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possibility of working freely without a world of officialdom that was too aware of the explosive nature of his films.

As far as Mexico was concerned, Buñuel was simply a good commercial film director who could turn out a powerful work such as *Los Olvidados*, but who was good above all at harmless comedies and successful melodramas.

This attitude accounts for his *Subida al Cielo* and *El Bruto*.

The first is a relaxed comedy with a hint of something more meaningful just beneath the surface. A young man on a motor trip discovers life and learns to know people and things. It is a modern version of the picaresque tales that Buñuel so loves. The trip begins, in fact, with an absurd birth and ends with a ridiculous death. Meanwhile, the young man has learned what love is, has flirted with politics, had deflated a few balloons: business, the family, folklore, and so on. Delicious details—Buñuel's characteristic humor—abound. Who can forget the one-legged man who can't get his peg leg out of the chamber pot, or the tiny girl who hauls out the submerged auto while playing by the river.

El Bruto is a sublime melodrama. The hired assassin of a rich landowner betrays his boss after he has known love. All the elements of traditional melodrama are there, but they are transfigured by the social implications of the subject and by Buñuel's vision, which always leads to the surrealistic in what is apparently so realistic a film: the grandfather gets up at night to steal chocolates; the slaughterhouses are protected by a picture of the Virgin Mary; the rooster is terrifying; and a love as pure as that in *L'Age d'Or* helps men discover life and their own destinies. Though *El Bruto* is a minor film, it is one of Buñuel's best directed.

After these two trial runs, he gives us a real masterpiece in *El*. This film has been the subject of much discussion. Certainly it is far more than a clinical study of jealousy. It is a return to the theme of *L'Age d'Or*, and the first link in the chain binding *L'Age d'Or* to *Viridiana*.

Buñuel's evolution is unique in the history of the cinema. His first three films—*Un Chien Andalou*, *L'Age d'Or* and *Las Hurdes*—seemed freely to reflect his interior world. Then, and for too long an intermission, he was obliged to turn to commercial work. With

SUBIDA AL CIELO (MEXICAN BUS RIDE/ ASCENT TO HEAVEN). 1952. Luis Buñuel. Produced by Manuel Altolaguirre for Producciones Isla. Assistant Director, Jorge López Portillo. Screenplay by Juan de la Cabada, Manuel Altolaguirre, Luis Buñuel based on a story by Altolaguirre and Manuel Reachí. Photography, Alex Phillips. Art Direction, Edward Fitzgerald and José Ortiz Ramos. Sound, Eduardo Arjona. Editing, Rafael Portillo. Music, Gustavo Pittaluga (song "La Samarquēña" by Agustín Jimenez). With Lilia Prado (Raquel), Carmelita Gonzalez (Albina, Oliverio's wife), Esteban Marquez (Oliverio), Manuel Donde (Don Eladio Gonzalez), Roberto Cobo (Juan), Luis Acevez Castaneda (Silvestre) and Gilberto Gonzalez, Beatriz Ramos, Manolo Noriega, Roberto Meyer, Pitouto, Pedro Ibarra, Leonor Gomez, Chel López, Paz Villegas de Orellana, Silvia Castro, Paula Rendon, Victor Pérez, the Trio Tamaulipeco. Courtesy Azteca Films. In Spanish with English titles. 85 minutes.

"I liked SUBIDA AL CIELO very much. I love the moments where nothing happens, like when the man says: 'Give me a match.' I'm very interested in that sort of thing. I'm fascinated by 'Give me a match' or 'Do you want to eat?' or 'What's the time?' I was thinking of that sort of thing when I made SUBIDA AL CIELO.".... Luis Buñuel in an interview in "Cahiers du Cinema," No. 36, June 1954.

"While LOS OLVIDADOS is nothing to laugh about, SUBIDA AL CIELO seems, at first sight at least, to be a jolly caper. But one should beware of taking it simply as a piece of run-of-the-mill vaudeville entertainment. It is rather like a box with a false bottom, and more than once what first seems to be frothy comedy turns out to be black humour. Take for instance the sequence in which the bus gets bogged down in the middle of a ford. A tractor alone is unable to budge it, so two oxen are harnessed to it in the hope that they will provide the extra energy needed for the success of the operation. Everybody is bustling around in preparation for this when suddenly the coach moves forward: the oxen are following a little girl who is leading them by a string. The relieved passengers clamber back into the vehicle, and it is only at the last moment that they see a man with a wooden leg who is stuck in the mud and calling for help.

The film is reminiscent not so much of Blasetti's QUATTRO PASSI FRA LE NUVOLE as of the happy-go-lucky voyagers of Pierre and Jacques Prevert's VOYAGE SUPRISES: both films possess the same wild, anarchic, and surrealist-inspired humour.

The plot hinges on an outward and a return journey in a bus. When the film opens, we are in a village which has no church (a happy village therefore) and where the inhabitants make a living from coconut palms ("a coconut palm," we are informed by the commentary, "is as profitable as a cow"). Oliverio has just married. He and his young wife are gliding over the water in a flower-decked boat and are preparing to consummate their union when a motor launch appears on the scene. He learns that his mother is dying and rushes to her bedside. She tells him that she intends to cut off her sons without a penny and make her young nephew Chuchito her heir. The only person she trusts is Oliverio who, unlike his brothers, does not covet the inheritance. So she asks him to travel into town in order to find a notary who can legally draw up her last will and testament. Meanwhile, the other brothers are having a booze-up with the mayor. They are just as drunk with the idea of coming into a fortune as with the alcohol: their mother's death agony becomes a reason for rejoicing, and one of them makes a remark that could well be a surrealist proverb: 'One only has one mother and she only dies once!'

The town is very far away, and in order to get there one has to go over the mountains by a pass known as Subida al Cielo (Ascent into the Heavens).