

*Mexican Carnival:  
Profanations in Luis Buñuel's Films Nazarín and Simón del desierto*

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In 1960, Luis Buñuel gave an interview in which he coined a paradoxical formulation much quoted since then: “je suis toujours athée, grâce à dieu.”<sup>1</sup> This humorous statement succinctly expresses the ambivalent attitude towards Christianity the filmmaker shared with many other Surrealists. While affirming the miraculous and enigmatic aspects of every religion, Buñuel rejected the rationalization of the irrational enacted through the belief system of the Christian church, its hostility to the body and its pleasures, and its support of the existing social order. And because he had been strongly influenced by his Catholic upbringing in the regressive Spain of the early 20th century, his films came back to the topic of religion again and again.

In the following essay, I want to explore this strand in Buñuel's work on the basis of two films, *Nazarín* (1959) and *Simón del desierto* (1965), building on critical attempts to analyze it in terms of Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of carnivalism.<sup>2</sup> Drawing on this theory can be helpful in this connection for two reasons. To begin with, Bakhtin characterizes carnival as the elimination of several social oppositions by way of their leveling or reversal. These subversions also include profanations of the sacred, which, however, do not aim at its complete negation but merely at its relativization; for carnival is a dialogical counter-discourse to the monological discourse of official belief and simultaneously a part of religious culture itself. Besides, while acknowledging that carnivalism is primarily incarnated in the carnival festival connected to Catholicism, Bakhtin expands it in two directions. First, he places it in a tradition that is thousands of years old and reaches back to the archaic period, thus transferring it to other religions. Second, he regards carnivalism as a broader cultural phenomenon which also finds expression in the literary works of writers such as François Rabelais and Fyodor Dostoevsky, an idea that has encouraged scholars to apply this concept to cinema as well.<sup>3</sup>

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Nevertheless, earlier interpretations of Buñuel's films based on Bakhtin have seldom taken into account the specific geographical circumstances of their production and the ethnic references of their diegeses. In the case of *Nazarín* and *Simón del desierto*, this neglect seems to be justified by Ernesto Acevedo-Muñoz's claim that these works, although made in Mexico, are international films, since they were produced outside the country's established film industry and do not refer to the peculiarities of its culture.<sup>4</sup> In spite of his focus on issues of place in Buñuel's Mexican period, even Marc Ripley, in *A Search for Belonging*, remains peculiarly abstract in his analysis of those films' spatial dimension, as he hardly addresses the concrete geographical locations and their cultural implications.<sup>5</sup> In addition, Ripley presents his spatially oriented reading of Buñuel's work as an alternative to previous researchers' concentration on its engagement with Catholicism.<sup>6</sup>

My own analysis will differ from these approaches in two different ways. For one thing, I will try to show that the settings of *Nazarín* and *Simón del desierto* are far more specific than Ripley believes.<sup>7</sup> Then again, I argue that the depiction of these places is not an end in itself. Confronted with the criticism that *Nazarín* conveyed little Mexican atmosphere in an interview, Buñuel himself replied that he wanted to portray neither Mexico nor Spain in this film.<sup>8</sup> Instead, both *Nazarín* and *Simón del desierto* are interested in the relations *between* their various locations and put these relations into service of the films' profaning textual strategies, just as Ripley himself acknowledges that in Buñuel's cinematic oeuvre space and Catholicism are actually linked to each other.<sup>9</sup> Thus, in agreement with Volker Roloff's observation that Spanish and Latin American Surrealism was generally influenced by carnivalism, I will attempt to demonstrate on the following pages that the carnivalesque attitude of *Nazarín* and *Simón del desierto* is closely connected to the fact that these two films were made by a Spanish Surrealist in Mexican exile.<sup>10</sup>

#### *Christianity and Carnival in Mexico*

While Christianity originally emerged from Judaism, it also integrated the influences of other religions during its expansion in the Mediterranean, Northern Europe and other parts of the world.<sup>11</sup> In this process, the pagan religions were not only subject to diverse profanations, as suggested by Bakhtin, but they also actively infused Christian faith with alien ideas. On the Iberian peninsula, Christian kings, after struggling for seven centuries, finally succeeded in pushing back the Islamic sphere of power at the end of the fifteenth century and were subsequently also able to suppress any advance of the Reformation into their dominion. Both factors certainly contributed to the important role the Spanish Catholic church played in the establishment of the Spanish colonial empire and the Christian missionization of Asia, Africa and America.<sup>12</sup> However, apart from the fact that Catholic missionaries sometimes questioned the legitimacy of political colonization, Christianity could by no means be installed unchanged in Latin America, but was penetrated with

numerous extrinsic elements, partly imported from Africa, partly found in native pre-Columbian traditions.<sup>13</sup>

This ambivalence also applies to Mexico, the heartland of the Viceroyalty of New Spain. On the one hand, the Spanish Catholic church aggressively missionized this country, which included the conversion of Aztec temples and places of pilgrimage into Christian churches and the replacement of images of indigenous gods with crucifixes.<sup>14</sup> After the church had developed into one of Mexico's largest landowners in the following centuries, it sided with the Spanish colonial power during the Mexican War of Independence of 1810-21. On the contrary, its relationship to the new Mexican state was increasingly tense until an independent Mexican Catholic church was founded in 1925.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, the missionaries had illusions about their successes and only later recognized that the indigenous populations took over Christianity in public, but often adhered privately to their old religion, giving Christian names to their own gods or reading the Christian cross as a representation of the sunbeams of their sun gods.<sup>16</sup>

A good example of this is the Virgin of Guadalupe, who has an enormous national importance for Mexico and, according to Max Harris, unites three different persons, all of which bear indigenous traits. First, she represents Mother Mary who reportedly appeared in that suburb of Mexico City in 1531, addressed poor Juan Diego in his own Nahuatl language and assured him that she would protect him together with all his people. Second, according to the Franciscan Bernardino de Sahagún, the basilica of the Virgin of Guadalupe was built where a temple of Tonantzin, the mother of all Aztec gods, had previously stood. Recent ethnographic research has revealed that "Tonantzin" may just have been an Aztec name for the Virgin Mary, projected by the aboriginals into their own historical past. Third, the locals might have similarly transformed the name "Maria" into "Malinche." Notably, in ritual Mexican dances, Malinche does not appear as a partner of Hernán Cortés and thus as a traitor of her people, but rather as a partner of Moctezuma, with whom she rules over the spiritual realm, or as a goddess of fertility and a partner of the rain god Tlaloc.<sup>17</sup>

The hybridization of Christian and pagan elements can also be seen in many festivals in Latin America, where the increased and sometimes even excessive emotional intensity of feasts of saints and Good Friday celebrations can be attributed to indigenous influences.<sup>18</sup> This applies to Mexican festivals as well, which is exemplified by the combination of public European and private indigenous aspects in the Day of the Dead.<sup>19</sup> On the one hand, this feast falls on All Saints' and All Souls' Day, both introduced in Europe independently of each other in the early Middle Ages.<sup>20</sup> These Catholic holidays, which were celebrated with particular expenditure in Italy and Spain and in the latter country had been, during the High Middle Ages, the most notable festivals besides Easter and Christmas, already anticipated various components of the Day of the Dead, such as, for example,

the idea of the return of the deceased for the blessing of the households or the placement of food on the graves.<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, just as All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day had previously integrated Celtic and Germanic influences, reports of early missionaries and other written sources as well as archaeological finds indicate that pre-Columbian traditions have also manifested themselves in the Mexican Day of the Dead. In particular, the Aztecs commemorated their deceased no less than four times a year with the help of maize dough figures showing noticeable similarities with the sugar figurines and skulls that appeared at the Day of the Dead in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>22</sup>

In a similar manner, Holy Week, the Christian celebration of humanity's redemption by the sacrificial death of the Incarnate God on the cross, was associated with the Aztec notion that the gods sacrifice themselves for humans. The Aztecs represented this by sacrifices of their own to ensure the morning return of the sun god who succumbed every night to the dark forces.<sup>23</sup> These sacrificial rituals were performed at eighteen annual festivals, which reached their climax during the Nemptemi, the five supernumerary days between the old and the new year, which resulted from the old Mexican lunar calendar and during which, due to the winter solstice, great fear about the end of the world particularly prevailed.<sup>24</sup>

Other Mexican festivals with a complex mixture of Christian and indigenous elements are Corpus Christi and the *danza de los santiaguitos* in San Luis Huexotla, which derives its syncretic name from the erection of a Christian convent on the ruins of a pre-Columbian pyramidal temple.<sup>25</sup> Similar to the Corpus Christi celebration of 1538 in Tlaxcala, to this day the *danza de los santiaguitos* re-enacts the Spaniards' subjugation of the Aztecs in the guise of the Moors' expulsion from the Iberian peninsula.<sup>26</sup>

While the Holy Week ends the carnival season, the three versions of the Mexican Virgin Mary have themselves been interpreted by Harris as a manifestation of carnival abundance, just as the Day of the Dead can be considered a carnivalesque feast because of its cheerful disrespect of death.<sup>27</sup> In addition, from the eighteenth century onwards, the Day of the Dead was perceived by authorities as a threat to public order and therefore contained, while the skull motif also appeared in nineteenth-century cartoons which criticized social evils and were particularly directed against Porfirio Díaz's dictatorship and its orientation towards the United States and Europe. In these cartoons, the Day of the Dead was already seen as part of indigenous Mexican national identity, which was to be fully developed in the post-revolutionary republic of the twentieth century.<sup>28</sup>

The Spanish conquerors also brought the Catholic carnival to Mexico, where it was readily accepted and initially produced processions that were even more splendid than those in Spain.<sup>29</sup> This can again be attributed to affinities with indigenous festivals. The Nemptemi resembled carnival as well, due to, for instance, the fabrication of clay portraits which depicted the expulsion of the old

gods, who had poisoned the passing year, by the new gods, who gave strength to the coming year.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, Mexico's local population welcomed carnival as a temporary relief from the rules imposed by the Spaniards; for in colonial times, political satires were possible here that would not have been tolerated in Spain itself.<sup>31</sup> Later, carnival also seems to have preserved its subversive roots more in Latin America than in Europe, which applies not only to Brazil but to Mexico as well.<sup>32</sup> Admittedly, the great importance of beauty contests and the strict maintenance of sexual decency at the Mexican carnival indicate the latter's domestication for families and commercialization for tourists.<sup>33</sup> Yet, this is largely limited to the bigger carnival celebrations, while those in smaller rural communities still show excessive, transgressive, and pagan characteristics.

### *Buñuel in Mexico*

Several centuries after the Spanish colonizers, the Spaniard Buñuel also went to America. Having emigrated to the United States in 1939, he first lived in New York and Hollywood, then moved to Mexico seven years later, where he remained until his death in 1983. Although repeatedly returning to Europe on work-related trips in the 1960s and '70s, he realized no less than twenty films, his largest body of work, in Mexico. As is well known, Buñuel was one of numerous European Surrealists including Antonin Artaud, André Breton, Leonora Carrington, Wolfgang Paalen and Benjamin Péret who, during the 1930s and '40s, came to Mexico, where they met local artists with similar goals, such as Agustín Lazo Adalid, Manuel Álvarez Bravo or Frida Kahlo. Consequently, Mexico hosted the world's largest number of surrealist artists during and after the Second World War.<sup>34</sup>

Buñuel and the other Surrealists were certainly brought to this country by very different motives than the colonizers. First, they fled from fascism spreading in Europe as a result of the Republican defeat in the Spanish Civil War and Germany's expansion during the first years of the Second World War. They were admitted to Mexico along with many other exiles, thanks to the liberal immigration policy that had been initiated by president Lázaro Cárdenas in 1938 and continued after the end of the Second World War. The Spanish immigrants were allowed to acquire Mexican citizenship and eventually formed a considerable group of more than 15,000 people.<sup>35</sup>

Second, the Surrealists, as successors to earlier European avant-garde movements such as Fauvism, Cubism and Expressionism, were generally fascinated by non-European cultures. In this context, Mexico played a decisive role, as already indicated by the surrealist world map of 1929, which largely reduces North America to Alaska and Mexico (Fig. 1). Countless Surrealists were enthusiastic about Pre-Columbian Mexican works of visual art, which they collected, exhibited together with their own works and used as a source of inspiration, while others, most notable among them Péret, collected, published and researched oral and written myths,

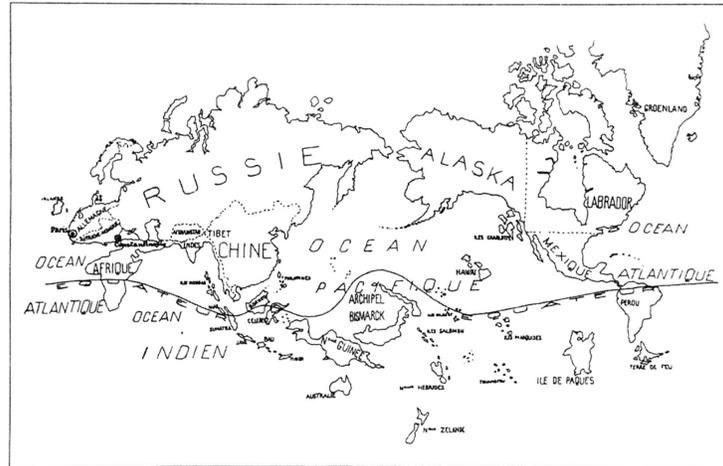


Fig. 1. Anonymous (accredited to Yves Tanguy), Surrealist World Map, first published in *Variétés*, special issue *Le Surréalisme en 1929*

legends and folktales.<sup>36</sup> In this way, the Surrealists made important contributions to the western recognition of Mexico's autochthonous culture.

At the same time, though, Breton's and the other Surrealists' stylization of Mexico as an exotic "other" has to be seen with a critical eye.<sup>37</sup> For instance, Kahlo insisted on her *mixed*—partly pre-Columbian, partly Spanish—identity, as staged in several of her self-portraits, which sometimes, as in the case of *My enfermera y yo* (1937), *Recuerdo o el corazón* (1937) or *Pensamientos a la muerte* (1943), also referred to the respective religions.<sup>38</sup> Still, the European Surrealists themselves were also interested in the carnivalesque fusion of the indigenous religions with Catholicism, as suggested by Raoul Ubac's photographs of the Day of the Dead and the fact that the objects Breton brought back from his journey to Mexico also included associated sugar skulls.<sup>39</sup>

Buñuel's relation to Mexico was quite different. Often feeling isolated in exile and longing for his Spanish homeland, he went there simply because he hoped to find work as a film director again, which turned out to be as difficult as in Hollywood.<sup>40</sup> In contrast to other Surrealists Buñuel seems to have been rather unimpressed by Mexico. Apparently, he did not value the country's heat and its deserts, its traditional and contemporary art, or its penchant for myth and magic.<sup>41</sup> As he himself noted in his autobiography, *Mon dernier soupir*, he even abhorred Mexico's "official" forms of folklore.<sup>42</sup> After some time, however, Buñuel took root in Mexico, taking on citizenship in 1949 and building a house in Mexico City

a few years later.<sup>43</sup> In addition to the professional success that now emerged, one reason for this was, perhaps, that he began to perceive similarities between Mexico and Spain, which included not only the language and the culture, but also the hot and barren landscapes with which he was already familiar from Spain.<sup>44</sup> Two peculiarities of Mexican culture, as perceived by Buñuel, even corresponded to his own personality, though he refused to admit this. While claiming not to understand Mexican machismo, he himself often behaved chauvinistically, according to several witnesses.<sup>45</sup> He was also repelled by the tendency of Mexican men to use lethal force, but was himself a weapon fetishist and hobby marksman.<sup>46</sup> At the same time, Buñuel was concerned with the “religious problem”<sup>47</sup> of a country whose Catholic Church had distanced itself from its Spanish roots less than twenty-five years ago. And although he had been particularly attracted to Cárdenas’s anti-clericalism,<sup>48</sup> he had coincidentally arrived in Mexico “at the time of All Saints Day and the Day of the Dead,” which had “immediately fascinated” him.<sup>49</sup>

While Buñuel’s experience of loneliness in exile found expression in some of his films, such as *Robinson Crusoe* (1954), *La mort en ce jardin* (1956) or *Cet obscur objet du désir* (1977),<sup>50</sup> Michael Wood claims that his films hardly reflect the specifics of their places of origin and action and cites as an example one of his Mexican works, *Los Olvidados* (1950), which, in his view, characterizes Mexico City by representing poor quarters and bourgeois streets that could be found in many other cities as well.<sup>51</sup> However, Wood has also expressed his openness to being convinced of the opposite.<sup>52</sup> In fact, other scholars have pointed out that in some of his Mexican films, including not only *Los Olvidados*, but also *El* (1953) and *Ensayo de un crimen* (1955), Buñuel penetrated peculiarities of Mexican society and the Mexican psyche more thoroughly than any other outsider.<sup>53</sup> He avoided both the nationalistic romanticization of Mexican society characteristic of the films of Emilio Fernández, the other great Mexican auteur filmmaker of that time, and its clichéd, distorted representation in conventional genre cinema, exemplified by the family melodrama’s confirmation of the conservative value system of the Catholic church.<sup>54</sup> Instead, he transferred the ethnographic distance he had adopted in *Las Hurdes* (1932) to his Mexican films, especially those of the early 1950s, which is precisely the reason why many Mexican artists and intellectuals felt Buñuel had offended their national pride with *Los Olvidados*.<sup>55</sup> However, in films such as *Subida al cielo* (1951) or *La ilusión viaja en tranvía* (1953), Buñuel also depicted joyful carnivalesque communities spontaneously formed by lower-class Mexicans during rides on buses and streetcars; and in his later Mexican film, *El ángel exterminador* (1962), he even carnivalized one of those bourgeois banquets he actually detested.<sup>56</sup>

#### *Religious Elevation and Degradation in Nazarín and Simón del desierto*

Similar references to carnivalism can be found in Buñuel’s films *Nazarín* and *Simón del desierto*, whose title characters strive to lead exemplary Christian lives

following historical models. Just as Simón is a hermit who was modelled upon Simeon Stylites the Elder, a Syrian saint of the fifth century who spent most of his life on the top of a column in the desert, Nazarín is a Catholic priest who actively tries to follow Jesus's example in all details.<sup>57</sup> Like Jesus, he seeks the company of socially marginalized people, renounces violence even when protesting against the mistreatment of others or being mistreated himself, and wanders across the country as an itinerant preacher.<sup>58</sup> These analogies are supplemented by the priest's experiences. When, after his prayer for Beatriz's sick niece, the girl actually recovers, Nazarín is regarded as a miracle healer in the savior's footsteps; his later arrest in a garden reminds the viewer of the Mount of Olives scene preceding Jesus's detention. This arrest also places Nazarín between an evil and an ultimately good criminal, as happened to Christ during his crucifixion.<sup>59</sup> Further characters have biblical counterparts as well: while the other clerics correspond to the Pharisees, Nazarín's two companions, Beatriz and Andara, can be compared to Mother Mary and Mary Magdalene or, as Buñuel himself suggested, to Mary Magdalene and the apostle Peter.<sup>60</sup> The analogy between Nazarín and Jesus is finally confirmed by the fact that the former's name alludes to the latter's home town and by the former's explicit comparison with Christ by one of the women who await him at the sickbed of Beatriz's niece.<sup>61</sup>

Seeking God's proximity, Nazarín and Simón distance themselves from their fellow men, whom they treat with condescension and reduce to mere embodiments of abstract concepts.<sup>62</sup> Following monological, fixed principles that are derived from the bible and alienate them from concrete reality, they neither enter into a true dialogue with other people nor do they take into account the consequences of their actions in changing circumstances.<sup>63</sup> Their attitudes are thus socially useless, as in the case of Simón's indifference to property, which appears sympathetic at first glance, but is then criticized by a monk for not preventing wars waged out of greed by other humans. In other cases, Nazarín's and Simón's actions are even harmful. When the ascetic miraculously cures a thief whose hands were cut off as a punishment, the first thing the man does with his regained body parts is to beat his child.<sup>64</sup> Likewise, Nazarín's willingness to work on a construction site for mere charity threatens to reduce the other workers' wages to alms and thus triggers a rebellion. After leaving the place he hears shots, but cannot even connect them with his own behavior, as he calmly breaks off a branch from an olive tree, which is of course a symbol of peace.<sup>65</sup> Nazarín is less worried about his fellow men's physical, worldly welfare than he is about their spiritual, otherworldly well-being. He wants to liberate Andara, a victim of the plague and a church thief not from their suffering, but from their sins.<sup>66</sup>

Through their ascetic way of life Nazarín and Simón also negate their own bodies. They neglect their clothing and eat little, so that at least Simón is evidently weakened. Similarly, both figures are estranged from all sensuality. This applies to



Fig. 2. Simón and his mother – Luis Buñuel, *Simón del desierto*, 1965, Producciones Gustavo Alatrste, still

olfactory perception in the first place, for as opposed to other characters, they do not notice the stench emanating from rotten water in Simón's case and a room contaminated by the plague in Nazarín's. In addition, both characters suppress their sexuality. Having forbidden his mother to step between him and the Lord at the beginning of *Simón del desierto*, the stylite later resists all temptations by the devil, who appears to him in changing female shapes, at one time even exposing the woman's thighs and breasts, and eventually abducts him, in a fantastic time travel, to a nightclub where young people celebrate "Sabbath" by dancing orgiastically to beat music played by the Mexican rock band Los Sinners.<sup>67</sup> Nazarín, in turn, explains to Beatriz that his love is not directed to her or Andara in particular, but embraces God's entire creation, which is why his companions' desire for him escapes his attention.<sup>68</sup> Generally, the two women are very passionate. While Beatriz feels an irrational love for Pinto, which, due to her disappointment, turns into hate in her imagination, Andara even lives out her aggression in reality, going so far as to kill another woman. In contrast, Nazarín is characterized by a peculiar lack of emotion, staying calm even during confrontations with other characters, such as the insults shouted at him by Andara and two other prostitutes at the film's beginning.<sup>69</sup>

However, during the course of both films, Nazarín and Simón are exposed to various profanations, which reduce them to their ordinary human measure and

restore a carnivalesque community with their fellow men.<sup>70</sup> These degradations take rather comical form on the side of the anchorite who shows human weaknesses when self-indulgently pronouncing abstruse blessings or forgetting lines of prayers.<sup>71</sup> Also, in spite of his initial separation from his mother, Simón later feels “greatly tempted” by an Oedipal daydream, in which he amuses himself with her in infantile ways, first romping around and then resting in her lap (Fig. 2).

Nazarín, in turn, ultimately lags so far behind his role model, Christ, that he becomes his profane doublet in the tradition of the medieval *parodia sacra*, which referred to many aspects of Christianity including the contents and formulations of the New Testament.<sup>72</sup> While Jesus went off on his travels voluntarily to preach his teachings and managed to recruit a large number of followers, who, except for Judas, were faithful to him, Nazarín’s peregrinations are determined by external forces. He not only flees from an impending suspension from office, but is also accompanied by Beatriz and Andara against his will and finally taken to prison by the police.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, the two women, who believe they follow him as Christian disciples but are in fact erotically attracted to him, are eventually separated from him and turn to other men, Pinto and Ujo, despite their obvious shortcomings. Nazarín also fails to truly convert others to Christianity. Just as he repeatedly rebukes Andara for her violent behavior without success, his attempts to persuade the woman suffering from the plague to confess remain futile. Instead, she turns to her husband, who has brought medical help and encourages her to recover, thus giving preference to worldly good over the salvation of her soul. Having already reacted angrily to Andara’s murder and arson and to the abuse of a poor peasant by an officer, Nazarín’s stoicism completely breaks down when his fellow prisoners attack him verbally and physically; unable to hold back his tears, he expresses his contempt for the aggressors. When it is discovered that Nazarín sheltered Andara in his apartment after her murder, he is accused of having protected a wanted criminal and of having entered a sexual relationship with a prostitute. His later arrest is similarly founded on the charge of bigamy, which is repeated by the other inmates, one of whom also calls him a “homosexual.”

Although these accusations are unjustified, Nazarín is sexualized through his repeated confrontation with the popular piety of female characters. On two occasions, Andara and Beatriz engage him in conversations that betray their superstitious beliefs. During their talk at the campfire, they relate religious phenomena including the Eucharist to material ones such as ordinary bread and trace Beatriz’s persistent seizures back to the work of the devil. However, the priest explains her intense bodily sensations as a “well-known illness” of “the imagination,” which is explicitly identified as “hysteria” in Benito Galdós’s novel *Nazarín* (1895) on which Buñuel’s film is based.<sup>74</sup> The film confirms this explanation by showing three attacks with obvious sexual connotations. While the first two seizures, one involving a classical hysterical arc, are linked to Beatriz’s lover Pinto, the third one is triggered



Fig. 3. Beatriz's hysterical arc – Luis Buñuel, *Nazarín*, 1959, Producciones Barbachano Ponce, still

by her mother's dismayed statement that she is also in love with Nazarín (Fig. 3).

Nazarín's contamination with emotionally and erotically charged superstition comes to a head when he is asked by several women to heal Beatriz's diseased niece. They are confident that the clergyman can help her because they attribute her illness to evil demons and consider him a saint with supernatural powers in the following of Christ. When Nazarín reluctantly agrees to a supplication, after which the girl actually recovers, the women feel confirmed in their conviction, which turns the whole procedure into a "Christian-pagan ritual."<sup>75</sup> Thus the priest is paradoxically desecrated in being mistaken for a miracle healer and compared to Jesus. Nazarín begins his prayer in a humble tone, but is soon joined by the women who shout loudly, roll on the floor and work themselves up into grotesque ecstasy, a "communal carnal paroxysm."<sup>76</sup> Whereas in Galdós's novel the ecstatic prayer remains unconnected to Beatriz's seizures, it bears a striking visual resemblance to them in Buñuel's film, in which it thus also appears as a "collective hysteria."<sup>77</sup> Although Nazarín can reject superstitious demeanor in other situations, he has to endure it here and is thus taken in by it, such that he closes his eyes with embarrassment. The tension between the women's frenzy and Nazarín's irritation has a comic effect, especially since he himself nearly believes they want to mock him.<sup>78</sup>

When Nazarín began his peregrination, he decided to live off charity



Fig. 4. Andara parodying the Eucharist – Luis Buñuel, *Nazarín*, 1959, Producciones Barbachano Ponce, still

but to continue helping others; yet, in the end, he himself is twice dependent on help. In the first situation, he is sheltered against his abusive fellow prisoners by another convict. This event shakes his Christian worldview not only because his protector is none other than the church thief, but also because Nazarín's attempt at conversion fails. Since the criminal insists on his fundamental wickedness, the thief's intervention can only be interpreted as support for a real person in a concrete situation, not as the fulfilment of an abstract duty, such as the priest's giving of alms.<sup>79</sup> In the second situation, Nazarín, exhausted from long walking, is given a pineapple by a fruit merchant with the wish "may God be with you," whereupon he thanks her with the words "[m]ay God repay you." These general religious references are supplemented by two more specific allusions to Good Friday. While the pineapple points to the sponge soaked in vinegar that soothed Christ's thirst, we can hear the Good Friday music drumming from Buñuel's hometown Calanda on the soundtrack.<sup>80</sup> Now, Nazarín is spared the crucifixion that Christ had to suffer.<sup>81</sup> But since the film ends with the drumming, he is also denied an Easter resurrection. Instead, *Nazarín* closes with a different turn for the good: the title character is supplied with food that sustains his mundane life, which is why he accepts it only after having first rejected it.

In addition to their protagonists, both films profane other characters and

objects. In *Simón del desierto*, the devil also possesses a monk, who writhes on the ground just as the women do in *Nazarín*, and assumes the appearance of Christ, who is thus degraded here as well. While the fellow prisoners' verbal assault on Nazarín also includes sarcastic remarks on his duties as a priest, most of the additional profanations in *Nazarín* are brought about by Andara. The first of them again concerns emotions, as the prostitute, in a feverish delirium, sees the face of Christ in a picture hanging on the wall opposite her sickbed in the clergyman's apartment take on laughing features, which substitutes the savior's traditional gravity with carnivalesque cheerfulness.<sup>82</sup> Andara's second profanation consists in a further reduction of the Eucharist to its material basis. Having been hurt during the fight with the colleague she ultimately killed, Nazarín cleans her wound. For want of another beverage, Andara drinks the water mixed with her blood from the washbowl. Similar to the gift of the pineapple to Nazarín, this merely serves to satisfy a bodily need, so that it parodies the Last Supper just as the feast on the occasion of Pantagruel's birth in Rabelais's carnivalesque novel *Gargantua et Pantagruel* (1532) does (Fig. 4).<sup>83</sup> The scene also refers to the carnivalesque concept of the grotesque body in that drinking is one of its typical functions, just as the mouth and blood belong to its characteristic parts.<sup>84</sup> A third profanation occurs when Andara burns Nazarín's household, including a statue of Saint Anthony, in a kind of carnival fire that is no less ambiguous than the carnivalesque strategy of profanation.<sup>85</sup> On the one hand, the fire is likewise meant to fulfill a practical function by dissimulating Andara's stay in Nazarín's flat, while the figurine is destroyed in retaliation for the fact that the prayer Andara had previously addressed to it remained ineffective.<sup>86</sup> On the other hand, the statuette's destruction could be understood as an iconoclastic gesture directed against the secularization of Christianity for which the Catholic church itself is responsible. A similar ambivalence can be read in the relation between the church and Nazarín. Because of his poverty and his mixing with women and ordinary criminals, Nazarín is time and again accused of desecrating priestly dignity and ultimately the whole institution of the church, while his commitment to the peasant induces another priest to call him a "heretic." However, here Buñuel's film obviously sides with Nazarín, who is "more Christian than the current Christian Church,"<sup>87</sup> and criticizes the clergy's exercise of power.<sup>88</sup>

A similar equilibrium between criticizing the title character and attacking his opponent can be found in *Simón del desierto*. While Nazarín does not oppose medicine, but rather, acknowledges its usefulness in connection with Beatriz's ill niece and the plague, *Simón del desierto* eventually associates the devil with the atomic bomb and thus puts modern physics in a negative light.<sup>89</sup> The dance in the nightclub is not only the "latest" but the "final" one, because the corresponding piece of music is called "Radio-active flesh"—a gloomy prospect for a nuclear world war that distinguishes this film from the hopeful ending of *Nazarín*.



Fig. 5. Simón looking upwards – Luis Buñuel, *Simón del desierto*, 1965, Producciones Gustavo Alatryste, still

*Vertical and Horizontal Dimensions in Nazarín and Simón del desierto*

While in *Simón del desierto* the airplane also functions as a time machine because it transports the title character from antiquity to the present, Nazarín's imitation of Jesus implies an inverse return from the end of the nineteenth century to antiquity.<sup>90</sup> In addition to these temporal symbolizations of the protagonists' religious elevations and degradations, both films also express the latter in movements within two spatial dimensions. The first movement is vertical, which refers to the motif of church bells being brought down from the tower to earth by the jester's bells in festive carnival and by horse bells in *Gargantua et Pantagruel*.<sup>91</sup>

At the beginning of *Nazarín*, the title character lives in an apartment that separates him from others because it is difficult to access and located on the upper floor.<sup>92</sup> However, after the first third of the film, Nazarín swaps his flat for the country road, where he takes a particularly low position by walking instead of riding or driving in a carriage as done by other characters. In this way, Nazarín also symbolically brings down Don Quixote from his horse, with whom he has been compared due to his unworldliness by many commentators, including Buñuel himself.<sup>93</sup> Later, Nazarín is again raised when he rests in a garden on a hill without ever descending to the town below.<sup>94</sup> Nevertheless, the film ends with close-ups of the prisoners' feet, reconnecting the body to the earth.<sup>95</sup>



Fig. 6. Satan in a coffin – Luis Buñuel, *Simón del desierto*, 1965, Producciones Gustavo Alatraste, still

The vertical dimension plays an even greater role in the film *Simón del desierto*, which uses a conventional tripartite division. Like Nazarín in his apartment, Simón is initially isolated on his column, but strives to ascend further: being placed on increasingly higher pillars, he regularly looks upwards (Fig. 5).<sup>96</sup> Just as the historical stylites avoided lying down and adopted an erect posture most of the time, Buñuel's film shows its protagonist sitting, kneeling and especially standing on the column. Similar to Simeon Stylites, Simón also punishes himself for having been deceived through the devil's disguise as Christ by standing only on one leg for the last quarter of the film.<sup>97</sup> As opposed to Simón, all other humans are bound to earth, including his mother who is only allowed to live in a hut below the pillar. The people who have gathered around it are in a particularly low position when kneeling down to pray at Simón's behest.<sup>98</sup> Finally, by his appearance in a coffin, Satan is assigned to the space under the ground and thus to hell (Fig. 6).<sup>99</sup>

The camera contributes to the film's emphasis on the vertical dimension by means of lower and upper views, as well as by tilting and tracking in this direction.<sup>100</sup> Pre-filmic entities, such as a food basket which is pulled up and lowered along the pillar and the devil who suddenly appears on its top, move vertically as well.<sup>101</sup> The anchorite himself is brought down from his column on three occasions. Right at the film's beginning, he can only climb a second, higher column after having descended

from his first, smaller one—a transitory forcing to the ground that ironically convicts him of a ridiculous vanity.<sup>102</sup> The second downward movement emphasizes Simón's sexualization, because in order to reach his mother in his fantasy he has to descend to Mother Earth again. After the hermit has praised “asceticism” for enabling him to “ascend ever onwards and upwards” to “the Heavenly Voices,” Satan finally puts him in an anachronistic airplane that briefly continues his upward movement but ultimately reverses it into a downward movement that ends in the beat club which, lacking windows, is evidently situated underground and thus stands in decided contrast to the column's airy top. The dancers are as fixed at one spatial point as Simón had been on the pillar, but, unlike him, move frenetically in a kind of carnival festivity.

Both films accentuate their title characters' downward movement by supplementing them with men of small stature, Ujo in *Nazarín* and a shepherd who herds his goats near the column in *Simón del desierto*, both of whom are played by Jesús Fernández. At the same time, both protagonists are primarily degraded by female characters, Beatriz, Andara and several other women in *Nazarín*'s case, the mother and the devil in *Simón*'s. Yet, in both films the profanations are not only linked to sexual, but also to ethnic difference, as they correlate with two kinds of horizontal movements as well.

On the micro-geographical level, *Nazarín* and *Simón* seek God's proximity and distance from other human beings, not only in the heights, but also in untouched nature. Just as the hermit lives in the desert, *Nazarín* decides to walk through the countryside, which he exclusively appreciates as God's creation.<sup>103</sup> In the end, though, neither of the two characters can escape from other men. On his wanderings, *Nazarín* is not only joined by Andara and Beatriz, but also encounters numerous others belonging to many different social groups.<sup>104</sup> Just as Simeon Stylite acquired such fame through his asceticism that his pillar became the most important place of pilgrimage in late antiquity, attracting visitors from as far as France and Spain, *Simón* is regularly visited by the monks of a nearby monastery who also hold a procession for the inauguration of his new column involving a large crowd of laypersons.<sup>105</sup> In addition, the recluse is visited repeatedly by the devil, who already tempted Jesus in the desert, as remarked upon by the shepherd and the young monk who provides *Simón* with food.

On the macro-geographical level, both protagonists follow the Christian colonizers' and Buñuel's movements from the old to the new world. Satan takes *Simón* not only from the top of his column to the underground club; since this is in New York, the ascetic is also transported from Syria to the United States. Interestingly, the plane does not fly from right to left through the image field, as one would expect from conventional world maps (Fig. 7). Instead, movement runs in the opposite direction, corresponding to the surrealist world map of 1929, which not only manipulates the relative sizes of the various regions, but also repositions the



Fig. 7. The airplane to New York – Luis Buñuel, *Simón del desierto*, 1965, Producciones Gustavo Alatriste, still

center from Europe to the Pacific (Fig. 1). Manhattan's skyscrapers rise into heaven like Simón's column, but profane it, too, as they are not close to god but dominated by the devil.<sup>106</sup> Not coincidentally, the atom bomb is associated with the United States, the first nuclear power in the world and still the only country that has actually used nuclear weapons in a military conflict.

Even before his voyage to North America, Simón's sexual profanation is connected to Mexico, for just as Simón's placement of his head in his mother's lap is reminiscent of the Pietà, her great devotion to him is clearly modelled on that of Mother Mary to Christ (Fig. 2).<sup>107</sup> This analogy was probably influenced by the Mexican Marian cult, which finds one of its most significant expressions in the Virgin of Guadalupe and her syncretic—partly Christian, partly pre-Columbian—identity.<sup>108</sup>

While the Virgin of Guadalupe is also alluded to in *Nazarín* when the women assembled at the niece's sickbed thank her upon Nazarín's arrival, I have already stated that this film is an adaptation of a novel by the Spanish writer Galdós. According to Acevedo-Muñoz, Buñuel did not adjust this literary source to the Mexican context, but, rather, used it to distance himself from Mexican cinema.<sup>109</sup> From this perspective, *Nazarín* could simply appear as one of those cinematic adaptations of Spanish literary works by which Spanish immigrants working in

the Mexican film industry tried to bring their homeland's culture to Mexico – an attempt that, despite the different circumstances, awakens disquieting memories of Mexico's colonization by Spain, but to which Buñuel's film cannot be reduced.<sup>110</sup> Admittedly, the film reinforces the link to Spain through the above-mentioned similarity of its title character to Don Quixote and also through its intertextual references to the picaresque novel, invented in Spain during the sixteenth century. Similar to Buñuel's *Nazarín*, many of these novels present an episodic narrative in which a foolish anti-hero from a questionable milieu is sent on a journey that brings him in contact with different social strata.<sup>111</sup> However, Acevedo-Muñoz also points out that Buñuel's work fits into a penchant for prestigious adaptations of classical literature characteristic of Mexican cinema itself.<sup>112</sup> It can be added that the novel's story is set in Spain at the end of the nineteenth century and that the film retains this time of action but transfers its place to Mexico, as is already indicated by the prints shown in the opening credits.<sup>113</sup> As implied above, at this time Mexico was ruled by Díaz, whose dictatorship left behind a political heritage that would still repel Buñuel decades later.<sup>114</sup> Since Díaz relied on rich landowners, the military, and also the church, the film's attack on the latter is also directed against his rule.<sup>115</sup>

The story's transplantation from Spain to Mexico has a counterpart in the fact that Buñuel used a "native cast," filling only one role, that of Nazarín himself, with a Spaniard, Francisco Rabal.<sup>116</sup> Although Nazarín, through his imitation of Jesus, symbolically moves from Mexico to Palestine and thus in the opposite direction to Simón's travel from the Near East to America, he has literally come to Mexico from Spain as well, where, as a child of Spanish parents, he went to school. By renouncing possessions, Nazarín not only shows solidarity with the poor, but also with Mexico's natives, which becomes particularly clear when he takes sides with the peasant who is harassed by the officer. Such behavior is all the more astonishing for a Spaniard who explicitly declares himself to be a priest of the Roman Catholic church, since as stated above, this institution historically played a rather inglorious role in Mexico's colonization.<sup>117</sup> Nonetheless, Nazarín's profanations have specifically Mexican roots: the women involved in them bring him in contact with two tropical plants closely connected to Central America, whereas the olive tree from which Nazarín himself breaks off a branch is associated with his native country. Both plants are absent from Galdós's novel and were added by Buñuel.

In this connection the first scene of relevance is the episode of Beatriz's sick niece. Here, already in Galdós's text, the women appear superstitious in regard to both her illness and healing; they compare Nazarín to Christ and frenetically join in his prayer.<sup>118</sup> However, only in the film they try to support the miraculous healing by touching Nazarín's body and that of the girl with a sugar cane flower (Fig. 8).<sup>119</sup> During late antiquity and the early Middle Ages, the Arabs brought the sugar cane, which originated in South East Asia and India, to the Mediterranean, including central Spain, where its cultivation was taken over by Christian Europeans.



Fig. 8. Nazarín and the sugar cane – Luis Buñuel, *Nazarín*, 1959, Producciones Barbachano Ponce, still

A few centuries later, Christopher Columbus took sugar cane shoots with him on his second journey to America, and other Iberian explorers followed his example. As the Caribbean climate was much more favorable to the cultivation of sugar cane, it moved completely from the Mediterranean Sea to this region, making cane sugar the most important export of the Central American colonies. Thus although the plant had been exported to America by the Europeans, from the seventeenth century onwards it was in their view firmly identified with this part of the world, as was the magical use of plants. Indigenous Mexicans and Afro-Mexicans used ritually-prepared herbs to cure disease and to avert or avenge particularly harassing behavior on the side of the Spanish colonizers.<sup>120</sup> The Spanish regarded such practices as an expression of unbelief or even as evidence of an alliance with the devil, fearing loss of colonial control. They even treated natives with suspicion when they themselves called on them for magical help in cases of illness in which Spanish physicians had failed.<sup>121</sup> Both the use of plants as magical remedies and their subversive effects on the relation between Christian colonizers and colonized heathens come into play in the healing sequence of *Nazarín*.

The film's ending is the second scene that connects the motif of profanation with Mexico. Although it is linked to Buñuel's Spanish homeland through the auditory inclusion of Calanda's Good Friday drums, it also contains a significant



Fig. 9. Nazarín and the pineapple – Luis Buñuel, *Nazarín*, 1959, Producciones Barbachano Ponce, still

change on the literary source.<sup>122</sup> The presentation of the pineapple is not found in Galdós's novel, which instead closes with Nazarín's hallucination of a Eucharistic celebration.<sup>123</sup> Now, the substitution of the host by the pineapple emphasizes not only the profaning replacement of spiritual redemption with a material turn to the good. It additionally associates this profanation with Mexico, since the pineapple is a tropical fruit which even originates in Latin America and was first met by Europeans when such a fruit was presented to Columbus as a welcome gift by American natives during his second journey to the Caribbean (Fig. 9). Thus, *Nazarín's* ending profanes Holy Week in a way that is closely linked to the latter's Mexican amalgamation with Aztec theology about divine and human sacrifice. And just as in *Simón del desierto*, here, too, the connection between the profanation of Europe's Christian heritage and the American continent reaches its final climax.

### *Conclusion*

Like many other surrealist artists, Buñuel fled from European fascism first to the United States and then to Mexico. However, while other Surrealists often exoticized and idealized this Central American country, Buñuel took a more critical stance, possibly due to Mexico's linguistic and cultural affinities to his home country Spain. At the same time, Buñuel's Mexican films were much more engaged

in the cultural context of their origin than is sometimes claimed. In particular, his films *Nazarín* and *Simón del desierto* took up the tradition of Mexican carnivalism, which included both a profane mixture of Christianity, introduced in the course of colonization, with the indigenous religion, and an anti-colonial instrumentalization of Catholic carnival itself. The title characters' enhanced religious ambitions, which alienate them from their fellow human beings as well as from their own bodies, are undermined by various strategies, ranging from the confrontation with superstitious convictions to the appearance of the devil himself and aiming at a restoration of repressed emotionality, sexuality and materiality. The elevations and degradations of the two protagonists are connected to both sexual and ethnic difference and are expressed not only by vertical up and down movement, but also by horizontal movement on a micro- and macro-geographical scale. In the latter case, the old world is confronted with the new world, which comprises both Mexico and the United States. Just as Simón is transplanted from ancient Syria to a New York nightclub that stands for the hell of a nuclear world war, *Nazarín* transfers its title character from Spain to Mexico in order to expose him to profanations in which the typical Central American plants of sugar cane and pineapple play a special role. Hence, the two films can be read as their creator's attempt to come to terms with his *entire* American exile.

- 1 Michèle Manceaux, "Luis Buñuel: Athée grâce à dieu," *L'Express*, May 12, 1960, 41.
- 2 Robert Stam, *Subversive Pleasures: Bakhtin, Cultural Criticism, and Film* (Baltimore/London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 102–107, 175–177; Mathias Mertens, *Buñuel, Bachtin und der karnevaleske Film* (Weimar: VDG, 1999); Aitor Bikandi-Mejias, *El Carnaval de Luis Buñuel: Estudios sobre una tradición cultural* (Madrid: Laberinto, 2000).
- 3 Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984); Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994); Stam; Michael V. Montgomery, *Carnivals and Commonplaces: Bakhtin's Chronotope, Cultural Studies, and Film* (New York/Berlin: Lang, 1993).
- 4 Ernesto R. Acevedo-Muñoz, *Buñuel and Mexico: The Crisis of National Cinema* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 2003), 13, 144.
- 5 Marc Ripley, *A Search for Belonging: The Mexican Cinema of Luis Buñuel* (London/New York: Wallflower/Columbia University Press, 2017), 79–90, 110–122.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 18–22.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 85–88, 124.
- 8 José de la Colina and Tomás Pérez Turrent, *Objects of Desire: Conversations with Luis Buñuel*, trans. Paul Lenti (New York: Marsilio, 1992), 133, 140.
- 9 Ripley, 20.
- 10 Volker Roloff, "Metamorphosen des Surrealismus in Spanien und Lateinamerika: Medienästhetische Aspekte," in *Spielformen der Intermedialität im spanischen und lateinamerikanischen Surrealismus*, eds. Uta Felten and Volker Roloff (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2004), 14, 22, 24, 26, 28–33.
- 11 Elena Nährlich-Slatewa, "Eine Replik zum Aufsatz von Dietz-Rüdiger Moser 'Lachkultur des Mittelalters? Michael Bachtin und die Folgen seiner Theorie,'" *Euphorion* 85, no. 3–4 (1991): 417–419; Max Harris, *Carnival and Other Christian Festivals: Folk Theology and Folk Performance* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), 75–76.
- 12 Paul E. Sigmund, "Latin American Catholic Societies," in: *The Oxford Handbook of Global Religions*, ed. Mark Juergensmeyer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 326.
- 13 Richard Nebel, "Fest und Feier in Amerika – Fronleichnam in Tlaxcala (1538) und Karfreitag in Iztapalapa (1975) in Mexiko," in *Fiesta Latina: Lateinamerikanische Feste und Festbräuche*, eds. Wulf Köpke and Bernd Schmelz (Hamburg: Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg, 2002), 30, 32.
- 14 Nebel, 34–35, 45.
- 15 Sigmund, 327.
- 16 Nebel, 45; Alexander Orloff, *Karneval: Mythos und Kult* (Wörgl: Perlinger, 1980), 68; Harris, 75.
- 17 Harris, 49–51, 60–61.
- 18 Nebel, 33–34, 46, 50–51.
- 19 *Ibid.*, 33; Anne Slenczka, "Das Totenfest (Día de Muertos) in Mexiko: Eine indianische, christliche oder erfundene Tradition?," in *Fiesta Latina: Lateinamerikanische Feste und Festbräuche*, eds. Wulf Köpke and Bernd Schmelz (Hamburg: Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg, 2002), 68, 74.
- 20 Nebel, 33; Slenczka, 58, 61.
- 21 Slenczka, 61–63.
- 22 *Ibid.*, 60–61, 64–66, 69–70, 74–75.
- 23 However, it is controversial whether human beings were really sacrificed in the process and, if so, to what extent.
- 24 Orloff, 67–68; Nebel, 47–49.
- 25 Harris, 65–66.
- 26 Nebel, 35–44; Harris, 66–77.
- 27 Harris, 68.
- 28 Slenczka, 56–58, 69–73.
- 29 Orloff, 69.
- 30 *Ibid.*, 68.

- 31 Ibid., 69.
- 32 Stam, 90–91; Thomas Macho, “Vom Ursprung des Monströsen: Zur Wahrnehmung des verunstalteten Menschen,” *Manuskripte* 109 (September 1990): 85.
- 33 Orloff, 69–70.
- 34 Acevedo-Muñoz, 44; Uta Felten, “‘Éste, que ves, engaño colorido’ – Intermedialität und hybride Diskurspraxis in der mexikanischen Literatur- und Mediengeschichte,” in *Spielformen der Intermedialität im spanischen und lateinamerikanischen Surrealismus*, eds. Uta Felten and Volker Roloff (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2004), 256–257; Dawn Ades, “Surrealism in Latin America,” in *A Companion to Dada and Surrealism*, ed. David Hopkins (Hoboken: Wiley Blackwell, 2016), 191–192.
- 35 Acevedo-Muñoz, 43–44; Marvin D’Lugo, “Subversive Travel: The Transnational Buñuel in Mexico,” in *Buñuel, siglo XXI*, eds. Isabel Santaolalla, Patricia d’Allemand, Jorge Díaz Cintas, Peter W. Evans, Consuelo Sanmateu, Alistair Whyte and Michael Witt (Zaragoza: Prensas Universitarias de Zaragoza, 2004), 93.
- 36 Ades, 187.
- 37 Felten, 255.
- 38 Ibid., 257–258, 263–271; Ades, 189.
- 39 Felten, 268; Marcel Jean and Arpad Mezei, *The History of Surrealist Painting*, trans. Simon Watson Taylor (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 291.
- 40 John Baxter, *Buñuel* (London: Fourth Estate, 1995), 198; Víctor Fuentes, “The Constant of Exile in Buñuel,” in *Luis Buñuel: New Readings*, eds. Peter William Evans and Isabel Santaolalla (London: BFI, 2004), 161.
- 41 Luis Buñuel, *My Last Breath*, trans. Abigail Israel (London: Flamingo/Fontana, 1985), 220; Baxter, 194, 212, 225.
- 42 Buñuel, 230. See also Víctor Fuentes, *Buñuel en México: Iluminaciones sobre una pantalla pobre* (Teruel: Instituto de Estudios Turolenses/Gobierno de Aragón, 1993), 50; Baxter, 225.
- 43 Fuentes, “The Constant of Exile in Buñuel,” 163–164, 169.
- 44 Francisco J. Aranda, *Luis Buñuel: A Critical Biography*, trans. David Robinson (London: Secker & Warburg, 1975), 130; Baxter, 198.
- 45 Baxter, 226.
- 46 Buñuel, 206–211, 226; Baxter, 194, 201–202.
- 47 Aranda, 130.
- 48 Baxter, 198.
- 49 Michael Wood, “Buñuel in Mexico,” in *Mediating Two Worlds*, eds. John King, Ana López and Manuel Alvarado (London: BFI, 1993), 40.
- 50 D’Lugo, 96; Fuentes, 166, 168.
- 51 Wood, 48–50.
- 52 Ibid., 48.
- 53 Acevedo-Muñoz, 8, 11; Fuentes, 164–165; Gerhard Midding, “Die Realität des Imaginären: Motive im Werk von Luis Buñuel,” in *Luis Buñuel: Essays, Daten, Dokumente*, ed. Deutsche Kinemathek (Berlin: Bertz + Fischer, 2008), 23–24.
- 54 D’Lugo, 93; Acevedo-Muñoz, 6, 147–148.
- 55 Aranda, 130; Acevedo-Muñoz, 147; Buñuel, 200–201; Baxter, 208, 212.
- 56 Buñuel, 227; Fuentes, *Buñuel en México*, 50. The bus trip in *Subida al cielo* brings together all essential events of human life, thus becoming its carnivalesque symbol. During the long journey, solidarity and even intimacy develop among the passengers, who were at first complete strangers to each other. In *La ilusión viaja en tranvía*, two mechanics take a last ride on their own with a tram that has just been discarded and allow others to board free of charge, with whom they fraternize in this transgressive act. Fuentes, 50.
- 57 Jacques Goimard, “Quelques réflexions sur Buñuel et le christianisme (à propos de ‘Simon du

- désert’),” *Positif* 108 (September 1969): 9; Freddy Buache, *The Cinema of Luis Buñuel* (London/New York: Tantivy Press/A.S. Barnes, 1973), 151; Mertens, 206, 210–211.
- 58 Raymond Durnat, *Luis Buñuel* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1977), 109.
- 59 *Ibid.*, 109; Gwynne Edwards, *The Discreet Art of Luis Buñuel: A Reading of His Films* (London: Boyars, 1982), 131; Monika Leisch-Kiesl and Hanjo Sauer, *Religion und Ästhetik bei Ingmar Bergman und Luis Buñuel: Eine interdisziplinäre Auseinandersetzung mit dem Medium Film* (Frankfurt/M: Peter Lang, 2005), 229.
- 60 Mertens, 206; Colina and Turrent, 132.
- 61 Leisch-Kiesl and Sauer, 228, 231.
- 62 Midding, 33; Mertens, 209–214.
- 63 Jean Bastaire, “Luis Buñuel ou le reproche d’angélisme,” *Études cinématographiques* 22-23 (Spring 1963): 219; Mertens, 214–215.
- 64 Buache, 154–155.
- 65 Marcel Martin, “The Priest and the Man,” in *The World of Luis Buñuel: Essays in Criticism*, ed. Joan Mellen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 212; Mertens, 214–215; Leisch-Kiesl and Sauer, 232.
- 66 Mertens, 209, 215–216.
- 67 All quotes without indication of source like this one are taken from the respective film under discussion.
- 68 Edwards, 129, 131; Mertens, 210–211.
- 69 This scene is reminiscent of a photograph published in issue 8 of *La Révolution surréaliste* from 1st December 1926, which shows Péret supposedly hurling abuses at a priest. It was precisely the sight of this picture which initially aroused Buñuel’s interest in Surrealism. Ian Walker, *City Gorged With Dreams: Surrealism and Documentary Photography in Interwar Paris* (Manchester/New York: Manchester University Press, 2002), 81–83.
- 70 Bastaire, 218; Midding, 33–34.
- 71 Peter Hasenberg, “Das Unerklärbare akzeptieren: Religiöse Dimensionen im Werk Luis Buñuels,” *Film-Dienst* 53, no. 4 (February 15, 2000): 11.
- 72 Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 6, 14.
- 73 Leisch-Kiesl and Sauer, 225, 227–228.
- 74 Benito Pérez Galdós, *Nazarín*, trans. Jo Labanyi (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 79. Galdós was influenced by the discussion of hysteria among late 19th-century psychiatrists, including Jean-Martin Charcot, who himself had linked hysteria to the witchcraft of earlier times.
- 75 Ripley, 154. See also Mertens, 218–219; Leisch-Kiesl and Sauer, 235–236.
- 76 Ripley, 154. See also Edwards, 124–126; Mertens, 219.
- 77 Ripley, 153. See also Michael Wood, “‘God Never Dies’: Buñuel and Catholicism,” *Renaissance and Modern Studies* 36 (1993): 100. Salvador Dalí had already read Charcot’s photographs of hysterical attacks as representations of female ecstasy in his article “Le Phénomène de l’extase” (1933) and an accompanying collage, which combined them with other photographic images.
- 78 Mertens, 219.
- 79 Theodor Kotulla, “Verbrecher und Heiliger bei Buñuel,” *Filmkritik* 138 (June 1968): 414; Mertens, 209, 224–225.
- 80 Hasenberg, 10; María Elena de las Carreras-Kuntz, “Luis Buñuel’s Quarrel with the Catholic Church,” in *Buñuel, siglo XXI*, eds. Isabel Santaolalla, Patricia d’Allemand, Jorge Díaz Cintas, Peter W. Evans, Consuelo Sanmateu, Alistair Whyte and Michael Witt (Zaragoza: Prensas Universitarias de Zaragoza, 2004), 67–68.
- 81 Amédée Ayfre, “Buñuel et le christianisme,” *Études cinématographiques* 20-21 (Winter 1962–63): 54.
- 82 Mertens, 220; Bakhtin, 59–144.

- 83 Bakhtin, 407–408. In the *Coena Cypriani*, almost the entire bible is profaned on the basis of its festive motifs. Bakhtin, 84, 286–289.
- 84 Ibid., 303–367.
- 85 Ibid., 17, 210, 237, 248–249, 332–335, 393.
- 86 Mertens, 221–222.
- 87 Wood, 99.
- 88 Durgnat, 112.
- 89 Mertens, 218.
- 90 Ian Christie, “Buñuel Against ‘Buñuel’: Reading the Landscape of Fanaticism in *La Voie lactée*,” in *Luis Buñuel: New Readings*, eds. Peter William Evans and Isabel Santaolalla (London: BFI, 2004), 137.
- 91 Bakhtin, 213–216.
- 92 Mertens, 209.
- 93 Colina and Turrent, 132; Kotulla, 410; Edwards, 117–118; Marcel Oms, *Don Luis Buñuel* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1985), 143–144.
- 94 Ripley, 114.
- 95 Ibid., 121.
- 96 Ibid., 111.
- 97 Xon de Ros, “Buñuel’s Miracles: The Case of *Simón del desierto*,” in *Buñuel, siglo XXI*, eds. Isabel Santaolalla, Patricia d’Allemand, Jorge Díaz Cintas, Peter W. Evans, Consuelo Sanmateu, Alistair Whyte and Michael Witt (Zaragoza: Prensas Universitarias de Zaragoza, 2004), 74.
- 98 Goimard, 10.
- 99 Ibid., 9.
- 100 Midding, 36–37; Ripley, 82.
- 101 Jacques Goimard’s claim that the devil remains on the ground is wrong. Goimard, 9.
- 102 Ripley, 81.
- 103 Ibid., 115.
- 104 Edwards, 135.
- 105 Goimard, 8. Originally, Buñuel had planned to include even more pilgrimage scenes in the film. Buñuel, 240; Oms, 147.
- 106 Durgnat, 138.
- 107 Ros, 75; Ripley, 82.
- 108 Ros, 78.
- 109 Acevedo-Muñoz, 145.
- 110 Fuentes, 162–163.
- 111 Aranda, 180; Edwards, 117.
- 112 Acevedo-Muñoz, 145.
- 113 Edwards, 118; Oms, 142–143.
- 114 Baxter, 194.
- 115 Aranda, 177; Edwards, 138; Leisch-Kiesel and Sauer, 232. During his argument with the officer, Nazarín refers to “despot[s],” which can be interpreted as a direct allusion to Díaz.
- 116 Sally Faulkner, *Literary Adaptations in Spanish Cinema* (Rochester: Tamesis, 2004), 136.
- 117 Wood, 98.
- 118 Galdós, 72–77.
- 119 Ripley, 154.
- 120 Joan Cameron Bristol, *Christians, Blasphemers, and Witches: Afro-Mexican Ritual Practice in the Seventeenth Century* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2007), 151–157, 164–169, 187–188.
- 121 Ibid., 159–164, 172–188.
- 122 The connection to Spain is also established in *Simón del desierto*, where the drums can be heard at three different times, but are always linked to Simón’s mother, another signifier for home.

123 Kotulla, 413; Galdós, 190.