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"A FEROCIOUS SATIRE... A 'MUST SEE' TOP GRADE PICTURE!"

—David Goldman, *WCBS*



LUIS BUNUEL'S

NAZARIN



starring **francisco rabal • rita macedo • marga lopez**

directed by **luis bunuel** • photography by **gabriel figueroa**

produced by **manuel barbachano ponce**

T H E A T R E

mat 401



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Distributed by ALTURA FILMS INTERNATIONAL
225 East 46th Street, New York, N. Y. 10017
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Comments by

Luis Buñuel

In none of the traditional arts is there such a wide gap between possibilities and facts as in the cinema. Motion pictures act directly upon the spectator; they offer him concrete persons and things; they isolate him, through silence and darkness, from his usual psychic atmosphere. Because of all this, the cinema is capable of stirring the spectator as perhaps no other art. But as no other art, it is also capable of stupefying him. Unfortu-

nately, the great majority of today's films seem to have exactly that purpose; they glory in an intellectual and moral vacuum. In this vacuum, movies seem to prosper.

Mystery is a basic element of all works of art. It is generally lacking in the screen. Writers, directors and producers take good care in avoiding anything that may upset us. They keep the marvelous window on the liberating world of poetry shut. They prefer stories which seem to continue our ordinary lives, which repeat for the umpteenth time the same drama, which help us forget the hard hours of our daily work. And all this, of course, carefully watched over by traditional authorities, morals, religion, good taste, white humor and other flat diction of reality.

The screen is a dangerous and wonderful instrument, if a free spirit uses it. It is the superior way of expressing the world of dreams, emotions and instinct. The cinema seems to have been invented for the expression of the subconscious, so profoundly rooted in poetry. Nevertheless, it almost never pursues these ends.

We rarely see good cinema in the mammoth productions, or in the works that have received the praise of critics and audience. The particular story, the private drama of an individual, cannot interest - I believe - anyone worthy of living in our time. If a man in the audience shares the joys and sorrows of a character on the screen, it is because that character reflects the joys and sorrows of all society and so the personal feelings of that man in the audience. Unemployment, insecurity, the fear of war, social injustice, etc., affect all men of our time, and thus, they also affect the individual spectator. But when the screen tells me that Mr. X, is not happy at home and finds amusement with a girlfriend whom he finally abandons to reunite himself with his faithful wife, I find it all very moral and edifying, but it leaves me completely indifferent.

Octavio Paz has said: "But that a man in chains should shut his eyes, the world would explode". And I could add: But that the white eye-lid of the screen reflect its proper light, the Universe would go up in flames. But for the moment we can sleep in peace: the light of the cinema is conveniently phlegmatic and shackled.

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Luis Bunuel's award winner
"The Exterminating Angel"

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"Viridiana"

SOON - Miklos Jancso's Hungarian masterpiece
"The Round-Up"

Andrzej Munk's "The Passenger"

Luis Bunuel's "Simon of the Desert"

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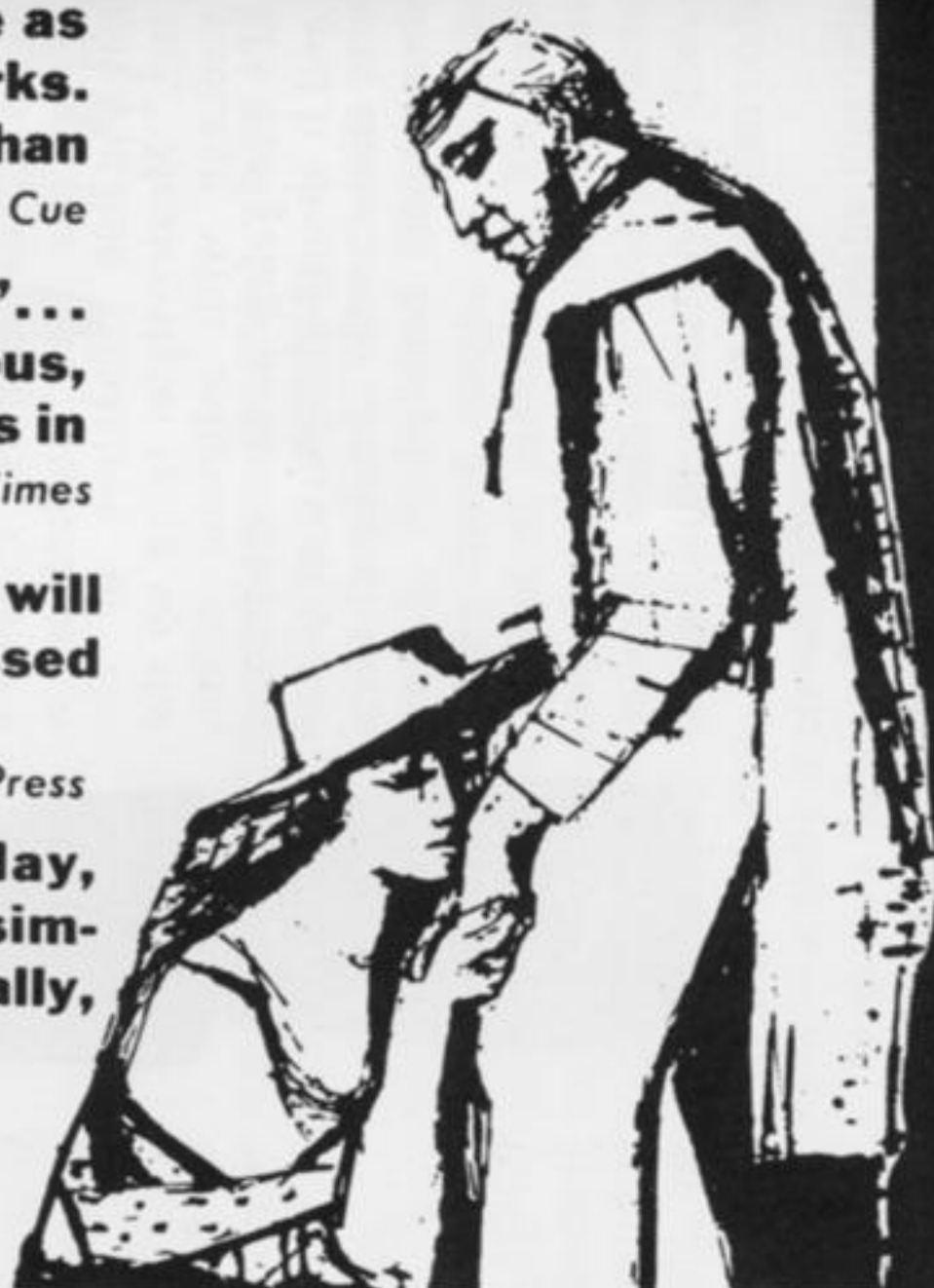
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LUIS BUNUEL'S
NAZARIN

...an observation.



Perhaps all the arts have an ultimate and general purpose: the expression and re-creation of man and his conflicts. Nevertheless, each artistic form has its own language, media and particular ways of enchantment; through them, each art creates its own domain. Music is not identical to poetry, or poetry to the cinema. In each case, the pleasure, thrill or revelation they communicate is different. But sometimes an artist surpasses the limits of his art and offers us a work which has its equivalents in a freer and ampler sphere. Bunuel's pictures, without losing their cinematic quality, carry us to other provinces of the spirit as in certain drawings by Goya, a poem by Quevedo or Peret, a chapter by the Marquis de Sade, a short play by Valle Inclan, an episode by Cervantes... Bunuel's films may be seen, and judged, as cinema, but also as works pertaining to the broader and more permanent universe of those masterpieces which both reveal the human condition and show us a way to surpass it. In spite of the obstacles our world opposes to such undertakings, Bunuel's film unfolds under the double arch of beauty and rebellion.

In NAZARIN, using a style which flees from any kind of complaisance or suspicious "lyricism", Bunuel tells the tale of a quixotic priest, whose idea of Christianity soon opposes him to the Church, society and authority.

Nazarin belongs to the great tradition of the Spanish Fool, inaugurated by Cervantes. His folly consists of taking the great ideas and the great words seriously and trying to live according to them. Don Quixote saw Dulcinea in a peasant woman. Nazarin, beyond the monstrous features of Andara and Ujo, sees the helpless image of the "fallen men" - behind the sexual delirium of Beatriz, he finds the echo of divine love.

The picture abounds in scenes of the best and most terrible Bunuel: his fury, more concentrated, is that much more explosive. Scene after scene, we are taken through the "cure" - that is, the torture - of the fool. All those he approaches reject him. The powerful and satisfied because they consider him a dangerous and anti-social individual. The victims and the persecuted, because they need another, more effective, kind of consolation. Even the feelings of the women who follow him - a blend of Sancho Panza and Mary Magdalene, are mixed. In prison, among thieves and murderers, comes the final revelation: both the "good" of Nazarin and the "evil" of the church-thief are useless in a world where "efficiency" is the supreme value. Faithful to the tradition of the Spanish madman, Bunuel tells us the story of a disenchantment. In Don Quixote, the illusion was the spirit of chivalry. In Nazarin, it is Christianity. But there is something else. As Nazarin's pilgrimage takes him through hills and hamlets, the image of Christ pales in his conscience, and the image of man begins to illuminate it. Here, Bunuel gradually takes us, in a series of exemplary episodes, through a double process: the illusion of divinity fades out, the reality of man is discovered. The supernatural gives way to something marvelous - human nature and its powers. This revelation embodies in two unforgettable scenes: when Nazarin offers the "comfort of the other world" to the dying lover, and she answers, fixed to the image of her love, with these truly perturbing words: "Not heaven, Juan"; and at the end, when Nazarin refuses alms and, after a moment of doubt, accepts it not as charity but as a sign of friendship. Nazarin, the lonely one, is no longer alone: he has lost God, but he has found love and fraternity.

Octavio Paz

NBC If you are one who chooses to beguile your time intellectually, a Luis Bunuel movie that was made some years ago is the thing for you to see. It's called "Nazarin". Nazarin is a good man. He is a priest who has been defrocked and sets out as a pilgrim in order to find exactly where moral values lie and he finds in this world of ours, although the story itself is set in Mexico in 1900, that good deeds and spiritual values are not rewarded. It is perhaps a cynical story as he goes on his pilgrimage followed by two women, one of them is a Magdalene, the other is a girl fleeing from fleshly allures and he finds ultimately however that cynicism is not quite the answer, that human values do get their rewards. This is a movie that really glows in retrospect. You seem to be looking at one Goya print after another with the remarkable faces that are presented to you in scene after scene. It is one that you will find afterwards stays with you - a stunning parallel, parable and I recommend "Nazarin" to you.

- Judith Crist, The Today Show WNBC



LUIS BUÑUEL'S NAZARIN

Mexico, 1900. The dictator Porfirio Diaz reigns, supported by a land-owning class, a military clique and a conservative clergy. The slum-house of senora Chanfa (Ofelia Guilmain) is a court of miracles: craftsmen, beggars, whores, muleteers, thieves. The humble priest Nazarin (Francisco Rabal) lives there. His mainstay is alms; he asks nothing of his fellow-men, but is mocked by them. Nazarin, in his daily life, only obeys the lesson of Christ: compassion love and forgiveness.

In the same slum-house, the destinies of two women are being woven. Beatriz (Marga Lopez), a victim of hysteria and a sense of guilt, has been abandoned by "Pinto" (Noe Murayama), the man she at once desires and rejects. Andara (Rita Macedo), a whore whose primitive kindness is lost under the flashy colors of her trade. She kills another woman in a brawl and hides, wounded, in Nazarin's shabby room - here, three lives are linked by the wheels of fate. Andara running away from the police - Beatriz from herself. Both decide to follow Nazarin who has been deprived of his clerical garb for protecting Andara. Like Don Quixote, the errant knight takes to the fields, believing that only in pilgrimage, among the nameless poor, can he fulfill his ideal for the good... and undo the wrongs of others.

What does he find on the way? In a rail junction, workmen who repel him because he works for food instead of a salary. In a village, the religious hysteria of ignorant women who believe Nazarin is capable of miracles. In a town struck by Cholera, two lovers who, in the throes of death, grasp at their sexual passion and refuse religious comfort. In another hamlet, a humiliated dwarf in whom love and humanity are but the caricature of the divine likeness. And in all his travels, he finds an unjust society which will not be moved by the example of pure Christianity. Such are Nazarin's windmills. His words are of pity for the sinner, wrath for the pharisee and brotherhood for the humble.

The pursuing guards catch up with the fugitive whore and the priest who protected her. In prison, Nazarin, is jeered and struck by a parricide (Ignacio Lopez Tarso). The images of failure cloud the priest's eyes when the church-thief says: "What's your life worth? You on the good path, I on the bad path... We're both useless". Nazarin shall know that neither his words nor his example will change the world. All has been useless.

Nazarin walks in shackles, wounded and spat upon. Doubt becomes stronger than faith. Men laugh at the good and ridiculous man: but in Nazarin's spirit their jeers resound like the drums for an execution. He doubts... He doubts everything - his faith, man, even God. But when a poor old woman on the wayside gives him some fruit out of her simple basic goodness, his eyes brighten and 'there is perhaps the beginning of' renewed faith, at least, in humanity.



LUIS BUÑUEL'S NAZARIN

Nazarin: FRANCISCO RABAL
Andara: RITA MACEDO
Beatriz: MARGA LOPEZ
The Church-Thief: IGNACIO LOPEZ TARSO
Chanfa: OFELIA GUILMAIN
The Parricide: LUIS ACEDES CASTANEDA
El Pinto: NOE MURAYAMA
La Prieta: ROSENDA MONTEROS
The Dwarf Ujo: JESUS FERNANDEZ

and Ada Carrasco, Antonio Bravo, Aurora Molina, David Reynoso

Photography.....GABRIEL FIGUEROA
Screenplay by.....BUNUEL and JULIO ALEJANDRO

from the novel by BENITO PEREZ GALDOS
dialogue supervisor EMILIO CARBALLIDO
assistant director IGNACIO VILLAREAL
lighting DANIEL OPEZ
sound supervisor JAMES L. FIELDS
administrator ANTONIO SALAZAR
costumes GEORGETTE SOMOHANO
studios CHURUBUSCO AZTECA
translation SARITA BRODEN

executive producer FEDERICO AMERIGO
production advisor CARLOS VELO
sets EDWARD FITZGERALD
cameraman IGNACIO ROMERO
sound effects ABRAHAM CRUZ
still photography MANUEL BRAVO
sound RCA high fidelity
film unit AGUILA
titles VENCE PEREIRA

barrel organ music " GOD NEVER DIES" by MACEDONIO ALCALA
" RHYTHM OF HOLY WEEK IN CALANDA"
Performed by The Drum Section Of The Philharmonic

Directed by Luis Bunuel
Produced by Manuel Barbachano Ponce

(running time - 92 minutes)

distributed by
ALTURA FILMS INTERNATIONAL, Inc.
225 East 46th Street - New York, N.Y. 10017
Plaza 3-5443

CBS The film NAZARIN is by Luis Bunuel and it was made nine years ago. Now that audiences are apparently ready to go see his work, we are finally getting to see the kind of film for which he is famous. The story of this one is not new, dealing as it does with the Spanish educated priest who lives among the poor in Mexico and who is really living according to Christ's principles. As you might guess, this kind of living does not fit in and he is called everything from a heretic to a trafficker of prostitutes. He is finally abused to the point where his faith, in his faith, is called into doubt. It is director Bunuel's powerful visualizations of the wretchedness of basic human behavior that lends much to the film. Image follows image as the Godly man and the two women who believe in him travel from town to town and the cumulative effort is absorbing and finally moving. Bunuel has made so many films satirizing the Catholic church that at times we think we have seen the movies before - but there is no denying that its atmosphere and execution mark it as a top grade picture. In summary: NAZARIN is a ferocious satire of the world's and church's treatment of a truly Christian priest - and it is a 'must see' movie.

- David Goldman, WCBS



THE CURRENT CINEMA

The Joker at the Last Ditch

W E do not live in the best of all possible worlds," Luis Buñuel said, once, nine or ten years ago, in Mexico. In the setting, it needed saying even less than it would now in America, but he was thinking about films, which overwhelmingly stick up for Pollyanna. We were sitting in a flyblown café, lunching on bowls of thin soup based on a meat bone that looked like elbow. There were stunted children in the street, and cripples, and underfed animals. The only riches were in the Church, of course. ("I do not believe, thank God," Buñuel once said, elsewhere, in a famous sad aphorism.) All of it—the talk, the melancholy, the street scene, the humor and endurance of a man whose company is sometimes like Timon's—are very much the substance of "Nazarin." It is one of the great films of his career, made ten years ago and running now in New York for the first time.

Nazarin is a poor priest, played by Francisco Rabal (of "Belle de Jour"). The time is 1900; the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz grips a Mexico that seems beyond change, immobilized by a landowning oligarchy, a military power-élite, and a venal clergy intent on keeping alive the Middle Ages. Nazarin lives in a slum house of workers, beggars, whores, and thieves. It looks like one of Goya's etchings from the "Disasters of War" series. The priest is defrocked for helping a whore. On the road, his surviving feeling for virtue is slowly put down. Wretched believers wait for miracles when, as he says, science could do more. He dutifully tells a dying woman that joy awaits her with God, and then watches her face lighten as she insists, "Not God—Juan," who is her lover. More and more, his life strikes him as fraudulent. He sits in mud with a thief and there is nothing to choose between them, as the thief coolly points out. At the end of the film, when Nazarin is in irons for a petty crime, a woman offers him a pineapple, but skepticism seems so much more commendable than belief that he finds no reason to accept the charity. He takes it, though, eventually, as if it made any difference, and walks on. A car runs up the road in the opposite direction.

Of all Buñuel's films, including the more raucously conceived and more startling "Viridiana," "Nazarin" se-

cretes the most cherished feeling for a character brutally cheated. The film's attitude made me remember something else that Buñuel once said, of what he would like to do in his work: "To show with a cold white eye what they have done here on earth in the name of God." The narrative line of the picture is often a near-caricature of the Gospel. The closer it gets to blasphemous parody—as in the famous "Viridiana" gorging spree that mimics Leonardo's "Last Supper"—the more serious Buñuel is being. He is a man of ingrained austerity, and it wins him rights of license and heresy that speak with curious power to his fellow-atheists. The humor of the film is entirely characteristic. It is the humor of people at the last ditch. "If you want to hang yourself," says one tart to another, "pick a stronger beam." A suicide attempt has failed because the wood was rotten. Doubtless the roof dates back to the Dark Ages and no landlord has ever picked out the termites.

Buñuel is deaf. When he directs actors, he lip-reads and listens on amplifying earphones. He caught what I said, he told me, because we were alone. The sound of three or four people together becomes meaningless and turns into cacophony. When I said that one didn't have to be deaf to have this experience, his boxer's face cracked up in a huge guffaw. It seems strange to me that Buñuel's films should have been called surreal for so long, and roped off as if their images of affliction and grotesquery were some freakish exhibit of aesthetics. His responses are more and more sure, and one grows to see them as more and more authentically provoked. "I would like to go on making films that are entertaining—yes, with energy—but that convey the absolute certainty of that idea: that we have not made the best of all possible worlds," he said. "Cinema is such a long way behind. How are audiences to get any better, and thus producers, when films keep telling us that our social relationships and our ideas about patriotism and religion and love and so on are, if not ideal, essential to keep things going?" He spoke admiringly of John Huston's "Treasure of Sierra Madre" and Stanley Kubrick's "Paths of Glory." And then he talked about commercial comedy, and looked angry.

—PENLOPE GILLIATT

JUNE 22, 1968

FILMS

"NAZARIN"

JULY 6, 1968

FOUNDED 1946

Guardian independent radical newsweekly

It seems to have become somewhat *pouche* in recent years to attack religion. What with monks and rabbis who, despite the noblest of motivations, has enlisted himself in the wrong cause at the wrong time. Just as social reality left Quixote's code of chivalry as merely a lighted memory on the path of history, so does the reality of the 20th century make the Christian code of Nazarin a sadly irrelevant anachronism.

With two Sancho Panzas to accompany him instead of one, Nazarin encounters the reality of the lives of the poor. In a railroad yard he accepts a job and works for food rather than a salary, until his fellow workers drive him off because he is, in effect, a scab whose actions will aid to their exploitation. In a village where Nazarin attempts to get a dying woman to seek absolution, she rejects heaven for the reality of a more tangible, earthly passion. And so it goes. Abstract principles of goodness are a drag in a world of hunger and poverty and loneliness.

The education of Nazarin is completed when, in jail, he is confronted by a cell-mate, a church-thief, who says: "What's your life worth? You on the good path, I on the bad path... We're both useless." Finally his faith is destroyed—the first step on the path to his self-liberation as a man. In a fleeting symbolic scene at the end, Buñuel tries to tell us that a new faith will replace the old—a faith in man, a faith in natural life, a faith in the independent human capacity.

Filmed in glorious black and white, "Nazarin" is a touching and somber experience. The acting, the photography, the direction are all what we have come to expect from a Buñuel film—mature, thoughtful, imaginative.

Still, the theme outdistances the accomplishment. "Nazarin" is, after all, a small film. It does not have the bitterly magnificent proportions of Don Quixote—either as novel or in the fantastic Soviet film of a few years back. And as a social document it tells the truth—but not the whole truth. For nowhere in Buñuel's film is there the faintest suggestion of the Mexican Revolution which was only a decade away.

And yet, the main artistic need of our times—the dispelling of illusions—is fulfilled. We don't want that old-time religion. It may have served its purpose once, but it isn't good enough for us. Now only truth will do.

Irwin Silber



THE CRITICS ... BUT AGREE ON BUNUEL'S GENIUS... BUT DISAGREE ON BUNUEL'S INTENTIONS

"NAZARIN is one of the greatest films in the history of the cinema... Luis Buñuel continues to be the most outrageous man in the movies."

—Alain Saunders, L'Express

"Every picture by Buñuel contains a charge of dynamite... the photographic style of the picture has the purity and power of an engraving... thanks to the talent of Gabriel Figueroa."

—Le Monde, Paris

"Buñuel's NAZARIN is a masterpiece which shall endure in cinema history... one of the most beautiful and moving films I have seen."

—John Huston

"Without technicolor, without cinemascope, shot on interiors and in dusty streets, this picture possesses an inestimable richness: its soul."

—Jacqueline Michel, Le Parisien

"Buñuel is one of the most audacious, single minded and creative directors in the history of the cinema."

—Robert F. Hawkins, N.Y. Times

LUIS BUNUEL'S

NAZARIN

classic AND featurette THE ANDALUSIAN DOG By Buñuel and Salvador Dalí

"They call Buñuel everything. Traitor, anarchist, pervert, defamer, iconoclast, but lunatic they do not call him. It is true, it is lunacy that he portrays, but it is not his lunacy. This stinking chaos which for a brief hour or so amalgamates under his wand, this is a lunacy of civilization... The record of man's achievement after 10,000 years of refinement. Buñuel is a first man who has taken the medium of the screen and used it to the fullest. He shows what hitherto has been denied us. They should take Buñuel and crucify him or at least burn him at the stake. He deserves the greatest reward that man can bestow upon man."

—Henry Miller

CATHOLIC FILM NEWSLETTER

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BEST OF THE NEW FILMS

It is also a long way from *Heli* to *Nazarin*, but the latter ten-year-old Luis Buñuel, is being re-released at a time when it could capture the attention and understanding of the adult movie goer as it never did before, though it had won a Grand Prix at the Cannes Festival. In any case, it is a must for any serious cineast.

Nazarin is a young priest who comes into disfavor (in 1903) with his inflexible superiors, with civil government and even with the poor when he tries to live a life of simplicity, poverty and charity among them. As the title suggests, Buñuel has made close allegorical reference to the life of Jesus of Nazareth through the priest's experiences, which include literally being seized by soldiers in a garden. Though Buñuel has a long record as a severe critic of Christianity and the Church, the irony of the picture is that it is by the intended, as many have claimed, to show that Christianity is "impossible," what he has actually succeeded in conveying is more nearly the opposite: it is and ought to be a religion of pompousness into which he saw Christian teaching to have fallen.

The film exhibits some signs of the bitterness that was to become exaggerated in Buñuel's later extremist attempts to make the points he believed, because of the lack of public response, that he had failed to make with *Nazarin*. Yet the film is finally very moving because it is undeniably lit with a deep religiosity in the best sense, and its mode of thought is recognizably "today." Those who have interpreted its conclusion, in which a despairing Nazarin accepts a small deed of mercy on the part of a humble peasant woman, to mean that the priest is renewed because he has forsaken Christianity and lost God, are in truth mistaken.

"With this work the anti-Christ Buñuel comes close to deserving a prize from the Catholic Film Office."

—Le Parisien, Paris

BUT

"It is a fiercely anti-Catholic film. Its theme is the failure of Catholic charity."

—L'Express, Paris

YET

"NAZARIN is more anti-clerical than anti-Christian."

—Le Monde, Paris

STILL

"It is a blasphemous picture which decries fraud. In 'Nazarin' religion appears as the enemy and plague of humanity."

—L'Humanité, Paris

BUT

"NAZARIN is the closest film to the Evangelical message ever produced... anti-clerical conclusions can only be drawn by present day pharisees."

—La Croix, Paris



—WILLIAM WOLF

commonweal

THE SCREEN

Right from the beginning about 40 years ago (with "Un Chien Andalou" and "L'Age d'Or") the appearance of a Luis Buñuel movie started arguments among critics and general moviegoers about interpretations and whether the film maker was a genius or a self-indulgent iconoclast. And anyone who read the reviews of Buñuel's film, "Belle de Jour," released here earlier this year, realizes that the arguments are still going on. No doubt Buñuel knows what he is doing: he wants to mystify and startle viewers. And in his cinema that is a mixture of poetry and realism with emphasis on the subconscious, he does. Whether or not you agree with his opinions and conclusions, including those directed against the Catholic Church, his compelling films make you think—and that's more than can be said about most movies these days. So if you want to be shaken out of your lethargy and take another stab at thinking (the kind of a stab inspired by "Viridiana" and "The Exterminating Angel"), go to "Nazarin," the Spanish-speaking picture (with English subtitles) made by Buñuel ten years ago in Mexico, which has at long last arrived on our screens.

"Nazarin" will no doubt stir up the rows about Buñuel's meanings and genius once more. Is it the director's intentions, in telling the story of the sufferings of a holy and humble priest, to show that even if Christ were to return to the earth today and follow his own teachings he would not be accepted by society or the Church? Or is Buñuel saying that we have wandered so far from true Christianity that we cannot accept the Christ of the Gospels today? In any case, although the screenplay by Buñuel and Julio Alejandro (stemming from a novel by Benito Pérez Calsos) is rather loaded—and not on the side of the angels—"Nazarin" is an extremely moving film; and you keep hoping against hope that this good priest will succeed in his quest to win followers instead of being rejected and misunderstood again and again not only by the authorities and the Church but also by the poor and the lowly who are his main concern.

Nazarin the priest, expertly played by Francisco Rabal, lives in a slum house among beggars, thieves, prostitutes—most of whom mock him for his gentleness and deride him for his simplicity. "He thinks he pisses holy water," says a whore who would accept his charity. It is true that Nazarin is naive, and when out of the kindness of his heart he hides in his room a whore (Rita Macedo) who has killed another whore in a fight, he finds himself in trouble with the police and with the Church. (This is in 1900.) Donning peasant clothes, he runs away to go on a pilgrimage among the poor and working classes. But wherever he goes, his goodness and humility are misunderstood. When he joins a labor gang for food instead of pay, he starts a row with the other laborers who want money for wages. In one village, he insists he cannot perform miracles; the sick should go to doctors. In a plague-ridden town, a dying woman wants her lover not a priest. And later, when Nazarin is joined by the whore he helped and another woman who is fleeing from her brutal, horse-trader lover, the people as well as the police begin to suspect him of carry-on. Why wouldn't they? Didn't some object to Christ's accepting the friendship of Mary Magdalene? The cynical and the mean are very much with us today—as well as the poor.

Gabriel Figueroa's black-and-white photography in "Nazarin" is stunning and has a quality of old prints that makes the fable itself all the more effective. At the end, when the military have captured Nazarin for harboring a murderer, the priest seems beaten and is very much alone as he's being dragged off to jail. When a peddler offers him a pineapple, the dejected man refuses, but then finally accepts her gift. Whether he wants it or not, he takes it to please her and accept her charity. Some viewers see this final scene as a symbol of Nazarin's becoming human, a man. But why not accept it as a sign of the priest's continued faith and belief in assisting one of God's creatures by allowing her charity? Buñuel may insist that he has freed himself from Catholicism. But maybe he protests too much in his movies. Perhaps the Buñuel who once said, "I do not believe, thank God," believes more than he knows. PHILIP T. HARTUNG

THE NATIONAL OBSERVER

Monday, July 1, 1968

The Movie Melange

The 'Nazarin' Plot Is Familiar —But Better

Nazarin (Altura) is a movie of such perfect proportions, such moving simplicity, and such universal relevance that one scarcely knows what to say about it. It is a quietly deftly described story; surely it is the best film, from any source, to open so far this year.

Directed and authored by the great Spaniard Luis Buñuel and shot on location in backwater Mexico, it begins with a frieze that is suddenly infused with life. This is no idle gimmick: It perfectly expresses, it seems to me, the sense of time's mystery merging inextricably with the barren present that is at the heart of this magnificent picture.

The scene is Mexico of 1900, though it could easily be today. The location is called a town, though it is barely more than a couple of rutted roads and a few rude, stucco houses. We are introduced to a pretty young girl trying unsuccessfully to hush herself (she has been used and abandoned by a mustache-trader in livestock); to a homely, waspish, and slightly dotty prostitute; and to an ascetic, quiet priest who seems much too good to be true.

These three figures, so totally unlike, move the core of the picture. The prostitute mocks the priest, but when she is stabbed in a street fight (the film is full of the bawling clamor of the town), he takes her to live with him while her wounds heal. But that is not proper priestly behavior: he loses his house and his post and takes to the road as an ordinary beggar.

It is at this point that the film begins to acquire its tragic, ineluctable momentum. It is a curious kind of momentum, for what ensues is largely episodic. The priest is taunted by a construction gang, then re-encounters the two women in another town and successfully prays for the recovery of the pretty girl's feverish niece. The two women want to "be saintly" and accompany him on his wanderings. "Be saintly on your own," he tells them. But he gives in.

And off through the impoverished countryside they go, their goodness recognized only by an ugly dwarf. They are ignored, laughed at, insulted, finally arrested. The animal trader comes to reclaim his woman; she cannot resist. The prostitute is hauled away as a common prisoner. The priest is marched back to his point of embarkation to face clerical charges. His Christianity—and he is, as he seems, the fountain of that faith—seems unavailing. Until the final 30 seconds of the picture.

"Not again!" I hear you mutter. "Not again with the Christ symbols and the golden-bearded whorl." Yes, again, but told so directly, so unashamedly honestly, with such uncompromising faith and such subtlety of performance (by Francisco Rabal, as the priest, and Rita Macedo and Marga López, as the two women) that it all seems more pertinent, more up to date, than the most mod film around. John Huston calls Nazarin "one of the most beautiful and moving films ever made," and he has made some pretty good ones himself. The Cannes Film Festival jury awarded it a grand prix. Go see it. Go see it. And to be absolutely clear: Go see it.

—CLIFFORD A. HEDLEY

"I don't know who is the greatest motion picture director but the only one is Buñuel!"

—Jean Cocteau

LONG ISLAND PRESS, FRIDAY, JUNE 21, 1968

MOVIE REVIEW by Frances Taylor

'Nazarin' Cinematic Art

The enormous power of "Nazarin," a new Buñuel film, will leave you limp. Staggeringly beautiful, even in the most violent and heart-wrenching moments, this straightforward story of a Mexican priest demonstrates the fate of those who try to live strictly according to Christ's teachings.

"Nazarin," which opened yesterday at the Carnegie Hall Cinema, is set in 1900 in Mexico where Father Nazarin, shunning the ease and comfort of a priest's position, lives in a slum among prostitutes, criminals and the poorest citizens. French critics have termed the film anti-Catholic and anti-clerical, but these are not the dominant qualities of "Nazarin." Rather, the experience of the young priest leads to a new and realistic faith in the goodness of human beings despite their cruelty and their weakness.

The film does expose the position of the hierarchy as a supporter of corrupt, despotic government in Mexico at that

NEW YORK POST, JUNE 21, 1968

'Nazarin' Opens at Carnegie

By ARCHER WINSTEN

Buñuel's "Nazarine," at the Carnegie Hall Cinema some-what tardily, a decade after filming in Mexico, is not one of the master's more mysteriously complex works. Therefore, since it was all too clear that he was again giving, resigned religion its lumps, and the back of his hand to people.

The story is quite simple. A Mexican priest, Nazarine, (Francisco Rabal), has gone his own way, forgoing dignity, power and riches of the church, living in

'Nazarin'

An Altura Film International Production. Directed by Luis Buñuel. Screenplay by Julio Alejandro. Cast: Francisco Rabal, Marga López, Ignacio López Tarso, Juan Guzmán, Juan Antonio Cordero, Nan Silverman, Ricardo Montalván, and Juan Fernández. 90 minutes.

poverty among the poor, giving or allowing to be stolen anything he has, and occasionally begging in order to keep alive.

A woman, Beatriz (Marga López, who has been cruelly betrayed comes to him for spiritual relief. Another woman, Andra (Rita Macedo), a working prostitute, comes to him to be hidden after she has killed another woman. Unwilling as he is to help, he cannot refuse the human being in distress.

"Nazarin" is indeed a saint, but he is not a saint in the usual sense. Instead he is interested for his unorthodox traveling with the women, thrown into jail, beaten by fellow prisoners, and in various ways tortured without ever failing to turn the other cheek.

However, this Christ-like behavior wins no greater approval from those in authority than did Christ himself. Though he may have wrought a genuine miracle in saving a child from imminent death, though he shared all his belongings with those in need, including his shoes, his money, his food, and some of his clothing, he is at last alone, his two female disciples elsewhere, his faith in good deeds almost beaten into the dust.

At this point we leave him, quite abruptly, Buñuel having had his say equally about the bad that is in his people and the good that occasionally peeps out of bad people, and the sheer benevolence that overrules a saint in this wicked world.

The performances of Francisco Rabal is uncommonly good and forbearing. The rest, both people and places, fall into the Buñuel landscape as if found there, a lecherous dwarf here, a fat leeching villain there, a cruel lecher in another corner, five women surmounting their difficulties, and the plague in a deathridden town. Luis Buñuel, Cinema's Goya, has here worked up a presentable "disasters of living," Mexico-style, tying up the package with religious technique. It's not going to convert many, and it should give further pause to those who have already ceased and desisted.

4D THE HARTFORD TIMES, Tuesday, June 25, 1968

By Bernard L. Drew

Luis Bunuel's 'Nazarin' Dissects Faith, Goodness

NEW YORK: When Plato wondered whether an honest man could exist in a dishonest state, he was finally forced to conclude that he could not, he would be destroyed.

Now, Luis Buñuel, one of the authentic cinematic geniuses extant has wondered correlatively whether a Christian, pure and innocent, and determined to walk in Christ's steps, could survive in his film, "Nazarin," now at the Carnegie Hall Cinema.

This film, which won the Grand Prix at Cannes in 1959, and which has only now arrived here, is one of Buñuel's own favorites. Seeing it, after having read about it and heard about it for nearly a decade, it seems to be unmistakably Buñuel, with its world of cruelty, hardship, and hate mocking every step of those foolish enough to be good and pure, but it is also a gentler Buñuel, a more reflective one, less strident and sensational, a Buñuel who is more sorry than angry.

"Nazarin" beautifully photographed by Gabriel Figueroa, traverses the same geography as Graham Greene's "The Power and the Glory" and Malcolm Lowry's "Under the Volcano." Its failed saint, its would-be Christ, trudges through the Mexico of the Porfirio Díaz dictatorship, a time of terror, poverty, and virulent anti-clericalism.

Saint of Nowhere

Sweetly simple Father Nazarine, the Nazarin, lives his small, good life in a slum surrounded by thieves and whores, churchless, poverty stricken, ignored by the rich, cheated by the poor, hated by the state, even despised by his more sophisticated, and vernal superiors in the church.

Still, in his faith and innocence, he manages to ignore his daily diet of slings and arrows until one day, his understanding world blows up. He has harbored a prostitute wanted for murder, the authorities have learned of this, and he is forced to flee.

He is denied sanctuary by his superior, a worldly man who considers Nazarine's actions embarrassing to the Church. It is fine to be good, but one should take pains not to be naïvely good. Nazarine is defrocked and his pilgrimage begins.

With the reclaimed prostitute as his Magdalene, and another woman who simply desires to be close to his goodness, he begins his journey through the parched, ugly, unholy garden which is the Mexico of his time.

Plagues and Easy Miracles

But this Nazarine is not Christ, he cannot walk upon the waters, nor can he make miracles. The only thing he can share is a final Crucifixion, and the rest of "Nazarine" details the steps which lead to it.

He comes to one town which once desired easy miracles from him. In another place, starved, he wishes to work for his food. He is beaten by the other workmen for lowering their wage.

He arrives at a plague-ridden city and attempts to comfort the dying. A woman stares at him contemptuously, and murmurs, "Not Heaven, Juan" who is her lover.

Finally, he is apprehended by the authorities and marched back to trial in a covey of other prisoners. He is beaten, spat upon, kicked, cursed and jeered at, and he suffers every indignity and inhumanity which man can inflict on his neighbor, so that his last remaining possession, his faith, leaves him.

The Dusty Road to Calvary

But on the hot, dusty road to his Calvary, a poor, simple woman offers him a pineapple. Lost in his own lost faith, he refuses it twice, then with a glimmer of returning hope in his eyes, he accepts it, saying quietly, "God will repay you," and he moves on.

Buñuel, in this starkly simple, beautiful parable which is visually, a Goya etching, uniquely for him, shows faith, ultimately, in the natural humanity of man, but his own Platonic conclusion is that the pure, innocent Christian cannot survive. The pure, innocent anything cannot survive anywhere. He is condemned to failure and defeat. Even saints must be pragmatic, sophisticated and selective.

You cannot help but think of the lines Bernard Shaw gave to Saint Joan, when beautified, she returned to earth only to find that her worshippers were prepping for the fires all over again.

"O God," she looked up hopelessly, "that made this beautiful earth, when will it be ready to receive Thy saints? How long, O Lord, how long?"

Francisco Rabal is a fine and deeply moving Nazarin—a an earthly possessed of all of the virtues except divinity.

'The Andalusian Dog'

"The Andalusian Dog," Buñuel's first film which he made with Salvador Dalí in 1929, and which has now become a classic, is also on the bill, and together they comprise a program which no one interested in cinema today, can afford to miss.

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