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Una mujer sin amor (A woman without love), Buñuel, Luis, 1951
Subida al cielo (Mexican bus ride), Buñuel, Luis, 1952
La ilusion viaje en tranvia (Illusion travels by streetcar),
Buñuel, Luis, 1953
The adventures of Robinson Crusoe, Buñuel, Luis, 1952
Centinela, alerta!, Grémillon, Jean, 1937
Cela s'appelle l'aurore (That is the dawn), Buñuel, Luis, 1956
Cet obscur objet du désir (That obscure object of desire),
Buñuel, Luis, 1977
El rio y la muerte (The river and death), Buñuel, Luis, 1955
Gran Casino, Buñuel, Luis, 1947
Un chien andalou (Andalusian dog), Buñuel, Luis, 1928
La voie lactée (The milky way), Buñuel, Luis, 1969
La Hija de Juan Simon, Saenz de Heredia, José Luis,
Ensayo de un crimen (The criminal life of Archibaldo de la Cruz),
Buñuel, Luis, 1955
La mort en ce jardin (Death in the garden), Buñuel, Luis, 1956

The outrageous innocence of LUIS BUÑUEL

'When I reached the age of sixty, I finally understood the perfect innocence of the imagination. It took that long for me to admit that whatever entered my head was my business and mine alone.'

In his autobiography, *My Last Breath*, which has just been published in Britain by Jonathan Cape, Luis Buñuel shares his innocence with us once again. His story reads at times like one of the later film scripts, not least for having been filtered through the intermediary presence of Jean-Claude Carrière.

Rambling through frequent detours (revealing, for example, that it took two dry martinis to sort out a problem on *That Obscure Object of Desire*, or that he once arm-wrestled the world champion boxer Jack Johnson – and won), he looks placidly back across an extraordinary 80 years, around half of them devoted to making films.

There aren't too many clues as to how, right from the start, the basic vocabulary of the cinema was no problem to him. But the background to each stage of his career is often vividly revealed: the burst of surrealist fervour that created *Un chien andalou*, the delightfully inappropriate patronage that financed *L'Age d'or*, the 36 years and 20 films of his Mexican citizenship, and the friendship with Serge Silberman that was to produce his finest European work.

Along the way, there are tantalising glimpses of

Buñuel in Hollywood in 1930, unlikely guest of MGM, meeting with von Sternberg, being thrown off the Garbo set, and chopping down Chaplin's Christmas tree. Buñuel as hypnotist, as practical joker, as nun, as gunman, as political activist – he seems perpetually to have experimented not just with cinema but with the very process of being alive.

The two main revelations of *My Last Breath*, in case we couldn't always have known them from his films, are that he never ceased his allegiance to surrealism, and that in his life as in his work dreams were as frequent and 'real' as any other experience. These two sources of inspiration were as much a part of his last films as of his first, fifty years earlier. 'Give me two hours a day of activity,' he says, 'and I'll take the other twenty-two in dreams. . . provided I can remember them.'

In this season we pay an affectionate tribute to the outrageous innocence of Buñuel's dreams, in gratitude not only that he was willing to share them with us but that he did so with such consistent grace and humour. He wouldn't have approved ('when I'm dead I hope they burn everything I've ever made; the only dignity I see is in oblivion'), but we too must surely be allowed our measure of appreciative recollection. – Philip Strick.



Buñuel's nightmare provided the blade and the eye, Dali's the hand crawling with ants. *Un chien andalou* (France 1928) started from there. 'Our only rule was very simple: No idea or image that might lend itself to a rational explanation would be accepted.' Next came *L'Age d'or* (France 1930), the primal surrealist statement. 'For me it was a film about *l'amour fou*, the irresistible force that thrusts two people together.' Then the documentary *Las hurdes* (Spain 1932). 'Those graceless mountains fascinated me, as did the poverty and intelligence of their inhabitants.'

Dubbing for Warners in Spain in the 1930s, Buñuel worked on four films financed by his friend Urgoiti, owner of Madrid's main cinema circuit. Buñuel anonymously created four commercial successes, concealing (and then belittling) his involvement for many years; this is the first screening in the UK for three of them. *Don Quintín el amargo* (remade in Mexico in 1951), based on a farce in the style of Feydeau by Carlos Arniches, was completed within a month, each scene reportedly being filmed at first take. Spain 1935/Dir Luis Marquina.

A gypsy melodrama well flavoured with flamenco, the film was based on a song popularised by its star, Angelillo. When the first director proved too slow, Buñuel was brought in, the director walked out, and credit went to José Luis Sáenz de Heredia (later Spain's leading film-maker in the 1940s). 'Every day Buñuel would tell me exactly how he wanted each scene shot; in the evening he saw the takes and did all the editing.' Buñuel also appeared in a prison scene. Spain 1935/Dir José Luis Sáenz de Heredia.

Again based on a farce by Arniches, with elements of music-hall set against a military background, this was a major project for which Buñuel brought in the French director Jean Grémillon. The collaboration appears to have been uneasy and neither name was credited, but Buñuel is said to have directed much of the film when Grémillon fell ill. It has the reputation of being the finest of Urgoiti's Filmófono productions. Spain 1936/Dir Jean Grémillon, Luis Buñuel. With Angelillo, Ana Maria Custodio, Luis Heredia.

Buñuel's chance to return to movies. 'I hadn't been behind a camera in 15 years, but while the scenario's not particularly gripping, the technique's not half bad.' A girl arrives in the Mexican oil-fields in search of her brother's killer – then falls in love with him. It had to be a musical because the producer had two singing stars under contract, 'so I had them singing all the time, tangos and I don't know what else.' Mexico 1947/With Libertad Lamarque, Jorge Negrete.

Wed 1 Feb
6.30

**Un chien
andalou**
L'Age d'or
**Land Without
Bread**
(*Las hurdes*)



Thu 2 Feb
8.30

**Embittered
Don Quintín**
(*Don Quintín el amargo*)



Sat 4 Feb
8.30

**Juan Simon's
Daughter**
(*La hija de Juan Simón*)



Sun 5 Feb
8.30

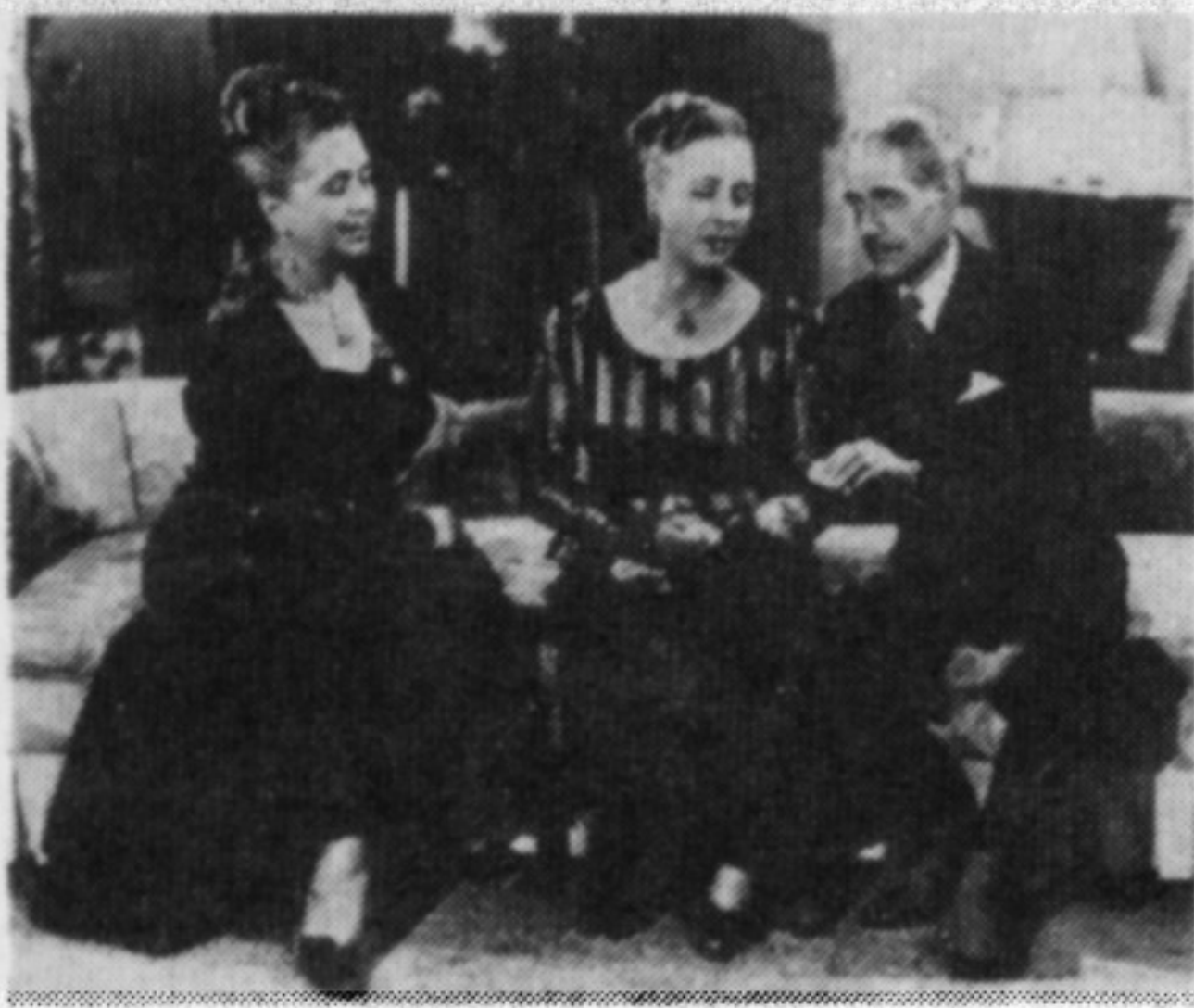
**Look Out,
Sentry!**
(*Centinela, alerta!*)



Mon 6 Feb
6.30

**Gran
Casino**



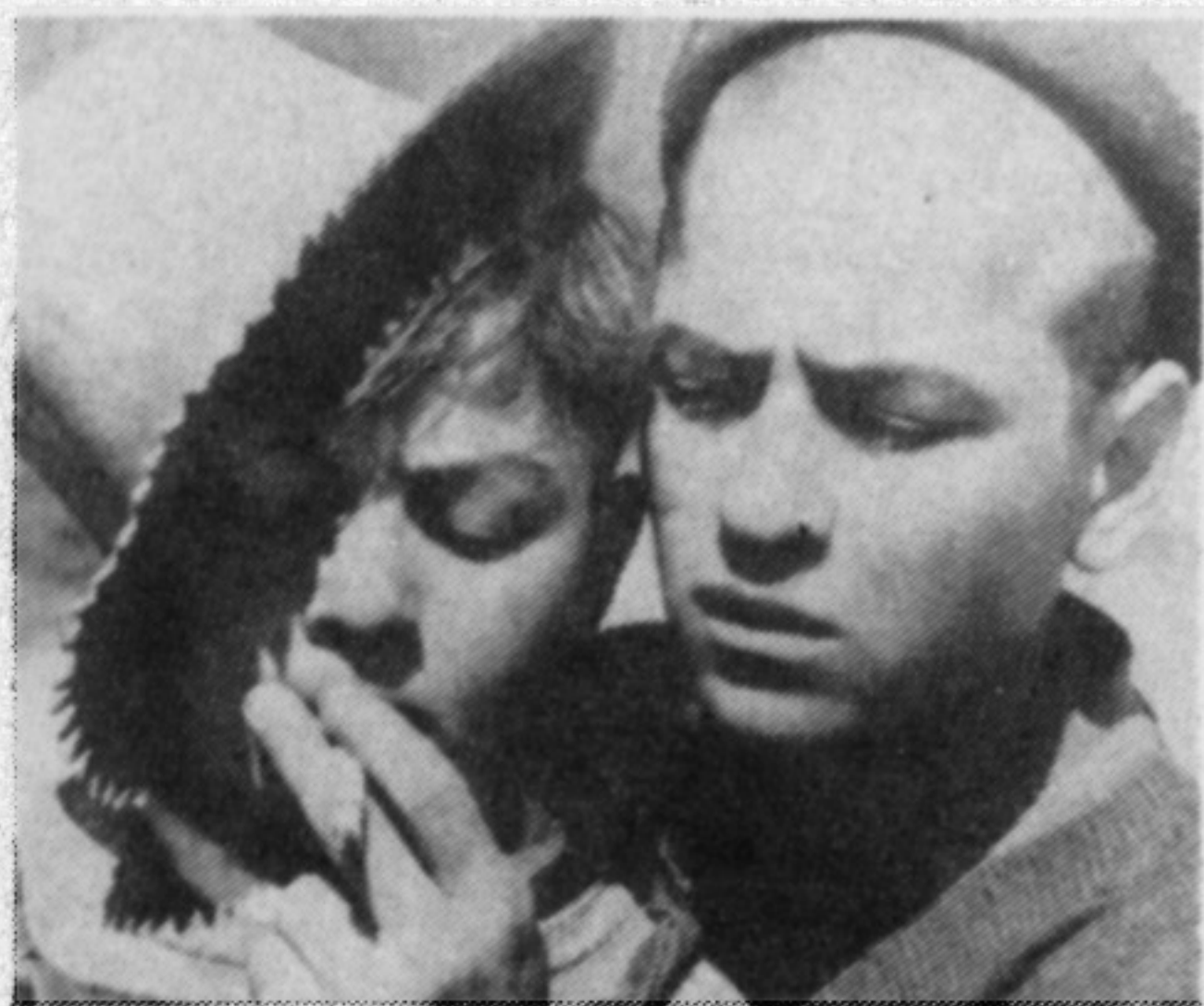


Tue 7 Feb
8.45

The Great Rotter

(El gran calavera)

'Fernando Soler was going to produce and star, but he needed an honest and above all docile collaborator to give him a hand'. With its story of a drunken millionaire who feuds with his family, thus providing the opportunity for some sly comment about the moral cost of the good life, it's pure commercial corn, but far from negligible. It represents Buñuel's first collaboration with the scenarist Luis Alcoriza, who also worked on *Los olvidados*, *El*, and *The Exterminating Angel*. Mexico 1949/With Fernando Soler, Charito Granados.



Wed 8 Feb
6.30

The Young and the Damned

(Los olvidados)

'For several months I toured the slums on the outskirts of Mexico City . . . I came to know these people, and much of what I saw went unchanged into the film.' Made in 21 days, it portrays slum existence through the story of a young gang-leader who hounds and destroys another youth before being destroyed himself; somewhere along the line, Buñuel plagiarises *Rigoletto* but his more bizarre visions were suppressed for lack of cash. First prize at Cannes compensated for initial reactions of horror. Mexico 1950/With Alfonso Mejía, Roberto Cobo, Estela Inda.



Thu 9 Feb
6.10

Susana

Spain 37

(España leal en armas)

'A perfectly routine film,' comments Buñuel, promptly describing anything-but-routine problems with spiders and shadows. Fresh out of gaol, Susana is employed as maid by kindly benefactor and sets about challenging his family's serenity with some militant eroticism. Today, it reads uncannily like a rehearsal for the discreet disruptions of the later films. Mexico 1951/With Rosita Quintana, Fernando Soler. Plus the rare documentary *España leal en armas* (Spain 1937) supervised by Buñuel, who wrote the commentary with the surrealist Pierre Unik.



Thu 9 Feb
8.35

Daughter of Deceit

(La hija del engaño)

Simon of the Desert

(Simon del desierto)

A remake of a film produced by Buñuel in Spain in 1935, *La hija del engaño* combines comedy and melodrama in the story of a deceived husband who abandons home and baby until, after 20 years, he learns the child was his. Mexico 1951. Plus *Simon del desierto*, Buñuel's most 'prized' film, for all that half of it had to be ditched when the producer ran out of cash. A startling, healthily wicked fantasy about the Saint on the pillar, a story introduced to Buñuel by Lorca. Mexico 1965/With Silvia Pinal, Claudio Brook.



Fri 10 Feb
6.30

Mexican Bus Ride

(Subida al cielo)

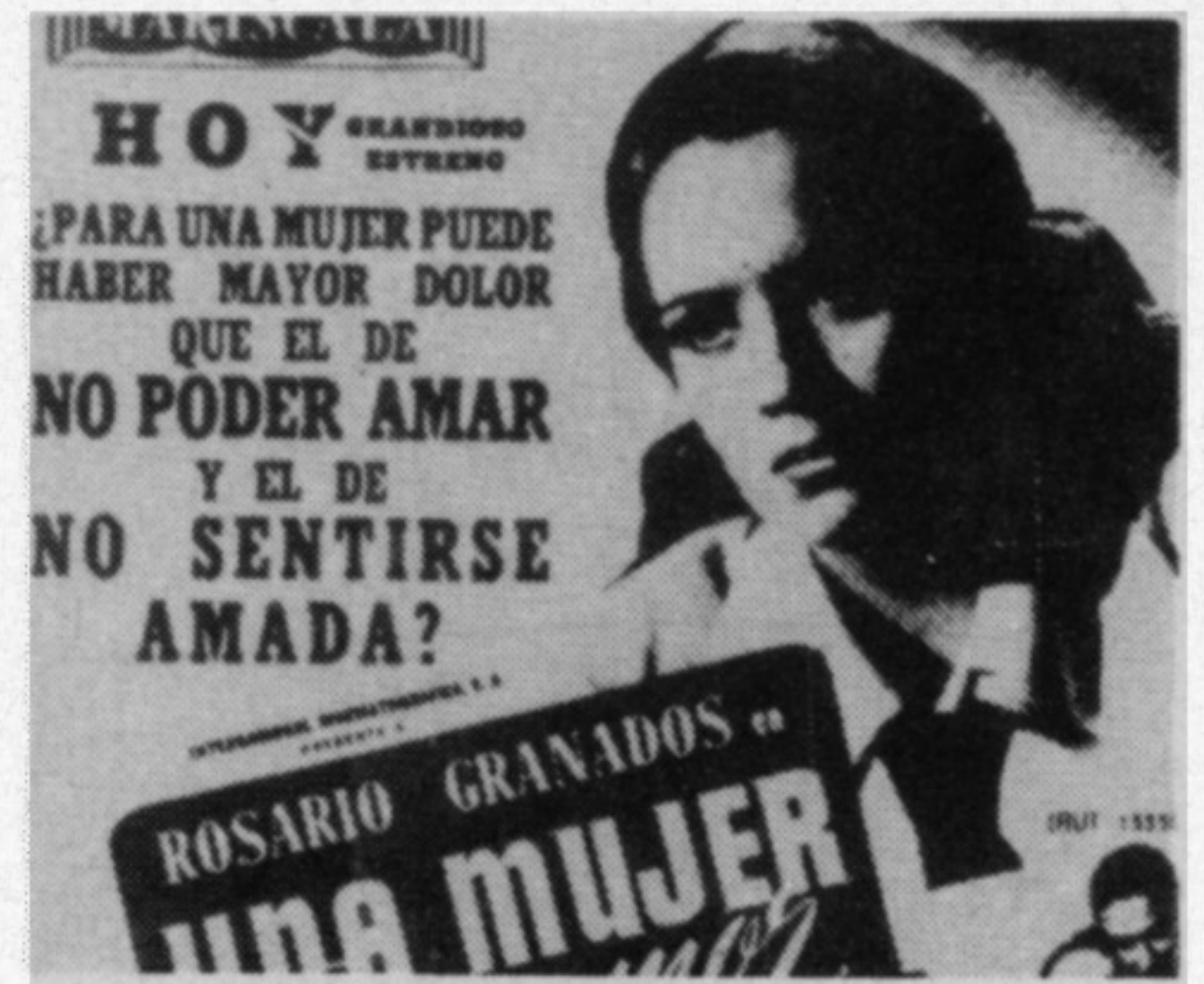
Buñuel particularly liked this one, based on a real-life trip by his producer and friend, the poet Altolaguirre. Oliverio, a young man in a hurry, takes the hazardous bus-journey to the nearest town and runs into delays: the bus gets stuck in a river; a woman has a premature delivery; Oliverio is pursued by Raquel, an eager wench with a symbolic apple; and there's an unscheduled party and banquet. The delicious dream sequence has provided a special feast for Buñuel fans over the years. Mexico 1951.

'The worst film I ever made' was intended to be a scene-by-scene remake of a Cayatte film based on Maupassant's *Pierre et Jean*. 'Not surprisingly I made it my own way, but it was still a disaster.' A young wife has an affair but refuses to leave her sick husband; years later her youngest son inherits a fortune and the truth is revealed. Despite Buñuel's dismissal, any story told 'my own way' is bound to be worth a fresh look, roaring melodrama or not. *Mexico 1951/With Rosario Granados.*

Sat 11 Feb
6.30

A Woman Without Love

(Una mujer sin amor)



Shot in a mere 18 days, it 'could have been a good film; the scenario I wrote with Alcoriza was quite interesting, but I was forced to change it completely.' An abattoir worker gets hired as muscle in a landlord's battle against rebellious tenants. The landlord's wife becomes the butcher's mistress but betrays him. Echoing *Los olvidados* with its grim emphasis on the vulnerability of the innocent, the film has unexpected power in exploring – as ever – the occasional fortuitous rightness of wrongdoing. *Mexico 1952/With Pedro Armendariz, Katy Jurado.*

Sun 12 Feb
6.30

The Brute

(El bruto)



'Simply the portrait of a paranoiac who, like a poet, is born, not made.' This Sade-ian masterpiece about an insanely jealous husband is quintessential Buñuel, whose autobiography reveals that the richly horrific image of knitting needle thrust through keyhole comes straight from his own adolescence. Combining Catholic restraints with sexual excesses to produce the inevitable breakdown, Buñuel diagnoses a global malady; the idea of God, he suggests, is crippling mankind with an intolerable burden. *Mexico 1952/With Arturo de Córdova, Delia Garcés.*

Sun 12 Feb
8.45

El



'In the beginning I wasn't very enthusiastic, but gradually as I worked I became interested in the story, adding some real and some imaginary elements to Crusoe's sex life as well as the delirium scene when he sees his father's spirit.' Notable for the textures of Alex Phillips' colour photography along Mexico's Pacific coast, the setting provides a mellow context for the rebirth of natural human virtuosity. Adrift from the restrictions of his upbringing, Crusoe constructs a new life-style. *USA-Mexico 1952/With Dan O'Herlihy, Jaime Fernández.*

Mon 13 Feb
6.30

Adventures of Robinson Crusoe



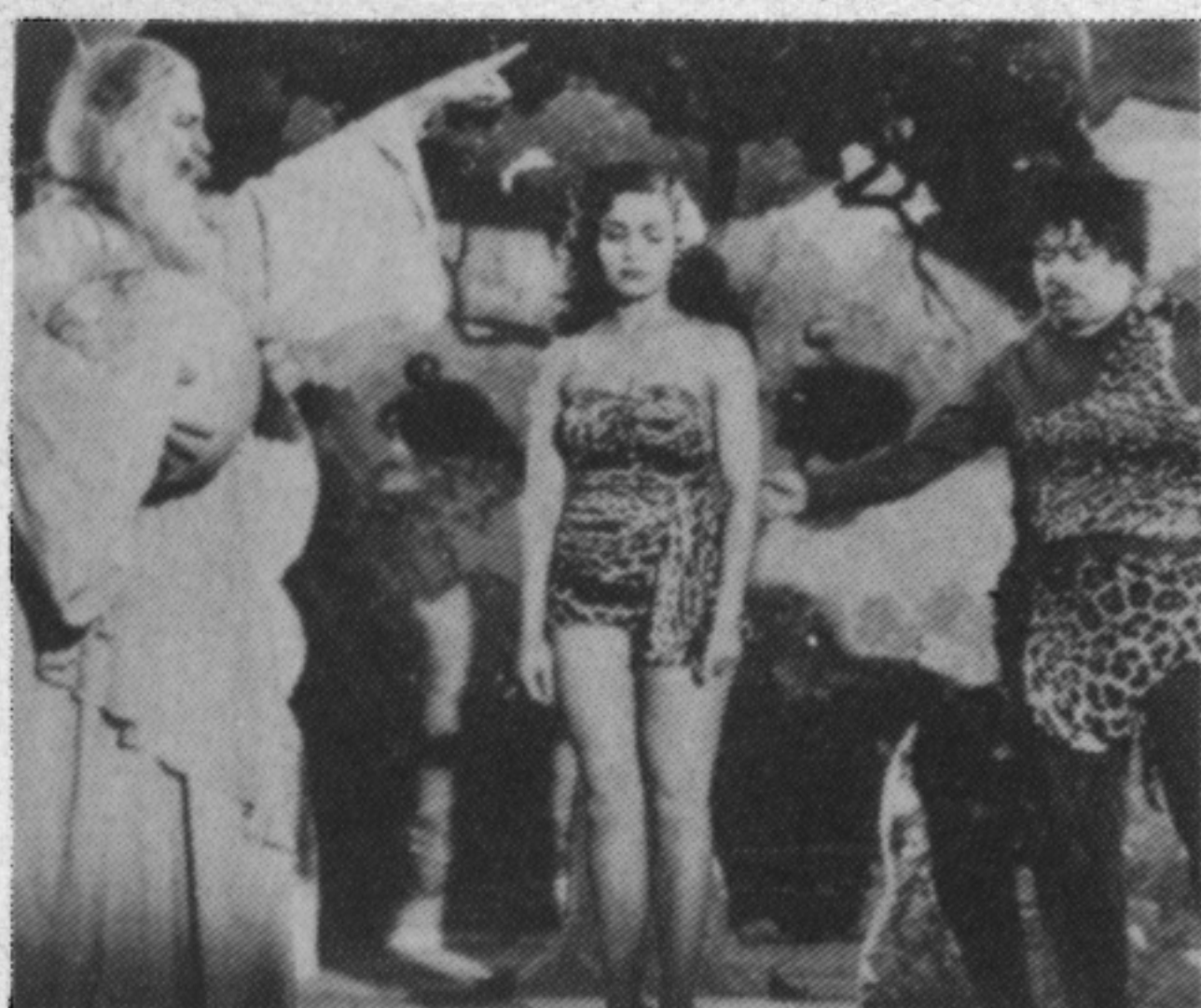
Twenty-three years after writing the screenplay (with Pierre Unik), Buñuel was at last able to film the novel, a favourite among the surrealists for its celebration of *l'amour fou*. 'I knew I had a first-rate script, but unfortunately I had to work with actors hired for a musical . . . there were horrendous problems during the shoot, and the results were problematical at best . . . but I think it's faithful to the spirit of Emily Brontë – a very harsh film, without concessions, and it respects the novel's attitude to love.' *Mexico 1953.*

Tue 14 Feb
6.30

Wuthering Heights

(Abismos de pasión)



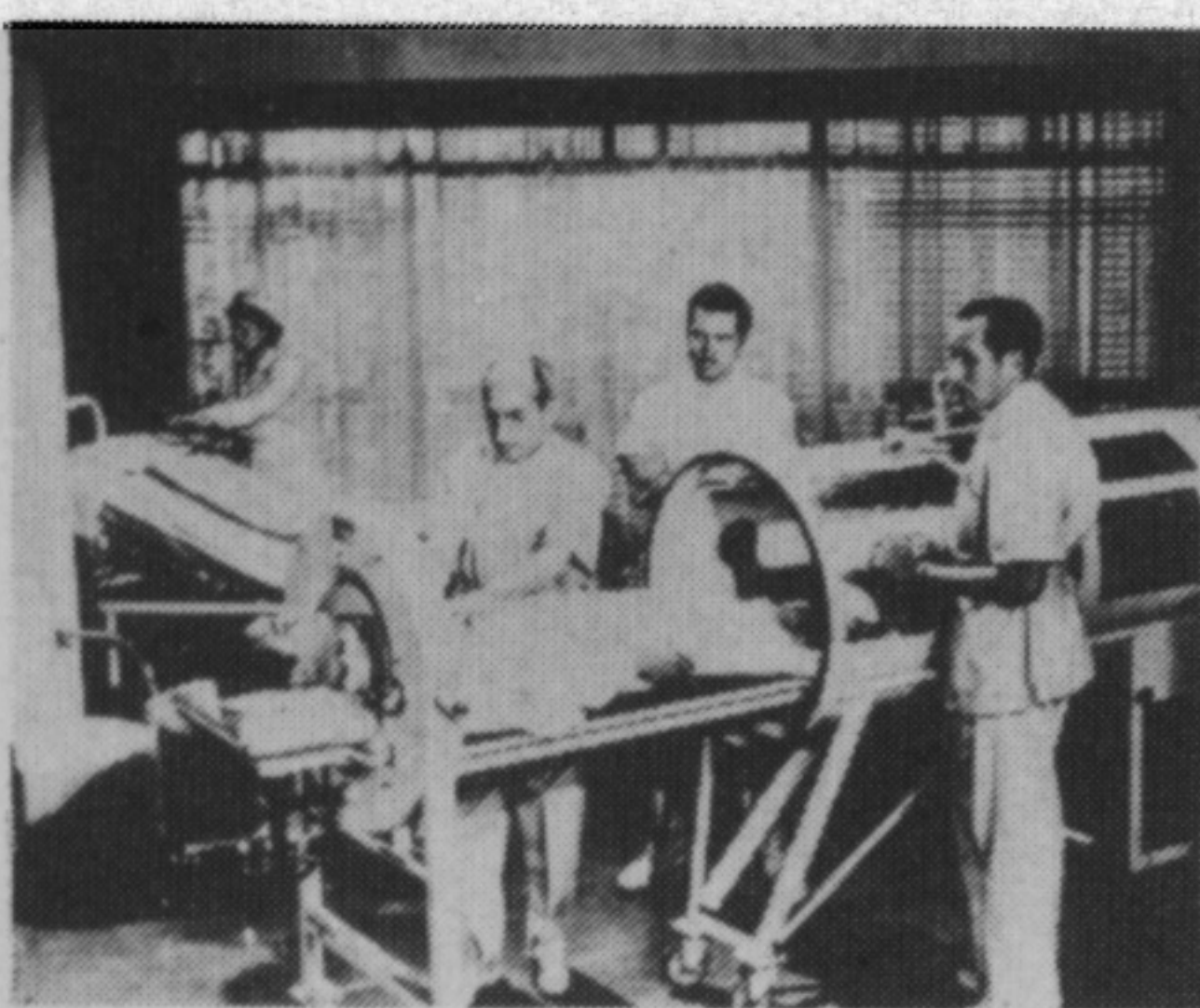


Tue 14 Feb
8.45

The Runaway Street-Car

(La ilusión viaja en tranvía)

The starting point is a picaresque tale of two transport workers taking a last illicit journey on the tramcar their employers are about to take out of service. Trundling through the streets of Mexico City, its mission becomes a joyful declaration of defiance – as some passengers are refused a ride while others aren't allowed to pay their fares. Characteristic sequences include some 'charitable' blackmail, and a hilarious theatrical performance on a Biblical theme. *Mexico 1953/With Lilia Prado, Carlos Navarro, Domingo Soler, Fernando Soto.*



Wed 15 Feb
6.30

Death and the River

(El río y la muerte)

Intrigued by the 'gun cult' in Mexico, which his autobiography explores in detail, Buñuel created a near-parody of a Western in this adaptation from Acosta's novel, based on fact. Set in a remote Mexican village, it describes the vendetta between two families, a struggle in which the shootings have a ritualistic pattern. 'I've always been fascinated by the ease with which certain people can kill others, and this idea runs through the film in the form of a series of simple and apparently gratuitous murders.' *Mexico 1954/With Columba Dominguez.*



Thu 16 Feb
6.30

The Criminal Life of Archibaldo de la Cruz

(Ensayo de un crimen)

One of Buñuel's most accessible and enjoyable films, a black comedy about a man whose compulsion to murder – derived from the childhood experience of witnessing the death of a maid in erotic circumstances – is constantly thwarted by the habit his female victims have of arranging their deaths before he can. When his grandest scheme results only in the burning of a dummy while the girl escapes, he at last attempts to exorcise his private demon. *Mexico 1955/With Ernesto Alonso, Miroslava Stern, Rita Macedo.*



Thu 16 Feb
8.45

That's Called Dawn

(Cela s'appelle l'aurore)

On a Mediterranean island a rich industrialist callously exploits his factory workers, the children play at executions, small girls are attacked by old men, and the police beat up their suspects. Revenge on the whole shabby system is at last taken by a worker whose wife has died following their unjust eviction. Steering his way through the moods of a lively cast and inserting soup, socks and turtles to the despair of his fellow scriptwriter, Buñuel again disposes of ordinary taboos. *France-Italy 1955/With Georges Marchal, Lucia Bosè, Giani Esposito.*



Fri 17 Feb
8.45

Death in the Garden

(La Mort en ce jardin)

As with *Robinson Crusoe* and *The Exterminating Angel*, Buñuel plunges his characters abruptly into savagery; five refugees from an Amazonian diamond-mining community attempt to escape through the jungle. A Bible comes in handy to light a fire, a chalice for drinking purposes. Buñuel found it tough to write, but the message comes through clearly enough: emergency once again takes precedence over idealism. A film of enormous force, its relatively crude style suits it perfectly. *France-Mexico 1956/With Simone Signoret, Georges Marchal, Michel Piccoli.*

Buñuel's favourite among his Mexican films, based on a novel by Galdós. 'The essence of *Nazarin*, as a character, remains true to the novel. . . but I also slipped in a few new elements – the strike, for instance, and the dying woman in the plague scene, which was inspired by de Sade.' A saintly young priest sets out to follow the direct example of Christ and is rewarded with violence, scorn, corruption and, eventually, an understanding of his own arrogance, his loneliness – and his freedom. *Mexico 1958/With Francisco Rabal, Marga Lopez, Rita Macedo.*

Sat 18 Feb
6.30

Nazarin



'A well-made movie all in all,' Buñuel remarks, adding only that there's a touch of *Tosca* in his adaptation from Henri Castillou's novel. The story seems to have needed the infusion, wandering as it does through some twisting political corridors, but the passionate, shadowed atmosphere of desperation and betrayal in a Fascist state is captured with a remarkable visual intensity. Buñuel's ironic portrait is of Franco's Spain, against which even Gérard Philipe's vague liberalism is demonstrably futile. *France-Mexico 1959/With Maria Felix, Jean Servais.*

Sun 19 Feb
4.15

Republic of Sin

(*La Fièvre monte à El Pao*)



'This film was made with love, but American morality just couldn't accept it. One of the problems is its anti-Manichean stance, which was an anomaly at the time, although today it's all the rage.' In 14-year-old orphan Evvie's existence, clear blacks and whites give way to the grey twilight zone of comprehension as she encounters death, hypocrisy, racial hatred, corruption and seduction from her new guardian. Against all odds, the film's rough, humorous poetry offers an elusive gleam of hope. *Mexico 1960/With Zachary Scott, Key Meersman.*

Mon 20 Feb
6.30

The Young One

(*La joven*)



Offered *carte blanche* by his producer, Buñuel 'decided to write my own screenplay about a woman called Viridiana, in memory of a little-known saint I'd heard about when I was a schoolboy. As I worked, I remembered my old erotic fantasy about making love to the queen of Spain when she was drugged, and decided somehow to combine the stories.' Combining, too, the vehemence of *L'Age d'or* with the brutal honesty of *Nazarin*, the result is a direct assault on sexual and social complacency. *Spain 1961/With Fernando Rey, Silvia Pinal.*

Mon 20 Feb
8.45

Viridiana



The rich, elegant guests at a dinner party suddenly find they're unable to leave the room; slowly their rigid social conventions start to crack. 'Why certain things tend to repeat themselves over and over again I have no idea, but the phenomenon intrigues me enormously,' says Buñuel. 'Basically I simply see a group of people who couldn't do what they want to do. . . that kind of dilemma, the impossibility of satisfying a simple desire, often occurs in my movies.' *Mexico 1962/With Silvia Pinal, Claudio Brook, Enrique Rembal.*

Wed 22 Feb
6.30

The Exterminating Angel

(*El ángel exterminador*)





Wed 22 Feb
8.45

Diary of a Chambermaid

(Le Journal d'une femme de chambre)

A chambermaid leaves Paris to take up a post in a country town. Typically, Buñuel turns the bourgeois family of Mirbeau's novel into a turmoil of religious, social and sexual repressions, and the two main working-class characters get what they want but are also victims. 'We decided to set it in the 1920s, allowing the right-wing demonstrators to shout "Vive Chaippe" at the end in memory of *L'Age d'or*. Jeanne Moreau, a marvellous actress. . . taught me things about the character I'd never suspected.' *France-Italy 1964/With Michel Piccoli, Georges Géret.*



Fri 24 Feb
6.30

Belle de Jour

'My biggest commercial success, which I attribute more to the marvellous whores than to my direction.' Adapted from Joseph Kessel's novel, the film shows how happily-married housewife Catherine Deneuve enjoys her masochistic tendencies by afternoon brothel sessions. 'I was able', comments the director, 'to indulge myself in the faithful description of some interesting sexual perversions.' But perhaps more spellbinding is the film's elegant disdain for the boundaries between memory, fantasy and reality. *France-Italy 1967/With Geneviève Page, Jean Sorel.*



Fri 24 Feb
8.45

The Milky Way

(La Voie lactée)

Two pilgrims meet a series of characters representing the principal heresies of our culture. What intrigued Buñuel about heretics was their certainty that they possess the absolute truth, which (according to André Breton) gave them a point of contact with the surrealists. The film is an extraordinary parade of Buñuelian doubts and notions. 'And for the second time I put Christ on camera. I wanted to show him as an ordinary man . . . in all respects completely alien to our traditional iconography.' *France-Italy 1969/With Delphine Seyrig, Laurent Terzieff.*



Mon 27 Feb
6.30

Tristana

'The novel was Galdós' worst, but very able to accommodate my observations about some anachronistic Spanish customs and my usual theme of eroticism and religion.' *Tristana* returns to the theme of *l'amour fou*, its two unyielding characters sharing a universe of lascivious pain. 'I remember liking the second half, from the return of the young woman with the amputated leg; I can still hear the scrape of her crutches, and the febrile conversation of the priests over their hot chocolate.' *Spain-France-Italy 1970/With Catherine Deneuve, Fernando Rey.*



Mon 27 Feb
8.45

The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie

(Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie)

An abortive dinner invitation recalled by his producer gave Buñuel the idea for the film's opening. 'From there we repeated the pattern, inventing all sorts of situations where a group of friends keep trying to have dinner together but can't seem to manage it.' The result is a chaos world with a charming, imperturbable surface; dreams, anecdotes and parties blend into a blistering text of irreverence and scorn, immaculately presented, and spiced with Buñuel's personal recipe for the dry martini. *France 1972/With Fernando Rey, Stéphane Audran, Delphine Seyrig.*

A simple surrealist suggestion was the arbitrary shooting of pedestrians, and in *Phantom* a sniper picks off random targets among the crowds below. It's just one entry in Buñuel's dazzling catalogue of observations in a film of magnificent anarchy that begins with his own death by firing squad. Monks gamble at cards, gendarmes squabble like schoolkids, a nude performs Brahms at the piano. 'Down with liberty!' is the final cry; it's altogether too close for comfort. *France 1974/With Monica Vitti, Adolfo Celi, Michel Piccoli.*

Wed 29 Feb
6.30

The Phantom of Liberté

(*Le Fantôme de la liberté*)



Curiously undervalued at first appearance, Buñuel's final film is an agonised meditation on universal duplicity – funny, yes, but also a methodically escalating account of betrayal and violence. Two-faced Fernando Rey tells his fellow-travellers about the ever-changing girl who claims to love him but refuses to be possessed. A parable of totally unreliable personal integrity, it was a subject Buñuel worked on for twenty years, and it's as close to the bone as he ever cut. *France-Spain 1977/With Fernando Rey, Angela Molina, Carole Bouquet.*

Wed 29 Feb
8.45

That Obscure Object of Desire

(*Cet obscur objet du désir*)

