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The Museum of Modern Art Department of Film

11 West 53 Street, New York, N. Y. 10019 Tel. 956-6100 Cable: Modernart

LA HIJA DEL ENGAÑO
(DAUGHTER OF DECEIT)
Sunday, January 11 (3:00)
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BUNUEL IN MEXICO

January 8 - February 16, 1976

When at the end of 1946, Luis Buñuel left Hollywood for Mexico with his family, he had already made three of the most original, passionate, subversive films of our time: UN CHIEN ANDALOU, L'AGE D'OR, and LAS HURDES. Behind him lay the production of several Spanish comedies and documentaries, the trauma of the Spanish Civil War ("I thought the world was coming to an end"), and years of frustrated creativity, bureaucratic jobs, and comparative inactivity. He was almost 47 years old.

As Francisco Aranda succinctly stated, "The simple fact of going to Mexico was decisive in Buñuel's rediscovery of his road. Not only the idiom and the race, but the physical types, the dry and dusty landscape, the impassioned speech, the attitudes to life and death, the religious problem, the social structure which he attacked, all combined to restore him to conditions in which he could be himself. From the very first film his personality and his 'Spanishness' were engaged, while he observed, understood and analysed the idiosyncrasy of the Mexican people with a greater profundity than any of the cineastes who had preceded him. Like many other Spanish exiles, he definitively adopted Mexican nationality."

This program at The Museum of Modern Art - where Buñuel worked between 1939 and 1943 supervising, adapting, and editing documentaries - includes the masterworks as well as the too long neglected melodramas and cheap comedies produced with Mexican financing between 1947 and 1965. Each of the films reveals something of his private obsessions, his incisive observations, his penetrating wit and black humor, his exasperation with human folly and pettiness, and his ever-rebellious attitude toward bourgeois morality. Here is an artist attracted and repelled by the contradictions, by the reality of the human condition. His outrage, ironic laughter, or sympathetic shrug rise from the spirit of a man struggling to transcend himself. Buñuel is a man of uncompromising honesty, of intrinsic moral integrity. He is also a man who admires simplicity, who is himself an iconoclastic spirit of love, tenderness, and deep understanding.

Many of the twenty-one features have never been released in commercial English language theaters in the United States; therefore this retrospective bridges a significant gap in Buñuel's filmography. It offers an opportunity for further insight into the sensibility and the creative genius of a major living artist and poet who will celebrate his 76th birthday on February 22.

The Department of Film wishes to acknowledge its gratitude and appreciation to the following individuals and organizations that have made this program possible: Jeanette Bello, William K. Everson, Azteca Films, Banco Nacional Cinematográfico de Mexico, La Cineteca Nacional de Mexico, Columbia Pictures, Macmillan/Audio Brandon Films.

...Adrienne Mancía

LA HIJA DEL ENGAÑO (DON QUINTIN EL AMARGAO; DAUGHTER OF DECEIT). 1951. Luis Buñuel. Produced By Oscar Dancigers for Ultramar Films, S.A. Assistant Director, Mario Llorca. Screenplay by Raquel Rojas de Alcoriza and Luis Alcoriza based on a farce by Carlos Arniches. Photography, José Ortiz Ramos. Art Director, Edward Fitzgerald. Music, Manuel Esperón. Sound, Eduardo Arjona. Editing, Carlos Savage. With Fernando Soler (Don Quintín Guzmán), Alicia Caro (Marta), Fernando Soto 'Mantequilla' (Angelito), Rubén Rojo (Paco), Nacho Contla (Jonron), Lily Aclemar (Jovita), Amparo Garrido (María), and Alvaro Matute, Roberto Meyer, Conchita Gentil Arcos, Francisco Ledesma. Courtesy Macmillan/Audio Brandon. In Spanish with English titles. 80 minutes.

"LA HIJA DEL ENGAÑO (or DON QUINTIN EL AMARGAO) is a remake of Luis Marquina's film of 1935, on which Buñuel was executive producer (and which J.F. Aranda, in spite of what the credit titles say, believes to have been directed by Buñuel).* The scenario is a melodrama in the best 'Fanny by Gaslight' tradition..

"Buñuel does not allow himself the luxury of indulging in a crude, caricatural piece of parody. He keeps strictly within the conventions of Mexican melodrama, but from time to time livens things up with just a slight piece of emphasis or a moment of wry understatement. We see, for instance, Marta as a little girl in Lencho's house. There is a black-out for several seconds on the screen, and all we hear is the spanking Marta is getting from the drunkard. When the picture comes back Marta is now a young woman. The dialogue informs us that Lencho still spansks her, but the significance of this corporal punishment has of course changed: there is now a strong erotic element in it. In this way, Bunuel guides us almost imperceptibly from a cliché situation (step-father versus poor waif) to the phenomenological description of an emotional relationship that is based on a reciprocal, instinctive and unstoppable quest for pleasure. All through the film, Buñuel pulls out the stops of sentimentality with such abandon that the result is humour or irony; and through some pataphysical logic, the fatuously edifying plot of the film suddenly debunks itself."...from "The Cinema of Luis Buñuel" by Freddy Buache (A.S. Barnes & Co., N.Y., 1973)

"... Based on a play by Carlos Arniches, it faithfully reflects characters that are actually prototypes of the literature of Spain's 'Siglo de Oro.' This is particularly true in the case of the film's central figure who comes close to being a caricature of figures of Lope de Vega, Tirso de Molina, and Calderon. He is sometimes reminiscent of the anachronistic man buried in his world of madness of EL (1952) and the Spanish feudal gentlemen living outside their time in VIRIDIANA (1961) and TRISTANA (1969). This film offers a rich mixture of nuances -- the comic and the melodramatic -- in the various roles, particularly that of 'Don Quintin,' played by Fernando Soler, with incorrigible gruffness like that in 'Alcestes' of Euripides which causes laughter to the point of pain, as the critic Marcel Martin put it.

The film has many virtues and calls for a critical sense on the part of the spectator to enable him to see beyond what meets the eye in the plot. It has a curious admixture of the melodramatic tearjerker and for that reason this film should be looked at in a different dimension from the one in which movies are usually seen. There is no need to describe the well-known 'olive sequence' but Buñuel's special humorous approach to musical numbers with mockery of the conventions is worth mentioning. We are reminded of those chorus lines of girls in ballet slippers like the ostriches in the 'Dance of the Hours' number in Disney's FANTASIA (1940), with plumes on their heads like one of Josef von Sternberg's creations in

*Note: For further information on Buñuel's career in Spain, 1935-36, see "Buñuel, Saenz de Heredia and Filmofono" by Roger Mortimore in "Sight and Sound, " Summer 1975

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THE BLUE ANGEL (1930), the dance beginning very seriously and ending up helter-skelter, out of rhythm, and in utter confusion.

Like many other Buñuel films that are considered minor efforts by the critics, LA HIJA DEL ENGAÑO still awaits re-evaluation that should give it due stature among his works."...from the program for a presentation of Buñuel films at the Biennale of Venice in 1974.