás, I am pretty much finished ... I'm worn out. This will most likely be the last year I come to Calanda, I don't think I'll last much longer." Luis Buñuel picked up his drum and played with the drummers of his land. He would never again return to Spain. Buñuel's Spain was like the landscape of his personal geography, like the harsh obstinacy of the drums of Calanda, which one day, on the 29th of July, would be silenced in Mexico.

Works Cited:

- Buñuel Luis, *Mi último suspiro*, Barcelona: Plaza & Janés, 1958.
- Fuentes Carlos, "Centenario de Buñuel" ABC es. March 5, 2000.
- García Buñuel Pedro Christian, *Recordando a Luis Buñuel*, Zaragoza: Ayuntamiento de Zaragoza, 1985.
- Guerrero Ruiz Pedro, *Francisco Rabal*, Murcia: Editora Regional de Murcia, 1992.
- . (ed.), *Querido sobrino*, Valencia, Pre-textos, 2001.
- Rabal Francisco, *Si yo te contara. (Memorias recogidas y ordenadas por Agustín Cerezales)*, Madrid: El País-Aguilar, 1994.
- Saura Carlos, "Surrealismo ibérico y mordaz" in "El Espectador" (Supplement of *El País*) February 20, 2000.

Universidad de Murcia
Nazareth College of Rochester