The Best of All Worlds?: Representing Space and Belonging in Luis Buñuel’s Mexican Cinema

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Abstract

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This thesis seeks to revisit the Mexican films of the Spanish film director Luis Buñuel in order to show that a concerted focus on space, an important aspect of the films' narratives that is often intimated by scholars, yet rarely developed, can unlock new philosophical meaning in this rich body of work. Although Buñuel’s Mexican films now enjoy a greater presence in criticism on the director, they are often segregated according to an intra-corpus hierarchy of critical value, effectively creating two sub-strands among the films of this period: independent and commercial. The interdisciplinary approach taken in this thesis unites the two, focusing on a total of nine films from the period. In doing so it moves beyond the tropes most often associated with Buñuel’s cinema – surrealism, Catholicism, a fixation on the bourgeoisie – and the approach most often invoked in analysis of these themes: psychoanalysis. Instead, the thesis takes inspiration from the fields of human geography, anthropology and philosophy, applying these to a close reading of Buñuel’s Mexican films to argue that, ultimately, these films depict a sense of placelessness, overtly or subliminally enacting a search for belonging that forces the viewer to question what it means to be in place.
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**Introduction**

Luis Buñuel’s arrival in Mexico in 1946 would herald a new phase in the director’s career. This phase was, if not always critically acclaimed, indisputably prolific until its end in 1965. Francisco Aranda asserts that ‘[t]he simple fact of going to Mexico was decisive in Buñuel’s rediscovery of his road’:¹ Buñuel had not acted as the sole director of a film since his 1932 documentary *Tierra sin pan*, despite working as a producer for the Spanish Filmófono studios between 1935 and 1936, then emigrating to the United States and working in the Museum of Modern Art in New York before spending two years as a dubbing expert for Warner Brothers in Los Angeles. Of a total of thirty-two films of which Buñuel was the sole director, twenty were filmed in Mexico.² The films that Buñuel shot during this time differ greatly in theme and style, and the themes of Buñuel’s Mexican cinema often eschew generic conventions and classifications in a national industry which, as Ernesto Acevedo-Muñoz has signalled, was saturated with recognisable genres such as the archetypal *comedia ranchera* and the family melodrama.³ Paradoxically, Buñuel, ‘an iconoclast, a moralist and a revolutionary’,⁴ was most productive in a national cinema whose commercial success in its so-called Golden Age from the late 1930s to the early 1950s was based largely on strict adherence to generic conventions.⁵ Carl Mora goes as far as to say that, as the Golden Age of

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² This figure does not include productions that, although filmed during the director’s so-called Mexican period, were not actually filmed in Mexico. The filming of *Cela s’appelle l’aurore* took Buñuel to Corsica, *Viridiana* was filmed in Spain, and *Le Journal d’une femme de chambre* was shot in France.


production drew to a close, Buñuel ‘gave the Mexican cinema whatever vitality it had left in the late 1950s and early 1960s’.6

This thesis aims to shed new light on Buñuel’s Mexican cinema through considering the spatial dynamics of the films of this period. The films that Buñuel made there have traditionally been segmented into commercial and auteurist strands. This polarity in the films’ critical reception has been largely reinforced by the analytical paradigms employed in the study of these films. For the more independent movies that pepper Buñuel’s Mexican period, such as Los olvidados, Nazarín and El ángel exterminador, scholars often foreground their readings in what I term the Buñuelian bedrock of Catholicism, surrealism, the bourgeoisie and Spanish identity. In turn, the lesser critical attention given to the more commercial films has frequently focused on genre and the films’ production contexts. The interdisciplinary analytical framework of this thesis works to free the commercial movies from these modes of analysis; likewise, it seeks to reconsider the auteurist films outside of the analytical predicates of surrealism, Catholicism and psychoanalysis. In this way the films for study, occupying positions of critical renown and relative critical neglect, are simultaneously drawn together outside of the respective investigative approaches within which they have frequently been circumscribed. The thrust of the argument of this thesis lies in its refusal to conform to pre-established critical paradigms – auteur-biographical, psychoanalytical or surrealist – to achieve an in-depth reading of the films. Instead, in its concentration on the representation of space, it actively takes advantage of what Julián Daniel Gutiérrez-Albilla sees as Buñuel’s position as straddling a ‘liminal slipzone between Spanish, Mexican and French culture, between sexual and political discourse, between sound and image, between surrealism and commercial melodramas and between margins and centre’. Importantly, he goes on to emphasise: ‘[t]he location of Buñuel’s cinema in a liminal position encourages us to use interdisciplinary theories’.7

By foregrounding the centrality of space in producing alternative readings of Buñuel’s Mexican films, I am displacing the films studied from their interpretive

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anchors by working within the domains of spatial analysis and the philosophy of geography. Although I draw heavily on a variety of spatial theorists and theories in my reading of the movies, I am aware of the imperative that these should evidence the theory and not vice-versa. As such, I provide detailed and film-focused readings of the movies themselves and how they illuminate the theoretical positions at hand. Furthermore, I engage extensively with past scholarship on each of the films, showing how much of this has hinted at, but never concertedly addressed, the spatial concerns that underpin my analyses of these films, effectively inflecting the films’ respective narratives in a different manner by actively reading the films against the grain of prescribed conceptual models of interpretation. At the same time, I take my lead from Carlos Fuentes, who describes the development of Buñuel’s characters in spatial-philosophical terms, as they plunge the depths of ‘las selvas subjetivas y los océanos sociales’ in a quest to find ‘el ser auténtico’.8 I link his writing on Buñuel’s cinema to similar philosophical elaborations of the filmmaker’s corpus by writers and critics such as Manuel Marcel, Elliot Rubinstein and Michael Wood, foregrounding Buñuel’s Mexican cinema within spatial-philosophical questions of belonging and non-belonging that coalesce around Charles Chaspoul’s acute assertion that ‘Buñuel very often films characters in displacement, who never truly seem to succeed in inhabiting the places where they find themselves’.9

Chapter One provides the justification for this approach and excavates the groundwork for the research in this thesis, beginning with a reconsideration of the thematic complexity of Buñuel’s Mexican cinema. With the publication of numerous edited volumes, conference proceedings and exhibitions on the filmmaker after 2000, following the centenary of his birth, now is an opportune moment to re-evaluate the position of Buñuel’s Mexican cinema within Buñuel scholarship generally and to address the charges of critical neglect that researchers have frequently voiced in relation to his work made in Mexico, especially concerning those works seen as more commercial.

9 Charles Chaspoul, ‘Cinéma exilé, cinéma exilant’, Positif, 435 (1997), 113-18 (p. 115). [‘Buñuel filme très souvent des personnages en déplacement qui semblent ne jamais vraiment réussir à habiter les lieux où ils se trouvent’]. All translations from sources in French, German and Italian throughout this thesis are my own unless stated otherwise.
After reviewing the existing literature on Buñuel's Mexican films, I turn my attention towards the growing importance of space in analyses of Buñuel's cinema. I show that a spatial focus can serve to unite the two strands of Buñuel's Mexican period by bypassing the somewhat prescriptive modes of critical analysis outlined above. Despite the novelty of this approach in Buñuel studies, I do not treat my approach in isolation; I acknowledge the ways in which spatially driven readings have featured in Buñuel scholarship by first outlining Buñuel’s reluctance to represent space aesthetically, and the implications of this in research on the director, before examining the extensive thread of exile and transnationalism with regards to Buñuel, and the ways in which Buñuel scholars’ attention to space naturally feeds into and influences this. I then draw on more philosophical literature on Buñuel to propose that he can be considered a kind of human geographer insofar as the characters in his films are frequently subjected to their environments and the films' narratives can be read as the struggle to resolve this tension between character and place. In addition, I detail the growing significance of the so-called spatial turn in the humanities and social sciences, and consider various ways in which considerations of space have been employed in the study of film.

The remaining chapters elaborate film-focused readings of a number of movies from the period. In selecting the films for analysis, I have considered which of them share similarities or exhibit contrasts stylistically and thematically, as well as juxtaposing what have been seen as examples of Buñuel’s more auteurist movies with those made within more commercial contexts. Chapter Two approaches the island spaces of *Robinson Crusoe* and *The Young One*, Buñuel’s only English-language productions. The narrative of each film presents its island setting as more than simply passive *mise-en-scène*; it is fundamental to the viewer’s understanding of the films. I contend that the island spaces of both films are abortive utopias, that is, that Crusoe’s desert island and the game-preserve of *The Young One* are spaces of utopian intent, but which fail in practice, and are thus shown to affect the physical and psychological states of their inhabitants. I employ Michel Foucault’s theory of heterotopias – to be explicated in the chapter itself – as my framework for analysis here. Following Foucault’s brief outline of the concept, heterotopias, literally other or different spaces, have come to be considered as
structured according to their own system of power or social ordering, which often contrasts with that of the society in which they are located. Thanks in part to the aforementioned spatial turn, heterotopias have gained currency as a field for analysis in the arts, humanities and social sciences, and the concept is evoked in numerous analyses of film.\textsuperscript{10} As abortive utopias both Crusoe's island and the game-preserve of \textit{The Young One} are shown to be unsettling spaces that subvert the romantic image of the island as an idyllic retreat through the mental and physical effects that dwelling there has on their inhabitants.

Chapter Three delves into the similarly isolated spaces of the jungle and the desert, considering questions of exterior space and the ways in which this is shown to affect the characters placed there. The films for analysis here are \textit{La Mort en ce jardin} and \textit{Simón del desierto}. These have not been considered previously at length in Buñuel criticism as aesthetic or thematic companions; here they are taken as a pair because I propose that the spaces of their narratives – the jungle and the desert respectively – are strong examples of liminal spaces. Liminality has its roots in anthropology as a term used to define the middle period during rites of passage, whereby members of a group or tribe are separated from their society and are subjected to different laws, or indeed a suspension of laws, governing their behaviour, before completing the ritual process and achieving a reintegration into society. During this time they are, to cite anthropologist Victor Turner, in a state 'betwixt and between'.\textsuperscript{11} In this chapter I explain that the group of Francophone villagers in the former film, and Simón in the latter, are placed between spatial referents in the unfurling jungle and the seemingly limitless desert, not achieving a reintegration into any society. In doing so, I build upon the considerable body of work within the arts and the social sciences which fruitfully maps the spatial resonances of liminality. Through the analytical framework of the spatial liminal, the films' respective endings gain a new inflection which contrasts


with traditional interpretations that have tended to de-problematisate the latent ambiguity of these movies through their allegorical readings.

Chapter Four moves towards a rather different philosophical conception of space through a focus on what has been termed the place-world. This is a concept elaborated by the philosopher of geography Edward Casey to designate the ‘inhabitation of places in a circumambient landscape’.\textsuperscript{12} The films used to animate this exploration of the place-world are two of Buñuel’s most critically acclaimed of the Mexican period: \textit{Los olvidados} and \textit{Nazarín}. Thematically, these films are very different, with one focusing on Mexico City’s forgotten street children and the other on an itinerant priest in the Mexican countryside. This is not a question of typologies of external space, however. In positioning my analysis within a geographical-philosophical perspective I avoid contrasting the films from an aesthetic viewpoint as merely the representation of the urban versus the rural. Rather, the unifying thread will centre on the body in place, both in its physical and psychological dimensions. As the near surroundings of any person, the place-world requires corporeal negotiation and in turn impacts the negotiating body in a variety of ways. This focus allows for an opportunity to engage with and extend the work of scholars such as Aitor Bikandi-Mejías on Buñuel’s treatment of the body and his preference for the marginalised, frequently diseased, dying and defunct body. While Pedro and the gang of urchins demonstrate an intimate knowledge and dextrous manipulation of both their bodies and slum surroundings, Nazarín, unlike his female disciples, is shown to sublimate his corporeal urges, not committing himself to a grounding in any place. Once again, the spatial focus of this thesis makes possible a new interpretation of these much-commented films, teasing out the latent concern with space that is shown to underscore much of the criticism written on them in order to reconsider these analyses.

The aim of Chapter Five is to reposition the films and theoretical frameworks examined in the previous chapters within the unifying thread of the thesis: the impossibility of a home-place, or a place of belonging, within the films’ narratives. In this way, this chapter is a synopsis insofar as it is the point of

convergence for the previous three analytical chapters, as well as being an analytical chapter in its own right, forging a path for further research as each pair of films is considered alongside a third: *La Fièvre monte à El Pao*, *Abismos de pasión* and *El ángel exterminador*, respectively. Thus, the frameworks for analysis in each preceding chapter are expanded to consider their resonances with the notion of a home-place, casting another interpretational nuance on the films analysed previously. In addressing questions of home and belonging, my discussion is inspired by broadly phenomenological thinkers such as Gaston Bachelard, Martin Heidegger and Anthony Steinbock, all of whom I draw on in my reading of the films. I will show that a philosophical explication of the home in a broadly phenomenological vein is well positioned to bring to light alternative readings of belonging and non-belonging, a theme at the heart of the movies analysed here. The above analytical frameworks and concepts certainly demonstrate a degree of interdisciplinarity – stemming as they do from anthropology, geography and philosophy – yet they are all shown to underscore the way in which these films, independently of their portrayal of typical Buñuelian themes, their subscription to generic paradigms or their being claimed for this or that national cinema, encourage us to think about questions of belonging and non-belonging. Claudia Brosseder has said of Buñuel that he wanted to ‘let people see the realities that they usually avoid’.13 The interdisciplinary spatial-philosophical approach taken in this thesis brings this reality to light, reading an alternative narrative through the images on screen to argue that, as the characters show, we are not always securely in place or at home.

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Chapter One
Towards a spatial Buñuel

1.0 Introduction
Buñuel's Mexican cinema has traditionally posed several problems for critics and scholars of the filmmaker. Unlike the director's earlier French/Spanish triptych of *Un Chien andalou*, *L’Âge d’or* and *Tierra sin pan*, and his later French period from *Le Journal d’une femme de chambre* and *Belle de jour* onwards, his Mexican cinema presents a lesser degree of stylistic and formal cohesion. Whereas Gwynne Edwards and Elisabeth Lyon propose an association between Buñuel's first three movies predicated on an aesthetic basis, and Aranda lends the later films, beginning with *El ángel exterminador*, the grandiose title of the 'Great Films of Maturity', the intermediate Mexican period offers a collection of more commercial, genre-driven pictures peppered sporadically with more auteurist productions such as *Los olvidados* or *Nazarín*. The films made in Mexico constitute the majority of Buñuel's filmography as director and, as Acevedo-Muñoz suggests, the numerous, largely genre films made by Buñuel in this period prove difficult for some critics to reconcile with 'Buñuel as the European surrealist phenomenon'.

In addition, the commercial nature of Mexican cinema during its Golden Age, roughly coinciding with Buñuel's arrival in the country in the mid 1940s, meant that films were constructed around generic conventions and the star system in an emulation of the Hollywood model. Shooting schedules were largely rapid and demanding, as Buñuel comments: '[e]l tiempo de rodaje varió entre 18 y 24 días – lo cual es sumamente rápido –, excepto *Robinson Crusoe*. Medios reducidos, sueldo modestísimo. En dos ocasiones, hice tres películas al año'. This has led to the dismissive attitude among some critics that the bulk of the director's Mexican

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15 Acevedo-Muñoz, p. 11.

works are little more than 'studio potboilers', or its equally flippant equivalent in Spanish, 'películas alimenticias'.

Adopting a spatial approach to Buñuel's Mexican cinema first requires a justification and explication of several aspects. The films of this period have traditionally been neglected in criticism on the director, though recently this is being rectified, as I will show. My principal objective is to shed new analytical light on the films of the period as a whole by excavating new critical pathways which open up the meaning of these films and recall attention to both the more independent and the genre-driven movies. As is shown in the following section, a significant amount of the scholarship and criticism on Buñuel's Mexican films is predicated on generic or aesthetic compartmentalisations, and it has traditionally been the exception, rather than the rule, to encounter sustained studies in which the 'studio potboilers' receive equal attention within analytical frameworks as the more auteurist productions. Following this detailed survey of the critical literature on Buñuel’s Mexican period, I will explain the reasoning behind my use of his Mexican corpus as the object for such analysis, as opposed to other periods in Buñuel's career. I then outline the need to turn to paradigms outside of the Buñuelian bedrock of surrealism, Catholicism and psychoanalysis, before moving on to look at the various ways in which space appears as an object of study in previous Buñuel scholarship. Finally, I consider the broader salient trend towards spatial analysis across the arts and social sciences, and recent texts that deal specifically with cinema and space.

1.1 Reconsidering the thematic complexity of the Mexican films

Research on Buñuel’s Mexican cinema has experienced something of a revival over the last two decades. The increasing availability of even the lesser-known films of the period, for example Abismos de pasión and La Fièvre monte à El Pao, thanks to

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17 The Spanish term originates from Buñuel himself in reference to La hija del engaño. See José de la Colina and Tomás Pérez Turrent, Buñuel por Buñuel (Madrid: PLOT, 1993), p. 61. Julie Jones uses the English term in noting how scathing Buñuel was in the early 1950s about his commercial films, quoting him as saying: '[a]rtistically, they are zeros. They made it possible for me to shoot the films I believe in'. Julie Jones, 'Luis Buñuel and the Politics and Self-Preservation', in A Companion to Luis Buñuel, ed. by Rob Stone and Julián Daniel Gutiérrez-Albilla (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), pp. 79-97 (p. 84). This dismissal contrasts somewhat with Buñuel's interview with journal Cine Cubano, where he says that the 'churro', a Mexican slang term for a 'corny' film, 'puede ser perfecta en su técnica, ágil en su dirección y muy profesional en sus actuaciones'. See 'Luis Buñuel hace la anatomía del churro cinematográfico', Cine Cubano, 78-80 (1972), 112-13 (p. 112).
European, Mexican and US DVD distributors has contributed to the higher level of critical attention paid to these films in recent Buñuel scholarship. If still precluded commensurate status with what are widely regarded as the director’s most lauded productions, many of the Mexican films now feature sporadically in research on the director and his work. In the pages that follow, I will trace the trend of new and relatively recent writing on Buñuel’s Mexican corpus. As I will show, criticism on the director’s Mexican output is at a juncture: the application of original paradigms to analyses of these films in recent years has made a significant contribution to Buñuel scholarship and can serve as a springboard for the development of these, and other, theoretical perspectives, independently of pre-established analytical frameworks associated with the director’s cinema. However, these new approaches have, on the whole, not yet succeeded in drawing together the commercial and auteurist films of the period in a convincing and sustained way.

The hierarchisation of the two strands of Buñuel’s Mexican cinema can be traced back to the period itself. Articles on Buñuel’s Mexican films in prominent cinema journals such as Cahiers du cinéma and Positif during the 1950s and 1960s tentatively scoured the nascent corpus for any traces of Buñuel’s trademark style and thematic preoccupations, more readily discernible in films such as Nazarín or El ángel exterminador. Peter Harcourt’s evaluation of the Mexican corpus is indicative of this approach and is echoed in other critical receptions of the Mexican films. According to Harcourt,

[m]y own memory of the films of this period is one of seriously marred films of considerable interest. Whether they are marred by thundering implausibilities (Susana, Ensayo de un Crimen), crabbed plots (El [sic], and nearly all of the French stuff) or less than indifferent acting (especially The Young One), they seem to be films that are less interesting in themselves, each one separately, than they are either as interesting facets of the complete Buñuel or for the inescapable power of individual moments – their raison d’être, I’ve always felt, and the real source of their strength.18

Harcourt’s elucidation of these films is ultimately governed by their key moments of orthodox Buñueliana.19 Jean-André Fieschi considers that films such as El gran

19 Although several neologisms have been coined from Buñuel’s name, in using Buñueliana to denote aesthetic and thematic preoccupations perpetuated in Buñuel criticism, such as Freudian surrealism and iconoclasm, I take my lead from Acevedo-Muñoz, p. 4.
calavera and La ilusión viaja en tranvía served as sketches for more aesthetically accomplished films, for example El ángel exterminador or Nazarín.20 Fieschi’s praise for these supposedly minor films is tempered by his admiration for the most critically acclaimed examples of Buñuel’s Mexican cinema:

these little Buñuel pieces possess a creative coolness, a frankness of regard, clarity of expression, a charming quality that prevents us from contenting ourselves with their superficial or fleeting virtues alone, and invite us instead to consider them as good but minor sketches or reminders of the more austere beauty which blossoms in «El» [sic], «Nazarin» [sic] or «The Exterminating Angel».21

Whereas Harcourt ventures a cursory attempt to provide a holistic valuation of Buñuel’s work, reading his Mexican cinema through the director's first three surrealist films, Fieschi considers the Mexican period independently, yet encourages intra-corpus divisions whereby the auteurist films are intrinsically more valuable than their genre-driven counterparts. This, as Gastón Lillo signals, is a limiting – yet common – approach in the writings on this period, in an attempt to ‘legitimise’ the study of the Mexican films by bringing them into line with the auteurist approach often employed in the discussion of Buñuel’s earlier/later work, in order to ‘salvaguardar la imagen del autor en detrimento de los filmes, que permanecen ignorados’.22 Traditional Buñuel criticism beginning with Un Chien andalou has, as Patrick Keating signals, influenced the majority of criticism since, given that '[h]is reputation as a surrealist encouraged a particular viewing

20 Indeed, the title of Fieschi’s article is ‘L’Ange et la bête: croquis mexicains de Luis Buñuel’, Cahiers du cinéma, 176 (1966), 33-41.
21 Ibid., p. 34. [’Ces amusettes bunéliennes possèdent une fraîcheur d’invention, une franchise du regard, une clarté d’expression, une qualité du charme qui nous détournent de nous satisfaire de leurs seules vertus épidérmiques ou passagères, et nous invitent plutôt à les considérer comme des esquisses ou des rappels «en mineur» de bien des beautés plus austères qui s’épanouissent dans «El», «Nazarin» ou «L’Ange exterminateur»].
strategy, looking for dream-like motifs that would transform over the course of the film in unexpected ways’.23

Nevertheless, the 1990s saw Buñuel’s Mexican cinema revisited in earnest within new or modified paradigms in concerted attempts to unite the two strands of this period. Lillo aims to redress the balance between the director’s early and late periods, and the intermediate Mexican era. The inclusion of more commercial pictures such as El gran calavera and El Bruto alongside the critically lauded Los olvidados and Nazarín is an effort to bridge the gap between the commercial and the independent films. Lillo draws on genre theory to argue that Buñuel achieves a subversion of commercial cinema in the most genre-driven of his films. Lillo’s re-envisioning of certain of the director’s Mexican works hinges on the socio-historical context of the films’ production and the viewers’ reception of them. His argument is important in its focus on a variety of Mexican films, yet Lillo undermines this strength somewhat by positing El ángel exterminador and Simón del desierto as anomalies in Buñuel’s Mexican cinema, unable to be read as subversions of genre given what he sees as their overtly transgressive positions.24 Writing a year after Lillo, Peter Evans begins to transcend the rigid commercial-auteurist dyad of Buñuel’s Mexican cinema. Unlike Lillo, he acknowledges the fruitful results of examining Buñuel’s work through an auteurist lens, though without discounting the structures and constraints to which Buñuel was subjected. Indeed, Evans believes that ‘the two Buñuels, commercial and auteurist, cannot be so simplistically polarized’.25 Evans’s focus on relationships between male and female characters considered through sexual and psychoanalytical theory problematises the restrictive triad of Catholicism, surrealism and Spanish nationality proposed by critics such as Gwynne Edwards, as it explodes the privileging of the masculine implicit in Edwards’s framework through a consideration of female desire.26

24 Lillo, p. 23.
26 See Gwynne Edwards, The Discreet Art of Luis Buñuel (London: Marion Boyars, 1982). For more on Edwards’s study see section 1.3 in this chapter.
Víctor Fuentes’s book *Buñuel en México* lays claim to be the first monograph length study solely dedicated to the Mexican films of Buñuel.²⁷ Fuentes recasts the work of this period in a new light, giving consideration to the generic conventions within which Buñuel often worked and the ways in which he went about subverting these, as well as suggesting new and fruitful pathways for investigation in a more philosophical vein. For instance, with recourse to Gilles Deleuze, Fuentes highlights the fetish objects in the director’s cinema that give rise to the impulse-image, a concept that I make use of in Chapter Three of this thesis in relation to *Simón del desierto*.²⁸ In addition, Fuentes draws upon the biographical details of the circumstances around Buñuel’s arrival in Mexico in an attempt to give consideration to the dynamics of exile – a theme he has subsequently developed – and the ways in which Buñuel’s state as a Spanish *transsterrado* problematises a nationalist (specifically Mexican) reading of his films, which bear ‘el sello de esta doble nacionalidad’.²⁹ As I discuss in section 1.4.2 of this chapter, this is an area of Buñuel scholarship which has subsequently been expanded, both by Fuentes himself and others.

Iván Humberto Ávila Dueñas’s monograph study on Buñuel’s Mexican cinema takes a more linear approach than that of Evans, Fuentes or Lillo. Ávila Dueñas’s aim is to document the individual films of the period in order to establish common narrative themes and relationships across the various movies. His intertextual hinge, ‘la inclusión de otro mundo paralelo: el subconsciente’, ostensibly reverts to surrealism, yet he grounds Buñuel’s cinema in a search for ‘el conocimiento del hombre’, eschewing a restrictive definition of surrealism.³⁰ In her doctoral thesis on Buñuel’s Mexican corpus, Catherine Dey highlights the salient trend towards a reconsideration and reappraisal of Buñuel’s Mexican period, as she points out that criticism throughout the 1990s had begun to unlock a rich spring of Buñueliana through the incorporation of certain Mexican works


²⁸ Ibid., pp. 65-70, p. 73, p. 148.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 21.

into the Buñuel canon.\footnote{Catherine E. Dey, ‘Buñuel’s ‘Other’ Films: Responding to Work from the Mexican Period’, unpublished doctoral thesis (University of Birmingham, 1999).} Dey’s analytical framework draws on a philosophy of ethics and begins to interrogate recurring Buñuelian themes such as the question of morality in a new light, freeing Buñuel analysis from the typical scope of surrealism. Despite the originality of Dey’s reading, however, she turns almost exclusively to more auteurist films such as \textit{El ángel exterminador} and \textit{Viridiana} to support her argument, although \textit{The Adventures of Robinson Crusoe} is also included. Acevedo-Muñoz presents an insightful consideration of Buñuel’s work within the Mexican film industry. He locates his discussion within an industrial-auteur analytical framework, focusing on the relationship between the director and the industry. Thus, films such as \textit{Subida al cielo}, \textit{Una mujer sin amor} and \textit{La hija del engaño} are included, framed by their production contexts, counteracting the neglect they have traditionally suffered through more orthodox auteurist approaches to Buñuel’s cinema. Unlike Dey, Acevedo-Muñoz’s approach privileges what he calls ‘Mexican movies’ (Mexican-funded films with typical Mexican subject matter). Although some of the most critically disparaged films find a rightful place in his study, more independent films still made within the Mexican film industry, such as \textit{Nazarín}, and international co-productions filmed in Mexico, for example \textit{La Mort en ce jardin} or \textit{The Young One}, are discounted.\footnote{Acevedo-Muñoz, pp. 12-13.}

The centenary of Buñuel’s birth saw a series of conferences on Buñuel and their subsequent publications. The volume \textit{Buñuel, siglo XXI} is the result of an international conference held in 2000 and presents an ample selection of papers on a variety of topics. This wave of Buñuel scholarship engages with new theoretical frameworks, suggesting possible preliminary readings of a wide range of films from the Mexican period. For example, there is a discussion of the Freudian uncanny in \textit{El ángel exterminador}, as well as Deleuze’s notion of originary worlds and the impulse-image in relation to \textit{Abismos de pasión} and \textit{The Young One} – a theme briefly sketched previously by Fuentes, as I have said, but

which also echoes Paul Sandro’s contribution on Buñuel’s use of naturalism, in Lillo’s edited volume.\textsuperscript{34} Like \textit{Buñuel, siglo XXI}, Lillo’s multilingual volume is a collection of papers presented at a conference at the University of Ottawa in 2001. Significantly, of these sixteen papers, seven present research exclusively on the director’s Mexican cinema. While certain contributions recycle established paradigms to approach the more commercial Mexican films, others show greater novelty in their analyses.\textsuperscript{35} The year following the release of both conference proceedings, the edited volume \textit{Luis Buñuel: New Readings} was published. The aim of this collection was to carry out not only a re-evaluation of certain of the director’s films but also a reconsideration of the man himself. Evans and Santaolalla present a balance between early/Mexican/late Buñuel; moreover, within the section on the Mexican Buñuel, focus is given to \textit{Robinson Crusoe} and \textit{The Young One}, two films which have traditionally been considered too ‘international’ to be absorbed into a discourse of \textit{mexicanidad} and too commercial to be invested with the same critical value as \textit{Nazarín} or \textit{El ángel exterminador}.\textsuperscript{36}

As has been elaborated by researchers such as Fuentes, Buñuel was the site of conflation for two strands of Hispanism: \textit{el español} and \textit{el mexicano}. The latter was the subject of a 2007 exhibition co-organised by the Filmoteca Española and the Centro Buñuel de Calanda (CBC). As part of this exhibition, a selection of photographs taken by Buñuel during the location scouting stage for his Mexican films was included, under the title ‘México fotografiado por Luis Buñuel’. These photographs are published in a book of the same name, along with a series of short articles from Buñuel scholars and memoirs detailing the experience of location scouting and shooting with Buñuel, written by his son, Juan Luis Buñuel,

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\textsuperscript{35} Tomás Pérez Turrent uses the question of genre to consider \textit{Susana} as an example of subversive melodrama, much like Evans and Lillo before him. Conversely, Julià Tuñón’s original approach to \textit{Los olvidados} is foregrounded in the symbiotic relationship between (urban) space and the body, providing a direct link with Chapter Four of this thesis. Tomás Pérez Turrent, ‘El Buñuel mexicano: el melodrama’, in \textit{Buñuel: el imaginario transcultural}, ed. by Lillo, pp. 121-30; Julià Tuñón, ‘Cuerpo humano y cuerpo urbano en \textit{Los Olvidados}’, in \textit{Buñuel: el imaginario transcultural}, ed. by Lillo, pp. 69-89.
\end{flushright}
and Buñuel’s long-time collaborator and director of photography, Gabriel Figueroa. What is interesting about this volume is the consensus that arises between the various authors as to Buñuel’s treatment and depiction of Mexico and Mexican reality through his renowned anti-aesthetic stance, evident even in the early location scouting stages of his films. Though the appeal is never made directly, their observations indicate that a consideration at length of the representation of space in these films would be a valuable and fruitful avenue to explore: while Javier Espada writes that ‘estas fotografías también nos muestran, [...] una percepción de México, alejada de lo turístico y con una sensibilidad que aflora a menudo en pequeños detalles’, Elena Cevera points to ‘sus fotografías [que] se refieren a pañajes sin gente’. These observations clearly link with research on Buñuel’s depiction of Mexico from an exilic standpoint. However, as the book ultimately serves as a record of the exhibition, they remain cursory and undeveloped.

Towards the end of the noughties, more material was released which aims to reposition the Buñuel oeuvre within fresh theoretical frameworks. Gutiérrez-Albilla’s Queering Buñuel, as the title suggests, strives to re-read such canonical films as Los olvidados and Viridiana from a queer subject position. The strength of Gutiérrez-Albilla’s work lies in his interdisciplinary approach: constructing his analysis on the foundations of feminist, psychoanalytical and queer theory allows for a reconceptualisation of Buñuel’s cinema which explodes the heteronormative and misogynistic discourses that he discerns in the ‘textual unconscious’ of the filmmaker’s work. All five films featured in his study are from the Mexican period, and all were filmed in Mexico, with the exception of Viridiana. However, Gutiérrez-Albilla limits his analysis to what have regularly been hailed as the more auteurist of the Mexican films (Él, El ángel exterminador, Ensayo de un crimen, Los olvidados and Viridiana), a decision which again seems to suggest that some of the more commercial Mexican films do not lend themselves to extra-generic, interdisciplinary paradigms. This is echoed in Pedro Poyato’s El sistema estético de

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38 Gutiérrez-Albilla, p. 1.
Luis Buñuel. Poyato’s intention is to posit a system of aesthetics, a visual and formal strand within the director’s work, which serves to unify and draw together films from different periods of Buñuel’s career. Like Gutiérrez-Albilla’s research, this is a continuation of the trend towards an appreciation of the aesthetic possibilities of Buñuel’s corpus beyond the Buñuelian predicate of surrealism and Catholicism. For instance, in his exposition of ‘[una] morfología y genealogía de lo feo’, Poyato coincides with theorists such as Bikandi-Mejias, who explores the carnivalesque trope within Buñuel’s cinema. However, Poyato’s focus remains on the more independent films that punctuate the director’s body of work. Besides the director’s first three surrealist pictures, and Tristana and Cet obscur objet du désir from his later period, Poyato focuses on Los olvidados, Ensayo de un crimen and El ángel exterminador.

Most recently, Gutiérrez-Albilla and Rob Stone’s companion volume to Buñuel gives attention to some of the most critically neglected films of the Mexican period. There are chapters focused on Robinson Crusoe, Susana and even on the three international co-productions of the 1950s that Buñuel filmed in French. This publication follows the volume on the filmmaker edited by Evans and Santaolalla in its aim of addressing all periods of Buñuel’s production from revitalised, interdisciplinary perspectives. Tom Whittaker, for instance, considers the use of movement in three of the director’s Mexican comedies – El gran calavera, Subida al cielo and La ilusión viaja en tranvía – and links the ‘characters and objects [that] find themselves out of synch with the social worlds they inhabit’ with the struggle for modernity and the influx of migrants to the city under the presidencies of Miguel Alemán (1946-1952) and Adolfo Ruiz (1952-1958). Similarly novel is Sarah Leahy’s analysis of La Mort en ce jardin, which focuses on the star-system with relation to Georges Marchal, Simone Signoret and Michel Piccoli.

The many voices I have detailed above advocate a renewed focus on Buñuel’s Mexican period and are antidotes to Virginia Higginbotham’s astonishing barb that the majority of the filmmaker’s Mexican output is not worthy of serious attention, and Paul Coates’s likening of Buñuel’s role in the Mexican national cinema to ‘a paralysed limb of the industry’. It is no longer either accurate or objective to speak of the scholarly attention given to this work as a whole in Auro Bernardi’s terms as a ‘minoría desnutritiva’. Indeed, Floreal Peleato, employing an organic metaphor to play on the propensity to divide Buñuel’s corpus into competing eras, considers that Spain watered the roots of the Buñuelian germ, France strengthened its branches, but the main harvest took place in Mexico. However, although there is undoubtedly greater balance in criticism between the two strands of Buñuel’s Mexican cinema, even recent, extended studies of the director’s work still reinforce their stylistic and thematic divisions, as shown in the work of Gutiérrez-Albilla and Poyato. The development of new analytical frameworks through which Buñuel’s films have been inflected with fruitful results has seemingly not yet been wholly successful in providing complementary readings of films from the two strands.

Furthermore, it has also been common to hedge any analysis of Buñuel’s Mexican cinema, that is, to hasten to highlight the obvious distinctions between his earlier and later European periods to justify continuity errors or seemingly shoddy filming, owing to the films’ low budgets and tight shooting schedules. The title of an article in the German newspaper Der Spiegel betrays such views through intertextual metaphor. Headed ‘The Mexican Chalkcircle’, the title is a reference to Bertolt Brecht’s play The Caucasian Chalkcircle, which depicts a peasant girl (the Mexican film industry) who finds an abandoned baby (Buñuel),

46 Buñuel himself highlights the continuity errors in the backdrop of Simón del desierto, for example. Scenes with Simón against a cloudy sky are spliced together with scenes of him against a clear sky in the same sequence. This is unsurprising, given that filming was halted abruptly due to lack of funds. See de la Colina and Pérez Turrent, p. 140.
eventually, and in spite of limitations, rearing the child better than its birth parents (the European film industries) ever could.\footnote{‘Die mexikanische Kreidekreis’, Der Spiegel, 21 January 1974, pp. 112-14.} To this end, the most radical voice among all proponents of the films of this era is the Mexican film scholar Gustavo García. García elaborates an excoriating response to the (m)aligning of the Mexican period, which is worth quoting at length:

[l]o cierto es que al hacer aquí Buñuel la mayor parte de su filmografía, con varias de sus obras maestras, no le estaba haciendo un favor a nadie; ya basta de esa actitud mesiánica: si Buñuel hubiese ido a parar a otro país del continente no hubiera hecho nada, y que lo digan sus dos estancias en Estados Unidos, una antes de venir y otra para hacer Robinson Crusoe y La joven, ya como célebre ganador de la Palma de Oro, y que no pueden compararse con Los olvidados, Él, Nazarín y El ángel exterminador, sus obras maestras indiscutibles. También es cierto que Buñuel llegó a una de las capitales culturales de habla hispana, a una industria cinematográfica en plena expansión, a una colonia intelectual española que había encontrado acomodo natural entre los intelectuales mexicanos, que pisaban muy fuerte en los terrenos editorial, de artes plásticas, teatro y cine; si no filmó todo lo que quiso, tampoco lo hizo ningún director mexicano ambicioso.\footnote{Gustavo García in Daniel González Dueñas, ‘Buñuel en México: la mirada imparcial’, Guaraguao: Revista de Cultura Latinoamericana, 10 (2000), 191-202 (p. 193). Although his response is definitely spirited, García is mistaken in thinking that Buñuel returned to the USA to film Robinson Crusoe and The Young One, as he also is in writing that the latter won the Palme d’Or at Cannes. It won a special mention, losing the Palme d’Or to Fellini’s La dolce vita.}

García’s call to disavow the ‘actitud mesiánica’ came in 1993, at the very juncture when interest in Buñuel’s Mexican cinema was beginning to grow, with the publication of Fuentes’s and Lillo’s studies, as noted above. In fact, García’s statement is directed towards Fuentes, in response to the latter’s assertion that ‘el viento destructor de la cinematografía [mexicana] volvió a [deshacer su gran obra], alegando, menos que consternando, al autor’.\footnote{Fuentes, p. 40.} Now, then, is an opportune juncture to revisit Buñuel’s Mexican cinema and to build on the salient trend towards innovative modes of analysis to unlock new meanings in these films, showing how within an original approach the films can serve to complement, rather than inhibit, their respective meanings. I hope to take some of García’s spirit and to present a more balanced approach to Buñuel’s Mexican cinema by taking each film on its own merits within my framework for analysis.

\subsection*{1.2 Buñuel’s Mexican cinema as ‘un cine cafeinado, lleno de carnalidad’}
The above metaphor is taken from one of the most striking comparisons between Buñuel’s Mexican cinema and his later French period. Posing the question ‘¿existe un cine mexicano de Luis Buñuel?’, Pérez Turrent strongly concludes that the response should be in the affirmative. The doubt about its existence, as it were, Pérez Turrent attributes to the disparity between the director of *Un Chien andalou*, ‘una bomba [que provocó] un gran impacto en sus primeros espectadores’, and the director of *Gran Casino*, ‘de ninguna manera exaltante’. Documenting Buñuel’s critical and financial failures in the Mexican film industry driven by generic conventions and narrative codes, Pérez Turrent nevertheless finds that ‘[e]l antiguo vanguardista los asumió, los respetó – por lo menos hasta cierto punto – supo amoldarse a ellos y, como si fuese poco, fue capaz de expresarse, desplegar sus temas e imponerles su visión del mundo’. Although Pérez Turrent adds his voice to the multitude of those who separate Buñuel’s Mexican corpus from his earlier and later works, he celebrates its subversive potential. The later Buñuel ‘es admirable desde muchos puntos de vista pero es un Buñuel al que le han cortado las uñas’. This nail-clipping was partly the result of Buñuel’s reinsertion into an increasingly consumer-driven, Western European society where, he and André Breton lamented, to scandalise had become impossible. Furthermore, Pérez Turrent cites José de la Colina’s astute comments regarding the director’s Mexican cinema in comparison to his later French cinema: ‘en la etapa mexicana predomina una densidad de las materias, una carnalidad de los personajes, en la final etapa francesa se evaporan materia y carnalidad para dejar lugar a un juego casi abstracto de tipos y situaciones’.

Gayle Irwin considers Buñuel’s portrayal of narrative space within the context of postmodernism, given its predilection for narrative rupture and discontinuity. Despite her claim that ‘[t]he majority of Buñuel’s films are remarkable insofar as they seem to challenge all of the laws of traditional film making’, Irwin says absolutely nothing of the Mexican period, which looms as

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51 Ibid., p. 138.
52 Ibid., p. 142.
53 Buñuel, p. 143. As to Buñuel’s annoyance at the commercial marketing of *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie*, his only Oscar-winning film, see de la Colina and Pérez Turrent, p. 161.
54 José de la Colina in Pérez Turrent, ‘¿Existe un cine mexicano de Luis Buñuel?’, p. 141.
something of a black hole in her analysis, a surprising omission given her attention to both his early and mature periods, and her sweeping assertion that ‘[a]fter his first experiments with surrealist film-making, he never ceases to challenge the narrative processes inherent to film. Narration is a mapping, and, among other things, Buñuel’s films are like a map of the postmodern’.\textsuperscript{55} Quite clearly, Irwin’s argument is more applicable to the mature films with their episodic structures. This is an important distinction between the films of the Mexican period – stylistically heterogeneous as they are – and the later French works, and one I take as a rationale for the concentration in this thesis on the former.\textsuperscript{56} Again, de la Colina’s thought is useful here:

\textit{[h]ay, digamos, una densidad y una textura mexicanas en el cine hecho por Buñuel en México y casi no hay jugueteo intelectual y el ajedrez de fantasmas (ideas de personajes más que personajes) que se da en el cine hecho en Francia en los últimos años.}\textsuperscript{57}

Although some of the Mexican films could be seen as forerunners of the episodic narrative that structured Buñuel’s mature work,\textsuperscript{58} the protagonists of the Mexican films are relatable characters in largely realist – if often absurd – situations. When considering the presentation of the characters’ relationships to their surroundings, de la Colina’s notions of \textit{carnalidad} and \textit{densidad} are important. I contend that the characters of Buñuel’s Mexican cinema are, as Manuel Michel puts it, placed in alienation, a position that a philosophical reading of the films can elucidate.\textsuperscript{59} Buñuel’s greater preoccupation with form and style in his mature works could arguably be said to temper the element of \textit{carnalidad} in


\textsuperscript{57} De la Colina in Pérez Turrent, ‘¿Existe un cine mexicano de Luis Buñuel?’, p. 141. This point is echoed almost word-for-word by Gianfranco Corbucci. He argues that in Buñuel’s late films ideas are unmediated, as characters appear as ‘phantasms […], direct representations of ideas’, leading to what he sees as an intellectual game. Gianfranco Corbucci, ‘L’approccio brechtiano nel periodo dei film messicani’, \textit{Cinema Nuovo}, 227 (1974), 41-43 (p. 41). [‘Bastano soltanto fantasma di personaggi che siano pure e semplici, dirette rappresentazioni di idee’].

\textsuperscript{58} Nazarin, for instance, is described by Edwards as being structured by a series of episodes as the priest wanders the countryside. Edwards, \textit{The Discreet Art}, p. 135. De la Colina suggests that \textit{Simón del desierto} bears traces of this \textit{jugueteo intelectual} but is ultimately saved from abstraction as ‘el personaje revienta su propia existencia, porque ésta (la de los personajes y la de las situaciones) si bien responde a ideas (relacionadas con las herejías, con el debate teológico) termina encarnando, sufriendo la terrible evidencia de la materia’. De la Colina in Pérez Turrent, ‘¿Existe un cine mexicano de Luis Buñuel?’, p. 141.

his Mexican cinema, directing the critical gaze away from the protagonist and refocusing this on ludic questions of metanarrative and structural fragmentation. Sheldon Penn writes:

*Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* sacrifices plot – the contents of a narrative – for emphasis on the act of narration. *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* also, albeit in a less extreme way, exhibits Buñuel's later preoccupation with micro-narratives evidenced most clearly in *La Voie lactée* and *Le Fantôme de la liberté*.60

This conceptual shift in Buñuel's cinema emerges in conjunction with the end of the Mexican period and is evident in the films following this. Indeed, the titles of the films give a suggestive clue in this respect. The importance of space and setting to ground the narrative in the Mexican films comes across in the films' working, alternative and official titles such as *Island of Shame* (The Young One), *Abismos de pasión, Swamps of Lust* (La Fièvre monte à El Pao), *Los náufragos de la calle Providencia* (El ángel exterminador), *Evil Eden* (La Mort en ce jardin) and *Simón del desierto*. The titles of the later French movies are more suggestive of social satire – exactly the genre with which Higginbotham aligns them.61 The *densidad* of the rounded characters and their locations in the Mexican films thus gives way to a *textura* of micro-narratives in the later French films.

### 1.3 Breaking the Buñuelian bedrock

The commercial and independent strands of filmmaking in Buñuel's Mexican period have rarely achieved commensurate status in scholarship, as I have shown. The driving factor behind this incommensurability is the search for Buñueliana – as explained previously, often seemingly a coded term for Freudian surrealism – within the films. J. H. Matthews makes the polarising claim that, faced with the dismal prospect of a commercial cinema,

Buñuel was able to demonstrate before long that despair was not inevitable and that, with the right qualifications, one could feasibly undertake the

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61 Higginbotham divides Buñuel's work into 'character studies' (*Viridiana, Tristana*) and 'social satire' (*Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie, Le Fantôme de la liberté*), an interesting if arbitrary split, as she herself admits. Higginbotham, p. 193.
mission with which surrealism entrusts the movie director, despite the restrictions imposed upon the film by commercialism. Matthews focuses on the director’s Mexican period, yet undermines the whole premise of his argument and his attempt to reconcile Buñuel’s surrealist and commercial output by summarily dismissing any films that do not fit the model too easily (La Mort en ce jardin, La Fièvre monte à El Pao). This particular model is apparently evidenced by Él and Ensayo de un crimen, which exhibit ‘undertones and overtones which give [them] their poetic magic’, suggesting that all things should be subordinate to poetic surrealism.

As Matthews’s analysis demonstrates, the Buñuelian bedrock of surrealism, Catholicism and the bourgeoisie forms the foundation to numerous scholarly approaches seeking to posit an aesthetic or thematic intra-corpus narrative. Some readings in this vein elaborate thought-provoking analyses, such as Evans’s exploration of the monstrous mother and the Gothic mode in Los olvidados, a theme I refer to in my discussion of this film in Chapter Four. Evans meshes Freudian theory with Barbara Creed’s theorisation of the monstrous feminine, frequently employed in studies of horror cinema, as well as drawing on the work of feminist psychoanalysts and psychiatrists such as Karen Horney and Estela Welldon to expose the latent subversion of the family unit in Buñuel’s Mexican melodramas. Others such as Edwards provide an auteur-driven interpretation of the Buñuel canon that appears to rehash the same themes across films. Canon is the right word here: the aetiological predication of Edwards’s analyses is applied to many of Buñuel’s most critically acclaimed works. Of all the films made during his Mexican period, only Los olvidados, Nazarín, Viridiana and El ángel exterminador feature. Edwards’ is a relatively early contribution to the study of Buñuel’s films across different periods in the director’s career, but in this way it is comparable to the revised edition of Raymond Durgnat’s Luis Buñuel, published five years previously. Although Durgnat presents his analysis of Buñuel’s complete works, minus Cet obscur objet du désir, within a moralist framework (owing

63 Ibid., p. 152.
64 See Barbara Creed, The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis (London: Routledge, 1993).
65 See Evans, pp. 36-89.
66 See Edwards, The Discreet Art.
largely to the juxtaposition of libertarian surrealism with bourgeois social mores), he acknowledges that Buñuel analysis can be compartmentalised: he identifies nine ‘Buñuels’ in total, from the surrealist to the moralist and the anarcho-Marxist.  

For his part, Edwards foregrounds his analysis in an auteur-biographical framework, in that ‘the films made in Mexico bear witness in their themes to Buñuel’s essential Spanishness’.  

This assertion holds some weight: Nazarín is based on Galdós’s homonymous novel, transported from Castile to Mexico; Buñuel himself admitted that Viridiana was inspired by his childhood fantasy of drugging the Queen of Spain in order to sleep with her, and, humorously, that the eponymous heroine is a sort of ‘Quijote con faldas’, and the picaresque novel Lazarillo de Tormes can function as a loose intertext for Los olvidados, as Acevedo-Muñoz points out. Nevertheless, to suggest such an essential reading of the films is to freeze the filmic image in one specific, monolithic meaning and to reinforce simultaneously both the Buñuel canon and canonised frameworks for analysis within the discipline of film studies (psychoanalysis in Buñuel’s case). Already in 1961, Salvador Elizondo lamented the reductive scope for new readings of Buñuel’s films within pre-existing Buñuelian frameworks, asking the question ‘[s]e invoca el psicoanálisis, se invocan los Misterios, se invocan los Episodios Nacionales. ¿Ha invocado alguien la generalidad de las generalidades: el hombre?’. There is a need, then, as Stone and Gutiérrez-Albilla recently note, for a fresh, multivocal approach to Buñuel’s work, even if this means rebelling against the Buñuelian canon:

[i]f his work has been canonized and hence subjected to fixed symbolization by the numerous studies on his cinema, whether edited volumes or single-authored books in the Anglo-American academy and beyond, how can one engage critically with his oeuvre and yet avoid inserting his ambivalent, paradoxical and elusive films into pre-established critical models that perpetuate their subjection to symbolization?

Of course, surrealism and Catholicism are tropes that underscore Buñuel’s entire body of work. However, these motifs alone should not monopolise the study

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69 De la Colina and Pérez Turrent, pp. 117-18, p. 120.

70 Acevedo-Muñoz, p. 67.


of an output as vast and as open to interpretation as that of Buñuel. My framework for analysis in this thesis aims to follow Stone and Gutiérrez-Albilla’s methodology: to break with tried-and-tested critical paradigms in order to propose a creative, revitalised perspective on the director’s Mexican work and to add one more voice to the growing call for multivocality. Jordi Sánchez Navas, like Stone and Gutiérrez-Albilla after him, sums up what he sees as a distorted monopolisation within the economy of Buñuel criticism that effectively shuts down the possibility of interpretation beyond Buñueliana:

[I]os homenajes, publicaciones, documentales y citas constantes dentro del universo mediático a que [Buñuel] se ha visto sometido [...] han servido en ocasiones para distorsionar las interpretaciones de su cine y consolidar una categorización como sujeto-autor que no reconoce los múltiples matices de una obra abierta al espectador.73

1.4 Buñuel and space

One aspect of Buñuel’s films that is becoming progressively more pertinent to researchers is that of space. Where Buñuel scholarship has highlighted the importance of setting, it has been mainly used to feed into analyses based on the Buñuelian bedrock. Buñuel has simply not been considered a ‘spatial director’ in the same way as, for instance, Michelangelo Antonioni or Wim Wenders have been.74 Nevertheless, in recent years questions of space and place within the director’s work have been brought to the fore in large part thanks to the application of fresh theoretical frameworks to the director’s work, as detailed above. The relevance of this analytical perspective and its potential to revitalise Buñuel studies is spelled out by Tom Conley, who explicitly acknowledges the nascent consideration of space in Buñuel’s oeuvre. Conley writes ‘[o]ver the passage of time it may be that the spatial dynamics of Buñuel’s cinema may have


gained force [sic] where the psychoanalytical or religious material has lost some of its luster’.\textsuperscript{75} In its focus on the representation of space in the films of the Mexican period, this thesis will contribute to the growing interest in the spatial dynamics of Buñuel’s cinema and propose an alternative and equally valid reading of the director’s Mexican corpus, outside of the Buñuelian bedrock.

\subsection*{1.4.1 The Buñuelian anti-aesthetic}

It should be noted that Buñuel’s own comments regarding traditional cinematic aesthetics and compositional harmony made during interviews have perhaps deterred critics from paying too much heed to questions of space. Buñuel states: ‘no busco embellecer las imagenes’,\textsuperscript{76} and writes in his autobiography: ‘[n]unca me ha gustado la belleza cinematográfica prefabricada que, con frecuencia, hace olvidar lo que la película quiere contar y que personalmente no me conmueve’.\textsuperscript{77} As Miguel Marías puts it: ‘[n]o es que desdene la belleza, pero sabía que a veces había que buscarla debajo de las piedras, o que se hallaba con frecuencia en medio del horror y la miseria’.\textsuperscript{78} Buñuel’s candid view is all the more striking when considered in the context of Mexican cinema’s Golden Age where, as Charles Ramírez Berg notes, ‘films succeeded in creating an idealized, romanticized, and imaginary Mexico’.\textsuperscript{79} Indeed, the most (inter)nationally celebrated Mexican director of the 1940s and early 1950s, Emilio Fernández, together with renowned cinematographer Gabriel Figueroa, produced some of the most visually striking images of the period. These lyrical nationalist films were largely predicated on Mexican national identity as imag(in)ed through the eulogy of oppressed and marginalised social groups – frequently indigenous characters as in Fernández’s acclaimed \textit{María Candelaria} (1944) or \textit{Río Escondido} (1948) – and their symbiotic relationship with the land. Ramírez Berg documents the thematic and stylistic hallmarks of the Fernández-Figueroa partnership during the 1940s and 1950s,

\begin{footnotes}
\item[76] De la Colina and Pérez Turrent, p. 51.
\end{footnotes}
signalling Figueroa’s predilection for the low-angle, deep focus shot that draws attention to the skyline and the white clouds above it.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 16-19. So frequent were these compositions in the films of Fernández and Figueroa that Ramírez Berg points out that the expanse of sky came to be known as ‘Figueroa’s skies’.
}

Building on Ramírez Berg’s observations, Keating draws a parallel between the Fernández-Figueroa partnership and that of Buñuel-Figueroa. Keating’s focus is on Figueroa as a figure of mediation between Fernández and Buñuel, and between the multifaceted nature of art cinema. Notwithstanding the obvious thematic and stylistic differences between the cinema of Fernández and Buñuel, through a consideration of space – both narrative space as well as spaces of inclusion/exclusion within the institutions of art cinema – Keating posits numerous similarities between the two. Interestingly, Figueroa’s work with both directors produces ‘a set of films that are designed to be interpreted in spatial terms’,\footnote{Keating, p. 202.
} yet while Fernández’s films attracted a framework of criticism built around nationalist questions of Mexican/Indian identity, Buñuel’s display a preponderance of open, ambiguous motifs. This unique mode of representation, coupled with the surrealist frames of reference employed by influential cinema journals such as Cahiers du cinéma to interpret Buñuel’s work of the period, ensured that Buñuel, unlike Fernández, was placed in a universal, rather than national, context.\footnote{Acevedo-Muñoz summarises: ‘[a]s is the case with most Buñuel scholarship, [...] the idea of accepting these movies as “Mexican” seems unimaginable. Critics make these movies fit the category of “Buñuelian”, in spite of their signs of “Mexicanness”,’ pp. 159-60, n. 12.
}

Where Keating’s discussion falls somewhat short is due to his focus on Los olvidados alone. Figueroa collaborated with Buñuel on six films from the period, and a more capacious consideration of other films from the same period would provide a more equal weighting between the Buñuel-Figueroa partnership and that of Fernández-Figueroa.

In this respect, Ceridwen Higgins’s doctoral thesis documenting the fundamental role that Figueroa played in the making of key films of the Mexican cinema’s Golden Age and beyond is interesting. Higgins’s aim is to analyse Figueroa as a filmmaker, carrying out a reappraisal of the director of photography as a co-author of the film through a close visual reading of some of the key films of his career. Though a renowned and respected figure in the Mexican film industry, Higgins asserts that Figueroa’s input has traditionally been dwarfed in comparison
to the celebrated auteur film directors with whom he commonly worked, such as Fernández and Buñuel. In her chapter on Figueroa and Buñuel she writes, ‘a sense of being marooned is present in all of Buñuel’s films, yet it is most evident in the Mexican productions’. Higgins discerns the importance of a spatial analysis of Figueroa’s work with Buñuel and her own background as a filmmaker means that her analyses of key sequences in films such as Los olvidados and El ángel exterminador are focused and very technically detailed. She uses the condition of exile to align Figueroa’s and Buñuel’s positions within the Mexican film industry and Figueroa’s filmic rendering of Buñuelian themes of isolation and alienation, contending that Figueroa was a kind of internal émigré given his political and professional position within Mexico and his relationship to Hollywood where he also worked as a director of photography. Indeed, although Higgins erroneously claims that exile has been largely ignored in studies of Buñuel and his work, exile has become a notable analytical approach in research on the director, and one that has obvious links with space, as I will detail below.

1.4.2 Exile and the transnational

Con el renovado interés a fines del siglo XX y principios del XXI en los estudios del exilio y las diásporas, el cine de Buñuel ofrece nuevas respuestas e interrogantes a quienes se acercan a su estudio, desde estas perspectivas.

Fuentes contends that exile is the driving force behind Buñuel’s cinema. Fuentes is likely the foremost scholar on Buñuel and exile: he discerns the stamp of exile in Buñuel’s work in his early writing on the filmmaker, and has recently reaffirmed this line of investigation. Exile certainly has currency in the study of Buñuel, the man. There is a sub-chapter in Buñuel’s autobiography entitled ‘Nosotros, los

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84 Ibid., p. 196.
metecos', referring to his move from the Residencia de Estudiantes to Paris in 1925 and the xenophobic reaction of right-wing French citizens towards foreigners (the French word métèque is a pejorative term for an immigrant). Peter Besas, for example, dates Buñuel's exile from 1925 onwards and ventures, ‘[t]o a great extent when Buñuel came to visit Spain after 1925 he was an outsider’. For Fuentes, however, Buñuel's exile does not begin with his move to Paris but with his relocation to North America after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, and ‘dentro de las coordinadas del exilio sin fin, podríamos decir que se durará hasta su muerte en 1983’. John Baxter writes that ‘exile, and the company of exiles, kept [Buñuel] lean, hungry and committed’, while Marsha Kinder asserts that ‘Buñuel’s career of exile dialogizes the auteurist and national contexts, revealing that neither perspective is sufficient by itself’. Hamid Nacify evokes Buñuel in his writing on accented cinema – a cinema of migrants which is affected, or accented, by the filmmaker’s spatial dislocation, often through exile – outlining his paradoxical position as ‘both the epitome of exile and its most prominent exception’ and pointing already to the problematic of Buñuel's status as ‘exile’.

The reading of Buñuel’s films through the lens of exile has provided new and interesting perspectives to the field of Buñuel scholarship. The lengthy chapter on Buñuel in Kinder’s study on Spanish cinema introduces the section on exile and diaspora. Citing Rockwell Gray’s essay ‘Spanish Diaspora: A Culture in Exile’, Kinder contends that the phenomenon of exile is related to Spain in a unique way, experienced internationally en masse during the Spanish Civil War, but also throughout the centuries with the expulsion of the Jews, the Moors and

87 Buñuel, p. 90.
88 This period is depicted humorously in pictorial form in Fermín Solís’s graphic novel about the filming of Tierra sin pan. Buñuel and Ramón Acín, the financial backer of the film, are thrown out of a Parisian bar and called ‘shitty Spaniards’ ['españols de merde']. Fermín Solís, Buñuel en el laberinto de las tortugas (Mérida: Editora Regional de Extremadura, 2008), p. 39.
89 Peter Besas, Behind the Spanish Lens: Spanish Cinema under Fascism and Democracy (Denver: Arden, 1985), p. 51.
90 Fuentes, ‘Un cine del exilio redimido’, p. 137.
91 John Baxter, Buñuel (London: Fourth Estate, 1994), p. 188.
the Jesuits, among other groups. Kinder’s claim is that this pattern of exile and expulsion conversely gave Spanish artists ‘a propensity toward dialogism and double vision’.94 She reads Buñuel’s whole corpus through his status as an exile, focusing on his experimentation with sound, his experimentation with narrative and the exploration of the French-Spanish dialectic. These three aspects correspond to the frequent division of Buñuel’s career into the early surrealist period (and his work dubbing films for Warner Brothers in Madrid), the Mexican period and the mature works made in France and, to a lesser extent, Spain. Although Kinder’s framework has its critics,95 the power of her analysis comes across when she focuses on the ways in which Buñuel’s cinema reveals that nationality is a construct rather than a given. This is an important theme taken up by Marvin D’Lugo and Robert J. Miles, among others, with specific reference to the Mexican period. D’Lugo asserts that Buñuel’s work is characterised by a Bakhtinian dialogism which challenges the univocality of the home culture (here, Mexico).96 Univocality is an apposite term, as one of the principal ways Buñuel achieves the subversion of this is through sound and the inclusion of other languages (North American tourists in Ensayo de un crimen and Subida al cielo, the filming of Robinson Crusoe in English, the curious blend of spoken French and written Spanish in La Fièvre monte à El Pao). D’Lugo also contends that Buñuel’s position within a national film industry to which he could never fully adjust lends a degree of liminality to his filmmaking.97 This is the thrust of Miles’s argument. For Miles, Silvia Pinal, the Mexican actress of Viridiana, El ángel exterminador and Simón del desierto, is a liminal figure, representing in turn the Spanish and the Mexican through her roles in the two former films and complicating a nationalist reading of these. His philosophically inspired reading of El ángel exterminador as

94 Kinder, p. 279.
95 Robert J. Miles questions the implications of Kinder’s view that some of the Mexican films mirror the earlier European ones, for example the inside/outside binary in El ángel exterminador and Tierra sin pan. For Miles, ‘[this] would seem to rest on the supposition that his “best Mexican films” are again those films that are “read” more easily in terms of their recurrent Europe-derived Buñueliana’. Robert J. Miles, ‘Virgin on the Edge: Luis Buñuel’s Transnational Trope’, Studies in Hispanic Cinemas, 2.1 (2006), 169-88 (p. 176).
96 Marvin D’Lugo, ‘Subversive Travel: The Transnational Buñuel in Mexico’, in Buñuel, siglo XX, ed. by Santaolalla and others, pp. 89-100 (p. 91).
97 Ibid., p. 92.
an aporia, a pathless path, presents another way into thinking about the film, removed from tricky questions of cultural ownership and national cinema.\textsuperscript{98}

Several scholars have considered the spatial dynamics of Buñuel’s exile. Marina Pérez de Mendiola analyses the representation of Mexico in Buñuel’s films made there. For her, Buñuel’s Mexican films ‘seem to work more as a symbolic collective and unifying universe of Spain’s imperial past’.\textsuperscript{99} Whilst Pérez de Mendiola’s discussion presents some insightful observations regarding the sense of uprooting in several of the Mexican films (Subida al cielo, La ilusión viaja en tranvía and El río y la muerte are three examples she lists), in positing Buñuel’s anti-aesthetic erasure of the Mexican landscape and its function as a receptacle for the superimposition of Spain and its colonial past – she uses the term ‘motherland’ with no discernible sense of irony – she overstates Buñuel’s already always ambiguous connection to Spain. Her analysis is hedged by phrases of suggestion as she ventures conjecture: ‘the fact that his Mexican films emphasized desolation, poverty, a monolithic and depressed representation of what would never be his home, could in part translate his unwillingness to see Mexico for what it was, a country independent from Spain’.\textsuperscript{100} Pérez de Mendiola’s analysis is auteur-centric, reading quite indiscriminately the tumult of Buñuel’s life in the films in an aetiological vein common in traditional studies of Buñuel as auteur. She makes no acknowledgment that the notion of exile, when applied to Buñuel, is problematic, given that he settled in Mexico and became a Mexican citizen; indeed, to counter this she claims ‘[b]ecoming a citizen made him legally but not viscerally Mexican’.\textsuperscript{101} Demonstrating the polemic of extreme views, Pérez de Mendiola’s opinion finds its antithesis in Eduardo Vázquez Martín’s estimation that ‘[s]i uno ve las imágenes tomadas por Luis Buñuel, queda claro que éste ya había

\textsuperscript{98} Miles, p. 180.
\textsuperscript{100} Pérez de Mendiola, p. 32.
\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., p. 34.
descendido de las naves del exilio para incorporarse al mundo mexicano’.\footnote{102 Eduardo Vázquez Martín, ‘Una nave cruza los ojos de Luis Buñuel’, in México fotografiado por Luis Buñuel, ed. by Cevera, pp. 63-69 (p. 69).} Vázquez Martín argues the exact opposite; namely, that unlike other Spaniards exiled in Mexico, Buñuel did not base his work on the evocation of a lost homeland but quickly filled it with the reality of his adopted home.

Chaspoul also examines the notion of exile and its (filmic) spatial resonances in Buñuel. Chaspoul does not focus on the Mexican cinema but on Viridiana and Tristana, made in Spain. His argument is subtler than the above statements from Pérez de Mendiola and Vázquez Martín, and he is less willing than Pérez de Mendiola to ascribe cinematic effect to biographical cause. Indeed, he asserts, ‘[t]hat Buñuel has suffered exile there is no doubt; but it is not this suffering that he represents [in his films]; he does not show his exile’. Chaspoul continues:

[i]f physical exile comes to an end, the exile of the gaze is prolonged, for this is the true cinematographic exile. Insofar as Buñuel has never made exile a subject, but always a place which influences the mise-en-scène and has an effect on it, there remains an exile of the gaze despite the end of his physical exile.\footnote{103 Chaspoul, p. 113, p.115 ['Que Buñuel ait souffert de l’exil, nul doute; mais ce n’est pas cette souffrance qu’il met en scène; il ne donne pas à voir son exil’; ‘Si l’exil physique s’achève, l’exil du regard, lui, se prolonge, car il est le véritable exil cinématographique. Dans la mesure où l’exil n’a jamais été chez Buñuel un sujet, mais toujours un lieu depuis lequel s’exerçait la mise en scène, et qui agissait donc sur elle, il demeure exil du regard en dépit de la fin de l’exil physique’].}

Chaspoul hesitates to read the trope of exile from quite so unflinching an aetiological perspective. He considers the position of the viewer, arguing that exile as a subtext in Buñuel’s cinema ends up influencing or contaminating \textit{contaminer} the spectator,\footnote{104 Ibid., p. 118.} leading him to conclude that Buñuel’s cinema is a cinema of exile and an exiling cinema in equal measure. While the first term, embraced by Pérez de Mendiola and rejected by Vázquez Martín, may be problematic for reasons detailed above, the second term turns the spectator’s gaze back on him- or herself as well as containing a patent spatial signification.

In a perceptive essay on Buñuel and Mexico, Michael Wood considers the filmmaker’s relationship to the country as evidenced through his films. He begins in a spatial vein, asking whether Buñuel’s Mexican movies can really be placed, as Buñuel may be ‘a genuinely displaced movie-maker’. Wood concurs with Pérez de
Mendiola in asking ‘[h]ow much of Mexico do we see in these films? I want to say not much’.\textsuperscript{105} He discerns a salient trend of universality in Buñuel’s Mexican films that negates Vázquez Martín’s view. Crucially, however, Wood does not seek to place Buñuel, exposing the categorisation of Buñuel’s cinema according to national/transnational/diaspora cinemas as arbitrary. He believes that such categorisation can deplete the potential of the film image, as ‘to ask whether the film is Mexican or not, is to resist, to seek to disperse, the very mystery this film articulates for us’.\textsuperscript{106} He is talking here specifically about \textit{El ángel exterminador}, but his rhetoric can be applied to Buñuel’s Mexican period as a whole. Miles echoes this idea in a subtle rebuke to critics who have tried to claim Buñuel for one or another nationality or national cinema:

Buñuel’s trademark ambivalence, his unambiguous aestheticized religiosity, but vehement counter-clericalism make it difficult to nationalize the content of his films and the fullest meaning of each does not necessarily lie in any systematic re-particularization of them in a Mexican or European context.\textsuperscript{107}

To attempt to place Buñuel and his films, be it in a national, bi-national or transnational context, is effectively what Kinder, Acevedo-Muñoz, Edwards and Higgins, in their own ways, attempt to do, evidencing Lillo’s claim that ‘[el] paradigma de lo nacional ha dominado tanto la recepción inmediata de los filmes de Buñuel como el comentario crítico’.\textsuperscript{108}

The approach of this thesis will not be to read Buñuel’s Mexican films according to constructs of national cinema, nor will I attempt an aetiological interpretation of the representation of space as a product of Buñuel’s ‘exile’. Instead, in order to maintain a fresh approach to some of the most studied films of the period and to reconsider some of the most disparaged, I will take some inspiration from Chaspoul and Wood, where their respective articles begin to bridge the gap between filmic and philosophical conceptualisations of space.

\textbf{1.4.3 A human geographer: philosophical examinations of space in Buñuel}

\textsuperscript{105} Wood, p. 41, p. 48.
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., p. 51.
\textsuperscript{107} Miles, p. 174.
As highlighted above, recent scholarship on Buñuel has invoked Deleuzian concepts of the impulse-image and the originary world, analysing the representation of cinematic space from a philosophical perspective. A more philosophical conception of space can perhaps be understood as a reaction against ubiquitous surrealist readings of the filmmaker’s work, as mentioned by Conley above. Elliot Rubinstein lays the foundation for the marriage between philosophy and spatiality in Buñuel’s cinema. Concluding his analysis of the Buñuelian diegesis – rendered as ‘the worst of all possible [worlds]’ – Rubinstein, importantly, casts Buñuel in the role of a human geographer:

it is the “human geography” that calls up not only Las Hurdes but all the best of Buñuel’s work. In the manner of a geographer who refuses to restrict his field of study, Buñuel with passionate curiosity examines human beings in their longitudes and latitudes, their climates – their spaces.109

This acute observation naturally foregrounds the director’s cinema within human and spatial concerns. The human concern with the world that Rubinstein proposes is at the heart of Buñuel’s work, is an aspect that enters into dialogue with Carlos Fuentes’s essay on Buñuel in which he surmises that tension in the director’s cinema revolves around ‘la decisión de conectarse con el mundo o de rehusar ese vínculo’.110 Spatial metaphors abound in this article as Fuentes writes:

[II]os personajes de Buñuel cumplen un sacerdocio: sacerdocio de las barriadas, del crimen, de las alcobas, del abandono, de las obsesiones, de las soledades. Viven una búsqueda del ser auténtico a lo largo y ancho de las selvas subjetivas y los océanos sociales. La identidad del deseo personal y de la autenticidad del hombre en el mundo otorga un sentido superior al sacerdocio buñueliano.111

Although Fuentes does not refer to specific films to illustrate this observation, it evokes images of the slums of Los olvidados, the jungle of La Mort en ce jardin and the ocean that keeps Robinson Crusoe prisoner on his island. The polemic in Buñuel’s cinema according to Fuentes is between freedom and isolation, as the protagonists of his films, after ‘la búsqueda del ser auténtico’, discover either ‘los lazos de una precaria comunidad o la esterilidad de un nuevo y definitivo

110 C. Fuentes, p. 199.
111 Ibid., p. 198.
aislamiento'.

Certainly, the trope of imprisonment is palpable in the director's Mexican films (among others, Fuentes cites Nazarín's incarceration, the tomb of Catalina and Alejandro in Abismos de pasión and the second, irreversible confinement of the diners in El ángel exterminador in the church). Often, this tension between confinement and freedom has entered Buñuelian scholarship as a predicate of surrealism, no doubt thanks to Buñuel's belief that 'la imaginación es libre, el hombre no', a precept encapsulated in the title of Le Fantôme de la liberté.

Michel circumscribes the Buñuelian oeuvre within the tension between confinement and freedom. Whereas Fuentes opposes isolation to freedom, however, the contrast for Michel is between alienation and de-alienation. In an echo of Elizondo's observations, Michel believes the beginnings of Buñuel's cinema are rooted in 'the search for man', and, as such, his output is necessarily concerned with human beings' position in the world, for '[i]f there is a common trait among men, it is not «an immortal human nature», but the fact of being alienated'. The semantic field of liberation and alienation as refracted through human existence here is echoed in Fuentes's essay and both were originally published during and after Buñuel's Mexican period – 1961 and 1970 respectively. Alienation is arguably a more flexible term than isolation, able to convey a sense of placial and personal non-belonging even when the person in question is not alone. For instance, it is plausible to consider the group of fugitives in La Mort en ce jardin as alienated in that they do not belong to their environment (the jungle) and their interpersonal relationships fail. Similarly, Nazarín's residence among the dispossessed of Mexico City and his reluctant journey with 'disciples' Ándara and Beatriz brings him into contact with others, even if he still remains alienated from them. Naturally, both isolation and alienation suggest a spatial dislocation between the subject and his/her surroundings. Michel emphasises that the

112 Ibid., pp. 198-99.
114 Michel, p. 21, p. 24. '[L]a recherché de l’homme’; ‘S’il y a un trait commun aux hommes, ce n’est pas l’immuable nature humaine, mais le fait d’être aliénés”.
115 Indeed, Dey views Fuentes's figurative rendering of the characters' journeys as a 'negotiation of being'. Dey, p. 86.
characters in Buñuel’s films are ‘placed in a difficult situation of circumstances and alienations’,\textsuperscript{116} a seemingly oxymoronic statement that points to a ‘positionless’ position. This sense of non-belonging is accurately and acutely summarised by Chaspoul: ‘Buñuel very often films characters in displacement, who never truly seem to succeed in inhabiting the places where they find themselves’.\textsuperscript{117} This – that the characters of the films to be analysed are rarely successful in their search for a place of belonging – is the central tenet of my argument and forms the backbone of my reading of the films.

1.5 The spatial turn: geography as an exporter of ideas

As Barney Warf and Santa Arias make clear, ‘[h]uman geography over the last two decades has undergone a profound conceptual and methodological renaissance that has transformed it into one of the most dynamic, innovative and influential of the social sciences’.\textsuperscript{118} This is reflected in the move from a discipline grounded in empiricism to consider wider avenues of research and interfaces between different disciplines such as sociology, literary and film studies and philosophy, meaning that ‘geographers are increasingly being read by scholars in the humanities and other social sciences’.\textsuperscript{119} This turn towards space across the arts and social sciences necessitates an interdisciplinary methodology that has been embraced by many different theorists and researchers, affirming the proclamation by Michel Foucault that ‘[t]he present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space’.\textsuperscript{120} To a large extent, this resurgence has been linked with postmodernism: Fredric Jameson’s assertion that ‘we live in spacious times’,\textsuperscript{121} for example, resonates with postmodern geographer Edward Soja’s conception of human beings as ‘intrinsically spatial beings, active participants in the social construction

\textsuperscript{116} Michel, p. 27. [‘Placé dans un contexte dur de circonstances et d’aliénations’].
\textsuperscript{117} Chaspoul, p. 115. [‘Buñuel filme très souvent des personnages en déplacement qui semblent ne jamais vraiment réussir à habiter les lieux où ils se trouvent’].
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{120} Michel Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces’, trans. by Jay Miskowiec, Diacritics, 16.1 (1986), 22-27 (p. 22).
\textsuperscript{121} Fredric Jameson in Andrew Thacker, Moving through Modernity: Space and Geography in Modernism (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 1.
of our embracing spatialities’. Soja’s research on spatiality – or the production of space in society – is centred on Los Angeles. He draws on Henri Lefebvre’s influential book *The Production of Space*, as well as Michel Foucault’s concept of heterotopias and bell hooks’s writing on appropriating the margins of society as a site of resistance to dominant groups.

In addition, it is possible to look back further and identify contributions to the broader trend of a reconceptualisation of the discipline of geography. Edward Relph’s *Place and Placelessness*, published in 1976, is a notable forerunner of this spatial turn and a concerted effort to excavate a fuller notion of place outside of empirical geography. Relph writes of the ‘almost total failure of geographers to explore the concept of place’. His focus is on the experiential sense of place, and in this his work is coetaneous with and paralleled by that of geographer Yi-Fu Tuan. Perhaps Tuan’s most well-known text is his study of the affective relationship between people and their environments, in which he echoes Gaston Bachelard’s neologism topophilia, or the love of place. Like Relph, Tuan underscores the propensity in geographical thought towards a more strictly scientific epistemology, locating his own work in opposition to this:

> [e]nvironment [...] is not just a resource base to be used or natural forces to adapt to, but also sources of assurance and pleasure, objects of profound attachment and love. In short, another key word for me, missing in many accounts of livelihood, is *Topophilia*. Both Relph and Tuan present convincing cases for a concerted focus on the significance of space and place within the field of human geography. Paul Rodaway considers Tuan in particular as ‘[v]ery much defining “humanistic geography” for a generation’, due to his reaction against positivist models of geographical analysis.

The resonances of this spatial turn in various disciplines are myriad. In that of philosophy, for instance, Edward Casey has produced insightful work within a

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125 Tuan, p.xii.
phenomenological vein concerning the human relationship to his or her lived surroundings, while Dylan Trigg has investigated the link between place and memory, and the role that places play in shaping our sense of self.\textsuperscript{127} In literary studies Elizabeth Jones examines the interface between geography and literature, considering the importance of the home through the life writing [autofiction] of three twentieth-century French authors.\textsuperscript{128} Similarly, Andrew Thacker carefully outlines the importance of space in literary analysis. Thacker’s project is the portrayal of space in modernist literature and he traces the concepts of influential spatial theorists such as Foucault, Bachelard and Martin Heidegger before applying these concepts to his reading of the works of notable authors including James Joyce and Virginia Woolf.\textsuperscript{129} The recent volume edited by theologist Daniel Boscaljon on the representation of the home in art and narrative includes considerations of poetry, prose, film and television.\textsuperscript{130} The contributions are varied in their scope and demonstrate the permeations of spatially focused analyses across disciplines. The spatial turn also provides the impetus for the edited volume Spatial Turns: Space, Place and Mobility in German Literary and Visual Culture. Although focused specifically on German cultural production, the editors’ assertion that

\begin{quotation}
[s]pace, and its related terms place and mobility function both as analytical categories and as objects of analysis in literature, film and new media. This emphasis on space as both theoretical and thematic allows authors to read canonical literary and cinematic texts anew
\end{quotation}

points towards the suitability of, as well as the need for, a wider mapping of spatially driven analyses of texts.\textsuperscript{131} Although several contributions to the volumes by Boscaljon and Fisher and Mennel detailed above take visual media as their

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[129] See Thacker, pp. 13-45.
\item[130] Daniel Boscaljon, ed., Resisting the Place of Belonging: Uncanny Homecomings in Religion, Narrative and the Arts (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013).
\item[131] Jaimey Fisher and Barbara Mennel, ‘Introduction’, in Spatial Turns: Space, Place and Mobility in German Literary and Visual Culture, ed. by Jaimey Fischer and Barbara Mennel (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010), pp. 9-23 (p. 9).
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source of study, the richness of analyses of space in film comes to the fore in other books and edited volumes specifically on cinema.

1.6 Considering space in cinema

As an inherently visual medium, cinema is able to represent space in its multifaceted dimensions. Taking Buñuel’s cinema as an example, films are able to psychologise space, as in the postcard image of Paris which comes to life before Castin’s delirious eyes in La Mort en ce jardin; they are capable of narrativising and reifying space, as in the pestilential symbiosis between human and environment in Tierra sin pan; and, intentionally or not, they aestheticise the locations that structure and form them through an aesthetics of beautification (surprisingly for the ascetic Buñuel, critic Pauline Kael labelled the mise-en-scène of Le Journal d’une femme de chambre as ‘revoltingly “beautiful”’) or austerity. In the past few decades, the influence of the spatial turn has emerged in academic studies of filmic representation of space, place and landscape from film scholars, geographers and philosophers.

Feeding into the idea of geography as an exporter of ideas and the interdisciplinary spatial turn, geographers Stuart Aitken and Leo Zonn assert that ‘cinematic representation needs to be a key part of geographic investigation’, on the basis that film is mode of cultural production and a social text. They argue in favour of the symbiosis between cinema and culture, or as they phrase it, between ‘real-life and reel-life’:

the way spaces are used and places are portrayed in film reflects prevailing cultural norms, ethical mores, societal structures, and ideologies. Concomitantly, the impact of a film on an audience can mold social, cultural, and environmental experiences. Clearly, a research direction focused on the production and consumption of space and place in cinema deserves serious geographic attention.

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The contributions that make up Aitken and Zonn’s volume are heterogeneous, drawing on documentary film, Third cinema and British cinema, but all affirm the importance of the representation of space in film and hold film to be influential in ‘understanding our place in the world’.\textsuperscript{135}

In his study of space in cinema, André Gardies points out that the analysis of narrative space has traditionally been overlooked in favour of that of time.\textsuperscript{136} His monograph is a serious attempt to reverse this trend. In classical narrative cinema – largely the realm of Buñuel’s Mexican cinema – Gardies believes that there is frequently concordance between what the films tell the viewer and the viewer’s own knowledge; that is, the ‘anchoring-in-the-real’ [\textit{l'ancrage «réel»}] of the film by way of recognisable toponymy helps to build on a viewer’s encyclopaedic knowledge.\textsuperscript{137} Buñuel is an interesting figure in this respect: we need only think of \textit{Los olvidados} – arguably one of his most linear, realist films – to see how Buñuel’s depiction of space is always already an ambivalent one. Set unmistakably in Mexico City, the unforgiving slums that form the characters’ world are somewhat unexpected following the images of grandiose British, French and Mexican metonymy as Big Ben, the Eiffel Tower and the Zócalo flash across the screen, undermining the viewer’s epistemological expectations. Gardies’s approach is largely structuralist, frequently drawing on Saussure’s linguistic theories as analogies and Christian Metz’s writing on cinema, examining the transmission of information from the screen to the audience and the latter’s perception of this.

Contrasting with Gardies’s claim that analysis of film has traditionally favoured time over space is Wendy Everett and Axel Goodbody’s assertion that ‘it would be rare today to find any serious study of film that did not in some way take account of the importance of space’.\textsuperscript{138} Their aim is to explore the various ways in which spatial theories and theorists have impacted investigations of filmic space. As such, theorists of contemporary urbanity such as Michel de Certeau and Henri Lefebvre are prominent among the contributions that make up the volume. In

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{135} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{137} Ibid., p. 77.
\end{itemize}
many respects, the birth of cinema as a medium was coetaneous with the rapid expansion of cities and the redefining of the urban metropolis. Early cinema was perfectly positioned to demonstrate recent architectural achievements, such as the American Mutoscope and Biograph Company’s *Panorama of the Flatiron Building* (1903), and to capture urban life in its totality, from the bright lights and showgirls of commercial Weimar Berlin to the sewers underneath the city in Walter Ruttmann’s *Berlin: die Symphonie der Großstadt* (1927). Not surprisingly, the depiction of the city in film is a field of substantial research. However, there is also an effort in Everett and Goodbody’s volume to look beyond the urban to different conceptions of space, such as the idyllic spaces of tropical islands and the relationship between space and the male body as represented by actor Javier Bardem.

More recently, scholars have shown a renewed interest in the ways in which film can represent landscape. According to Graeme Harper and Jonathan Rayner,

> [c]inema, as the twentieth century’s most successful art form, worked in an analogous way to the globe produced by Behaim in the fifteenth century, in that it delineated and disseminated images and ideas about landscape, and promoted them for further discovery.

As an example of cultural production, film establishes a contract of sorts with the spectator, who is at liberty to interpret the images on screen in his or her own way. Harper and Rayner point towards the affective potential of spatial representation when they suggest that a filmic landscape is a ‘mnemonic offering’, and can be ‘landscapes of the mind, offering displaced representations of desires and values’. What Martin Lefebvre terms ‘a form of spatial predicate’, filmic landscapes are the most readily aestheticised element of *mise-en-scène*. Lefebvre distinguishes between the narrative mode of viewing, whereby the landscape on-screen is an integral element of the plot, and the spectacular mode,

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139 Among the numerous examples, see David Clarke’s *The Cinematic City* (London: Routledge, 1997) or Mark Shiel and Tony Fitzmaurice’s edited volume *Cinema and the City: Film and Urban Societies in a Global Context* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001).


141 Ibid., p. 18, p. 21.

142 Martin Lefebvre, ‘Between Setting and Landscape in the Cinema’, in *Landscape and Film*, ed. by Lefebvre, pp. 19-59 (p. 51).
whereby the viewer is invited to contemplate the aesthetic qualities of the landscape independently of the narrative.\footnote{143} The chapters in Lefebvre’s volume are wide-ranging in their subjects and the theoretical frameworks behind their analyses draw on the work of theorists such as Deleuze and Félix Guattari, and Foucault. For the purposes of this thesis, Lefebvre’s admission that there is much more research to be done on the representation of space in cinema is pertinent. Indeed, the present study of space in the films of Buñuel’s Mexican period addresses Lefebvre’s view that,

“[w]hile setting concerns narrative representation, and narrative aesthetic representation, it is equally possible to represent space in more “anthropological” terms. Indeed, space may be represented as pertaining to lived experiences other than narrative or aesthetic. This is the case, for example, with “identity” and “belonging” and the myriad ways of engaging with space that both can entail.”\footnote{144}

This call for a wider conceptualisation of the possibilities of spatial representation in cinema, beyond aesthetic analysis and in particular with regards to lived experiences, has been taken up relatively recently by Juhani Pallasmaa in his analysis of existential space in cinema and its representation in architecture. According to Pallasmaa, ‘experiential images of space and place are contained in practically all films’, given that ‘[a]rt articulates the boundary surface between the mind and the world’.\footnote{145} His twinning of cinema and architecture springs from his view that ‘[t]hese two art forms create and mediate comprehensive images of life. [...] Both forms of art define the dimensions and essence of existential space; they both create experiential scenes of life situations’.\footnote{146} Pallasmaa includes the work of four directors in his book: Hitchcock, Tarkovsky, Kubrick and Antonioni; interestingly, though, he cites Buñuel’s cinema as equally deserving of his philosophical approach to architectural analysis in film.\footnote{147} Pallasmaa contends that cinema can produce poetic images which ‘open up streams of association and..."
affect’, rendering cinema an ideal medium to ask philosophical questions.¹⁴⁸ In this way, his view coincides with that of Murray Smith and Thomas Wartenberg, who ask more generally:

[i]f philosophy is regarded as the attempt to think systematically about fundamental issues of human existence, it seems more plausible to regard film as capable of embodying such acts of reflection. For if philosophy names a range of concerns that are the common property of every thoughtful human being during at least some moments of his or her life, why should films not mobilize these concerns in ways that would count as philosophy in this sense?¹⁴⁹

This thesis addresses both of these concerns, firstly by reading space in the films beyond issues of purely aesthetic and artistic representation and secondly by using film to pose deeper questions of what it means to be in place and to belong in a place, and in doing so, widening the scope of Buñuel studies. Beyond aesthetic or narrative concerns, filmic depictions of space, place and landscape are replete with displaced desires and values, as signalled by Harper and Rayner, above, and can be considered as explorations of metatextual metaphors and allegories beyond the surface level of narrative. It is this which provides the thrust behind my reading of the films in this thesis, and the broad approach will consider how film, specifically here Buñuel’s Mexican films, is suited to depict issues of belonging and non-belonging within the interrelated fields of human geography and philosophy.


Chapter Two
Island heterotopias in Robinson Crusoe and The Young One

2.0 Introduction
In July 1954, Buñuel’s adaptation of Daniel Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe premiered in North America.150 In terms of the mechanics of the film’s production and its subsequent reception, Buñuel’s Robinson Crusoe constitutes a unique work among his films made in Mexico.151 On a technical level, it was his first colour production, which, when coupled with the aesthetically arresting mise-en-scène and shot composition by Buñuel’s Canadian cinematographer and colour film specialist Alex Phillips,152 culminates in what Tony Richardson sees as man and environment in harmony, ultimately leading to the realisation of a ‘mature and beautiful work’.153 Robinson Crusoe was aimed at the Anglophone, principally North American, market, the audience most likely to possess a more familiar grasp of the English literary canon, and as Marvin D’Lugo explains, of all Buñuel’s films made in Mexico, ‘none was more successful commercially nor more widely distributed at the time of its release than Robinson Crusoe’.154 However, although the film was generally well received in the USA and Europe, it has often been overshadowed by Buñuel’s more independent works of the period, such as Los olvidados, shot just two-and-a-half years previously.

Six years later, Buñuel began work on The Young One, released in Mexico under the title La jovem. In many ways this can be considered the companion film to Robinson Crusoe. The two have frequently been mentioned in conjunction with one another, with critics often citing their status as the director’s sole English-

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150 The film was actually filmed two years previously, after El Bruto. The Mexican première came in 1955. V. Fuentes, Buñuel en México, p. 177.
151 The full title of the film is The Adventures of Robinson Crusoe. I refer to it throughout as Robinson Crusoe.
152 Buñuel himself claimed the film was ‘la primera película en Eastmancolor del continente’. De la Colina and Pérez Turrent, p. 77.
language productions.\textsuperscript{155} Indeed, Buñuel writes about the two films together in his autobiography precisely for this reason.\textsuperscript{156} Aside from linguistically predicated similarities, both films were inspired by literary sources. The Young One is a liberal adaptation of Peter Matthiessen’s short story ‘Travelin’ Man’, first published in 1957.\textsuperscript{157} Matthiessen’s story depicts the racial struggle between an escaped black convict who flees to Ocean Island, off the coast of the US Deep South, and the white man who resides there. Like Robinson Crusoe, this film is often omitted from the Buñuel canon; de la Colina concedes that he initially found the film to be ‘un «buen Buñuel menor», una película lograda, pero un tanto impersonal’, a statement refuted by the director.\textsuperscript{158} Santaolalla notes that The Young One ‘remains one of Buñuel’s most neglected films critically’,\textsuperscript{159} due perhaps to the film’s decidedly tepid reception, unpalatable subject matter and subsequent moderate takings at the box office.\textsuperscript{160} This is echoed in Jonathan Rosenbaum’s appraisal of the film, though he ultimately attributes its commercial failure in the USA to the fact that Buñuel ‘still hadn’t become a “brand-name” director, a recognized auteur’.\textsuperscript{161} What little attention has been paid to the film, Santaolalla affirms, has invariably been caught up in the film’s thematic pertinent to US society of the 1960s: that of racial tension in the Deep South prior to the Civil Rights Movement.\textsuperscript{162}

Furthermore, both films are given as Mexican-US co-productions and both were projects involving the Canadian screenwriter Hugo Butler and American producer George Pepper. Their identities are disguised under pseudonyms in the films’ credits due to their blacklisted status under McCarthyism and the Second Red Scare sweeping American institutions, including Hollywood, in the 1950s.\textsuperscript{163}

\textsuperscript{155} See, for example, V. Fuentes, Buñuel en México, pp. 92-100 and Fernando Gabriel Martín, El ermitaño errante: Buñuel en Estados Unidos (Murcia: Tres Fronteras, 2010), pp. 745-75.
\textsuperscript{156} Buñuel, Mi último suspiro, pp. 223-25.
\textsuperscript{157} Peter Matthiessen, On the River Styx and Other Stories (London: Collins Harvill, 1990), pp. 37-56.
\textsuperscript{158} De la Colina and Pérez Turrent, p. 112. Buñuel writes that The Young One and Robinson Crusoe are ‘dos películas que recuerdo con agrado’. Buñuel, Mi último suspiro, p. 222.
\textsuperscript{159} Santaolalla, p. 97.
\textsuperscript{160} For a detailed account of the film’s production and reception, see Randall Conrad, ‘No Blacks or Whites: The Making of Luis Buñuel’s The Young One’, Cineaste, 20.3 (1994), 28-31.
\textsuperscript{162} Santaolalla, p. 97.
\textsuperscript{163} According to Conrad, ‘Mexico [...] was courting American projects, partly to help offset rising production costs. “They want foreign production now,” observed blacklisted screenwriter Dalton Trumbo in 1958, “and are laying out the red carpet for all kinds of politically soiled artisans.”’. Conrad, p. 31.
The spatial analysis elaborated in this chapter will concentrate on what is arguably the most obvious of the parallels between the two films: the island as narrative setting. I contend that fresh readings of the films can be achieved through a discussion of the spatial dialectics of the films’ island spaces, with a specific focus on the ways in which these islands can be seen as representative of an Other space whose identity is constituted in the islands’ alterity. This state of alterity, a contestation of the everyday space we inhabit, allows these island spaces to be viewed within Foucault’s framework of heterotopias.

2.1 Buñuel and the island as setting

The island as narrative setting is widespread in Buñuel’s cinema. La Fièvre monte à El Pao takes place on a fictitious island near a totalitarian South American state and the location for Cela s’appelle l’aurore is the Mediterranean island of Corsica. Additionally, the proposed title for El ángel exterminador was Los náufragos de la calle Providencia. The island as mise-en-scène was also intended to form part of Ilegible, hijo de flauta, the screenplay that Buñuel wrote with Spanish poet Juan Larrea in 1948 and modified in 1957, but which he never filmed.164 In the two present films, Buñuel’s preoccupation with what Fernando Gabriel Martín describes as spaces of isolation drives him to emphasise the physicality of these spaces through cinematography, as I will show.165 Indeed, Martín’s fixation on the island trope as an insular prison bears links to the unresolved dualism of freedom and isolation identified by Carlos Fuentes and Michel in Chapter One. D’Lugo draws attention to the fact that the island as setting really begins with the arrival of the Mallorcans in L’Âge d’or and later continues as the Mexican Pacific coastal region of Manzanillo forms the backdrop to a number of Buñuel’s international co-productions, functioning as a blank canvass to morph from Crusoe’s solitary home into the nondescript game-preserve of Miller in The Young One.166 Buñuel’s son, Juan Luis Buñuel, states: ‘[h]e [Buñuel] has always liked the idea of people being separated from the rest of society and how they would react in this new

164 See Juan Larrea and Luis Buñuel, Ilegible, hijo de flauta, ed. by Gabriele Morelli, Colección Iluminaciones, 32 (Seville: Renacimiento, 2007).
165 Martín, pp. 742-45.
ambience’. The two-fold nature of the island as both a self-enclosed site (or prison) and a secluded environment yet to be touched by commodification is encapsulated for D’Lugo in the pithy term salón en la selva. This expression first arises in de la Colina and Pérez Turrent’s conversations with Buñuel about La Mort en ce jardin, though it is easily reworked for other Buñuel films with literal or metaphorical jungles, such as Robinson Crusoe and El ángel exterminador. The duality between the commodification impulse and the island as a site of banishment underscores both Robinson Crusoe and The Young One, marking the island spaces of the narratives as Other, yet permeated by the cultural influence of the mainland societies to which these islands are bound. As I will explain, it is often the conflict between what can be considered opposing spatial modes that constitutes these islands as Foucauldian heterotopias.

2.2 Heterotopias

Outlined in a lecture given to architecture students in 1967, Foucault’s concept of heterotopias has gained substantial currency in considerations of space in the arts and social sciences since its inclusion in a 1984 exhibition intended to stimulate the urban regeneration of West Berlin, and subsequent publication in 1986. The literal meaning of the term is ‘other spaces’ and postmodern approaches within the discipline of geography have encouraged the use of the concept to support and affirm difference and resistance in feminist, postcolonial or queer strands of geography and their interrogation of hegemonic power structures. Moreover, evidencing the trend outlined in Chapter One towards human geography as an exporter rather than an importer of ideas, Foucault’s analysis and its elaboration by geographical researchers has bled into literary and cultural studies and is a potent and fruitful tool for analysis, given its wide-ranging applications to the analysis of space and spatial production. Indeed, according to Derek Hook and Michele Vrdoljak, although specific spaces can be considered as heterotopias, the

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168 See de la Colina and Pérez Turrent, p. 101.
169 The geographer Soja uses heterotopia as an analytical tool to propose ‘an alternative envisioning of spatiality’ which ‘directly challenges (and is intended to challengingly deconstruct) all conventional modes of spatial thinking’, Soja, p. 163. For a detailed account of the way in which the term has been used by scholars in these fields, see Kevin Hetherington, The Badlands of Modernity: Heterotopia and Social Ordering (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 39-54.
term itself can be used as a mode of analysis, as a 'particular way to look at space, place or text'. In Foucault's words, heterotopias are 'counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted'. He prefaces his discussion of heterotopias with observations on utopias: both spaces are separated from the surrounding space and remain 'outside of all places', but whereas the latter are ultimately imaginary, impossible spaces, heterotopias are culturally specific, able to be located in reality and are a 'constant of every human group'. Peter Johnson has explored the relationship between heterotopias and utopias, affirming that the former are abortive utopias or, to be more specific, they are utopias 'come unstitched', sites with a utopian intent that fails in practice. This is not to say that heterotopias are necessarily dystopias, however, since according to Kevin Hetherington they transcend the utopia-dystopia paradigm by problematising the etymological and homonymic ambiguity of the Greek term utopia as both a ou-topic no-place and a eu-topic good-place, existing 'in this space-between, in this relationship between spaces, in particular between eu-topia and ou-topia'. Furthermore, a counter-site requires the presence of another space, an outsider viewpoint from which the counter-site can be seen as a heterotopia, as heterotopias are established as such 'by their difference in a relationship between sites rather than their Otherness deriving from a site itself'. As I will explain, the island spaces of Robinson Crusoe and The Young One can be considered as heterotopic sites in that they are caught within a network of relations between the off-screen mainland, which is conspicuous through its absence in both films. In addition, the protagonists of each island space attempt to constitute their own elements of utopia that are shown to fail, influencing their interaction with their environment.

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171 Foucault, p. 24.
173 Hetherington, p. ix.
174 Ibid., p. 43.
Robinson Crusoe

2.3 Beyond cartography: Crusoe’s desert island

An island is, by definition, a site of isolation and exile, yet in many ways it functions as a metaphysical aperture which leads to experiences of self-discovery or self-realisation, facilitated paradoxically by its very nature as an insular site, both in the physical and psychological sense. Director and screenwriter John Truby posits that the island as setting constitutes a ‘laboratory of man, a solitary paradise or hell, the place where a special world can be built and where new forms of living can be created and tested’.175 Such a description clearly chimes with the island as an alternate space par excellence in the form of Thomas More’s Utopia. Significantly, in film and literature islands have frequently been located outside the perimeters of traditional geographical cartography, with castaways often chancing upon an island rather than following a deliberate trajectory, as in William Golding’s Lord of the Flies and its subsequent cinematic adaptation by Peter Brook in 1963, H. G. Wells’s The Island of Dr Moreau and the film adaptation by Don Taylor in 1977, and Robert Zemeckis’s film Castaway (2000). This element of contingency imbues the island space with a mysterious quality when we consider Foucault’s opinion on the relationality of contemporary space:

[t]oday the site has been substituted for extension which itself had replaced emplacement. The site is defined by relations of proximity between points or elements; formally, we can describe these relations as series, trees, or grids. [...] Our epoch is one in which space takes for us the form of relations among sites.176

A site, then, is defined in terms of its spatial coordinates – for example, latitude/longitude – in order to relate it to neighbouring sites; however, the island’s location in film and literature is regularly shrouded in mystery, augmenting the element of serendipity, or misfortune, in its discovery. This element of mystery underscores the opening sequence of Buñuel’s Robinson Crusoe, as the precise position of Crusoe’s island is never fully elaborated: it lacks relationality from the very beginning. Following the opening credits, as the camera focuses on a copy of Defoe’s novel and a rudimentary seventeenth-century map, the voice-over narration gives Crusoe’s location as ‘in the latitude of twelve

176 Foucault, p. 23.
degrees eighteen minutes’, before he is swept off-course by the storm. The juxtaposition of contrasting spatial modalities – contingency versus cartography – leading to Crusoe’s shipwreck and arrival on the island is important, as ‘[i]t is in this sense that many traditional island narratives start to reveal tensions regarding space and possible shifts in organization due to heterotopic elements’. As previously mentioned, unlike utopias, heterotopias are ‘outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality’. Crusoe’s island exists, yet paradoxically it lies beyond the parameters of traditional cartography, at least beyond those of the elementary map shown in the opening sequence of Buñuel’s film. Indeed, the very inclusion of the map in the opening sequence is interesting as a point of departure from the realist, empirical world into the unknown. Given that the archetypal iconography of the desert island is of a quasi-Edenic, unspoiled site completely closed in on itself, its precise location matters little. What is being stressed in the film’s opening is the romanticised theme of adventure associated with the desert island trope in seminal works such as Robert Lewis Stevenson’s Treasure Island, or Jules Verne’s The Mysterious Island, the kind of swashbuckling escapades on the high seas (or, in Verne’s case, in the air) alluded to by Foucault in the conclusion to his original lecture outlining heterotopias, where he writes: ‘in civilizations without boats, dreams dry up, espionage takes the place of adventure, and the police take the form of pirates’.

In his work analysing the portrayal of the desert island in literature, Walter de la Mare finds this narrative motif to be imbued with a decidedly romantic ideal: the entire globe, he suggests, can be viewed as a collection of islands, yet there is an intrinsic quality to the desert island in particular, to those ‘specks [on our atlas]
as minute as the vagrant footprints of some tiny insect’, that ‘invites the soul’. Paralleling Truby’s opinion that the island represents a malleable space fraught with dangers and bestowed with hidden pleasures – namely, that it is in constant oscillation within the utopian-dystopian paradigm – de la Mare writes:

[s]hort of the subterranean, the submarine, and the wild vacancies of space, however, the conditions of an ideal retreat from the tumult and artificialities of man are fulfilled – solitude, danger, strangeness, the unknown, the discoverable, the eventual means of escape – if our hermitage is an island.

It is significant that de la Mare should consider the island a space of opposition to the spaces and institutions of modern civilisation. This resonates with Martínez Herranz’s argument that Buñuel’s selective adaptation of Robinson Crusoe, which focuses exclusively on the hero’s time on the island, suggests that ‘the castaway’s exile was not a form of atonement but rather an opportunity to discover himself and rid himself of social and moral ties that prevented him from freedom’.

Quite how far Buñuel’s Crusoe achieves freedom is questionable, however, when we consider the film’s representation of what I have termed contrasting spatial modes. It is clear that the island archetype, and its representation in Buñuel’s film, is ‘[a space] in which an alternate social ordering is performed [...] that stands in contrast to the taken-for-granted mundane idea of social order that exists within society’. Hetherington illustrates these spaces using the Marquis de Sade’s castle of debauchery and death in One Hundred and Twenty Days of Sodom, and Franz Kafka’s Castle, a space of absolute bureaucratic authority. He continues: ‘they are set up to fascinate and to horrify, to try and make use of the limits of our imagination, our desires, our fears and our sense of power/powerlessness’. Hetherington views both spaces as heterotopic by means of their implementation of an alternative social ordering: in the former, a system based on unbridled sovereignty; in the latter, the supremacy of faceless bureaucracy. The respective spaces’ heterotopic qualities therefore derive from their ability to contest the ordinary, everyday space that we inhabit, either by

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182 Walter de la Mare, Desert Islands and Robinson Crusoe, 2nd edn (London: Faber and Faber, 1932 [1930]), p. 18.
183 Ibid., p. 16.
184 Martínez Herranz, p. 284.
185 Hetherington, p. 40.
186 Ibid.
'creat[ing] a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory', patently the subversive space of de Sade's castle, or by 'creat[ing] a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill-constructed and jumbled', akin to Kafka's *Castle.* Bearing in mind the words of de la Mare, namely that the island has traditionally been seen as an ideal retreat from the tumult and artificialities of man, I now examine the ways in which the island in *Robinson Crusoe* comes to encourage a conflation of real and illusory spatial modes.

### 2.4 Crusoe’s island as a simulacrum and heterotopia of illusion

Illusory spaces are a veritable trope in Buñuel's cinema and they come into their own during the more explicitly surrealist and illogical sequences in his films. For example, we can think of the strange country inn that fosters incest and bondage in *Le Fantôme de la liberté*, the quasi-oneiric mansion of the Sénéchals in *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* and the country-road walking sequences of the same film. In *Robinson Crusoe*, I contend that a contrast of spatial modalities underscores the narrative and the representation of the island space. For Storment, '[t]he key to understanding heterotopic island narratives is to recognize and interpret the competing spatial regimes being juxtaposed upon, [sic] contested, and renegotiated in these heterotopic spaces'. The spatial mode marked most dramatically in this film is the island's cultivation of illusion. Referring to the opening sequence of the movie, D'Lugo contends that the shadow of Crusoe over the book and the map, and the disembodied narration ‘affirms the Eurocentric cultural-economical position that relegates the New World experience to an object status’. This postcolonial reading certainly holds weight; however, this is precisely the paradigmatic schema of control as represented by and contained within the centre as opposed to the periphery that Buñuel problematises in *Robinson Crusoe*. The dominant space in the cultural discourse in *Robinson Crusoe* (England) remains unseen. Primacy is given thus to marginalised space. Concerning the Mexican co-productions, D'Lugo continues:

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187 Foucault, p. 27.  
we may begin to discern the underlying logic of subversive travel: these are commercial plunderers, terrorists, fortune hunters, sexual poachers, in short, characters who, by virtue of the plotting of these films, are brought to the same essential site of primitive tropical space that leads in each work to an implicit critique – often more visual than verbal – of the presumed superiority of civilisation over the culture of the periphery.190

Robinson Crusoe arguably does more than question the dominance of civilisation over the culture of the periphery. In its exploration of the island as a heterotopia of illusion, it eschews de la Mare’s romantic image of desert islands, presenting this not as ‘un entorno edénico y feliz sino el espacio de aislamiento y la soledad’.191 The consequence of this inversion of cultural hegemony is taken to its extreme halfway through the film, utilising the reality of Crusoe’s bitter despair and solitude as a vehicle through which the outside world, the supposedly dominant Eurocentric model, can be viewed as little more than an illusion.

According to Foucault’s classification of the types of heterotopia, a heterotopia of illusion has the function of rendering ‘every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory’,192 Foucault’s example of this illusory counter-space is the traditional brothel. This is a heterotopia of illusion that represents a self-enclosed site with a distinct social and moral ordering based on hedonistic rather than repressive drives. Though obviously dissimilar in their function, both the brothel and Crusoe’s island-home subsume the surrounding space, or ‘all the sites in which human life is partitioned’, as Foucault puts it, heightening the element of pleasure in the former and despair in the latter. Foucault’s categorisation of heterotopias is surprisingly short and his most cursory comments are reserved for heterotopias of illusion. David Grahame Shane has recently written about heterotopias of illusion with reference to Disneyland, among others. For Shane, Disneyland as the apogee of utopian consumerism is a notable example of a heterotopia of illusion.193

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190 Ibid., p. 85. Of the twenty-one films that Buñuel made within the Mexican film industry, six were international co-productions: in addition to the two Mexican-US co-productions, La Mort en ce jardin and La Fièvre monte à El Pao were Mexican-French co-productions, Cela s’appelle l’aurore was a project involving Mexico, France and Italy, and Viridiana was a Mexican-Spanish co-production.

191 Martín, p. 742.

192 Foucault, p. 27.

Baudrillard’s writing on simulacra can be used to shed more light on Disneyland’s – and the island’s – constitution as a heterotopia of illusion. Baudrillard’s taxonomy of what he terms the order of simulacra helps to explain the way in which the proliferation of visual images – from analogue and digital media – distorts the boundary between the real and the illusory in the postmodern world through the creation of a hyperreality, acting as a simulation, rather than an inferior representation, of an original image or object. Disneyland belongs to the third stage of the sign, that is, ‘[the sign] masks the absence of a profound reality’. Disneyland, as a sign, as a place, is ‘a play of illusions and phantoms’. It ‘exists in order to make us think that the rest is real, whereas all of Los Angeles and the America that surrounds it are no longer real’.194 This theme is taken up also by Umberto Eco. According to Eco, in the culture of North America the absolute fake, the simulacrum, is invested with more meaning than the original. In this way, ‘Disneyland not only produces illusion, but – in confessing it – stimulates the desire for it’.195 James Connor contends that Eco’s voyage through the hyperreal derives from the collapse of the Platonic distance between image and thing, allowing Eco’s hyperreality to unfold whilst ‘enfold[ing] two ontological levels, collapsing the gap between illusion and reality’.196 This is precisely the effect that Buñuel shows to influence Crusoe on his island and which is compounded by the hero’s solitude: in its total subsuming of all other reality, the island leads Crusoe to the brink of a profound ontological crisis.

The theme of solitude figures within pseudo-religious readings of the film as ‘a moral rebirth’.197 D’Lugo avoids rehashing this parabolic reading by focusing on Buñuel’s use of sound in the film. He posits that sound is configured by Crusoe as ‘[a] liberating power of acoustic imagination’, as ‘[Crusoe’s] response to his fear and loneliness is [...] acoustic. When he speaks within the diegetic space, for instance, it is invariably to fill the void of his solitude’.198 Crusoe’s solitude is

197 Durgnat, p. 80. Buache takes this further, contending that from Crusoe’s lowest ebb, as he runs into the sea screaming for help, he is ‘devoid of cumbersome laws and rituals, and has emerged reborn’. Buache, p. 71.
rendered as much through audio techniques as it is through visual techniques, and sound features prominently in the three sequences of the film that depict the nadir of Crusoe’s loneliness. Rather than functioning as a liberating power, as D’Lugo suggests, the sound here points directly towards the dominance of illusion and hyperreality, whereby the island effectively becomes a totalising microcosm of the world at large. This is portrayed in three sequences in particular.

Following the death of his dog, Rex, Crusoe, in his desperation for the reassuring sound of another human voice, charges towards his so-called valley of the echo in order to recite Psalm Twenty Three. The sequence is visually arresting as the camera pans the vast green wilderness, interspersed with three quarter shots and distance shots of Crusoe, suggesting not only a sense of scale in which Crusoe is dwarfed by his environment, but also his uneasy attitude towards his hyperreality where illusion, or simulacrum – here in the form of his own voice reverberating – has taken the place of reality. Disembodied vocalisation stands not as a comfort to Crusoe, as D’Lugo contends, but as a relentless onslaught, and the reverberations link with the camera’s panning of the valley of illusion as if seeking the source of these utterances even after we have clearly seen Crusoe producing the sounds. The longed-for onslaught of disembodied vocal simulacra in the valley of the echo filmically evidences the principle behind Eco’s view that, in announcing itself as illusion, Disneyland (and Crusoe’s island) actually stimulates the need for illusion. This sequence pre-empts Crusoe’s profound ontological crisis. Attempting in vain to take comfort from his Bible, a remnant from his milieu, Crusoe indicates that space beyond the island has now been divested of all meaning. The dialogue switches here from Crusoe’s diegetic utterances as he tries to make sense of the scripture to an extra-diegetic voice-over, used to communicate Crusoe’s inner confusion, which laments: ‘the scriptures became meaningless to my eyes. The world seemed like a whirling ball with oceans and continents of green scum. And myself, of no purpose, of no meaning’. This recalls the film’s opening image of the map, highlighting the fragility of epistemological security as it unmasks this as an illusion. The switch from Crusoe’s outer voice to inner voice is more than just a device for filmic narration. The island as a Baudrillardian third order simulacrum lacks any corresponding reality underneath; it is a subsuming totality that renders signs from elsewhere –
Crusoe’s Bible and spoken voice – insignificant, emerging as a heterotopia of illusion in its rendering of the world beyond its impassable borders as ‘still more illusory’. The following sequence represents the nadir of Crusoe’s dejection in which, according to Fuentes, Crusoe’s image becomes that of an anti-Prometheus, fleeing from the reality of his illusion into the sea, his torch, his voice and his hope drowned by the waves (see appendix RC 1). Therefore, at the culmination of Crusoe’s despondency, his island-home succeeds in shaking the hero’s worldview, dissociating the space beyond its borders with meaning by virtue of its uncontested hyperreality. The result is that Crusoe’s despair is compounded by an ‘exaggerated universe where nothing holds it back’.

2.5 Towards a heterotopia of compensation

There is a paradox at the heart of Robinson Crusoe, however. The island is the site of contrasting spatial modes that undermine its constitution as purely a heterotopia of illusion. As noted previously, heterotopic island narratives are often characterised by the competing spatial regimes being constituted within the setting. Here, the island represents unchartered and mystified territory – a potential threat to Crusoe’s survival – and he therefore feels compelled to establish a taxonomy of flora and fauna. Soon after his arrival on the island, Buñuel introduces a series of shots of the large variety of vegetation and wildlife as Crusoe narrates his findings. This can be considered the foundation of what Foucault terms a heterotopia of compensation, the space that Hetherington associates with Kafka’s Castle and which, contrary to that of a heterotopia of illusion, is ‘as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill-constructed and jumbled’. The alternation of despair and resignation with the quest for knowledge and self-preservation is one example of what Durgnat terms the dialectics of Buñuel’s cinema, ‘in that every character, every event, is not an

199 Foucault, p. 27.
200 V. Fuentes, Buñuel en México, p. 97.
202 Foucault, p. 27.
assertion of any one point, but is a synthesis between opposing polarities'. In this way, Crusoe's island is able to concurrently constitute both a heterotopia of illusion and a heterotopia of compensation. This duality of spatial modes is symbolised by Crusoe's attachment to certain objects on his island. We could contrast Crusoe's extinguished torch in the scene in which he runs screaming into the sea with his telescope that he uses frequently on top of his vantage point to survey his surroundings. Fittingly, D'Lugo suggests that empowerment for Crusoe is contained within 'the fetishism of the look'. To this end, the montage of the island's wildlife, mentioned above, is presented in the style of an objective documentary and the voice over narration serves this time as a quasi-zoological instruction rather than a free indirect discourse of Crusoe's uncertainty and existential crisis.

As the name suggests, then, a heterotopia of compensation acts to compensate and counteract the disorganised space in which our everyday lives are played out. These particular types of counter-spaces perhaps best display the characteristics of an effectively enacted utopic social order, one based on the enforcement of a system of organisation and regimentation that contrives to construct a place for everyone and to keep everyone in their place. Notable examples of such operational counter-spaces were the bishop Vasco de Quiroga's repúblicas de indios in sixteenth-century colonial Mexico. De Quiroga attempted to establish the economic and political system of More's Utopia through the creation of so-called hospital-villages of Santa Fe, settlements founded on

the common ownership of property; the integration of large families; the systematic alternation between the urban and the rural people; work for women; the six-hour working day; the liberal distribution of the fruits of common labor according to the needs of the inhabitants.

Silvio Zavala posits that de Quiroga's ordinances breathe life into More's theoretical notion of his utopic good-place, though it is necessary to signal that, viewed as a heterotopia in the vein of Hetherington's alternative social ordering

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203 Durgnat, p. 17. Arriving at much the same conclusion, Fuentes writes of the director's penchant for what he terms the 'coincidentia oppositorum', relating it specifically to the casting of two actresses for the role of Conchita in Cet obscur objet du désir. See V. Fuentes, Buñuel en México, p. 70.

204 D'Lugo, 'Subversive Travel', p. 99.

discussed previously, the hospital-village of Santa Fe acted as a Panopticon for social control through the natives’ conversion to Christianity. Though Crusoe’s situation is radically different from that of de Quiroga, Buñuel does in fact portray numerous scenes in which it is clear that, like that of the colonial bishop, Crusoe’s desire to demarcate the island space is driven by a desire to impose a sense of order and stability on fundamentally unpredictable space, a hierarchy which emulates the modern Western spatial model judged by Foucault to operate on a series of binaries – the division between public and private space, for instance, or between the space of leisure and that of labour. Crusoe is shown herding his goats into a pen, sewing corn seeds in a field and making pottery. He details his delineation of spatial units: ‘I built a barn, so that I fancied I was lord of the whole manor, and had my country house and sea-coast house, too. In short, I learned to master everything in my island except myself’. Though obviously evidencing the bourgeois, mercantile attitude towards property, this differentiation of spaces is telling of Crusoe’s endeavour to counterbalance the feelings of confusion and disempowerment associated with the island as a heterotopia of illusion. To this end, David Melbye argues that this film depicts a ‘landscape allegory of the “Western megalomaniac” pitted against an exotic wilderness and its native inhabitants’, categorising this film as an imperialist allegory that underscores later films such as Werner Herzog’s Aguirre: The Wrath of God (1972) and John Boorman’s Deliverance (1972).

Crusoe’s unexpected encounter with Friday also helps to counter the island’s role as an illusory other space and, to a large extent, Crusoe’s ontological crisis. Friday is effectively the other to Crusoe’s same, a physical manifestation and reminder of the space beyond the insular landmass on which Crusoe has been trapped for eighteen years. For Durgnat, the protagonist’s discovery of man is a meeting symbolic of Crusoe’s ‘first step back to sanity’. Buñuel’s treatment of the colonialis tropo and portrayal of the subaltern in Robinson Crusoe has

206 ‘Quiroga states in Información en derecho that the purpose of isolating the Purhépecha into repúblicas de indios was to reshape their behaviour. Close supervision would allow the clergy to monitor the process of converting the Amerindians to Christianity’, Bernardino Verástique, Michoacín and Eden: Vasco de Quiroga and the Evangelization of Western Mexico (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), p. 124.
207 Foucault, p. 23.
209 Durgnat, p. 81.
featured in numerous analyses of the film and it is not my intention to add to this discussion here. However, the allusion to the colony is pertinent to Crusoe’s move towards a heterotopia of compensation. Significantly, for Foucault, the paradigm of such an other space was the colony, specifically the seventeenth century Jesuit colonies of the Americas:

[t]he Jesuits of Paraguay established colonies in which existence was regulated at every turn. The village was laid out according to a rigorous plan around a rectangular place at the foot of which was the church; on one side, there was the school; on the other, the cemetery, and then, in front of the church, an avenue set out that another crossed at right angles; each family had its little cabin along these two axes and thus the sign of Christ was exactly reproduced. Christianity marked the space and geography of the American world with its fundamental sign.

The ambivalent atheist Buñuel does not overstate the reference to the role of religion within the colony of mutineers; his protestant Crusoe merely suggests that they live according to his instructions gained through his extensive knowledge of the island’s ecosystem and how this can best be manipulated to avoid a ‘sacilegious waste’. Of course, even if it were successful, Crusoe’s colony would act as such in a very loose sense, to mention nothing of the fact that the group of mutineers are all male, suggesting theirs will be an abortive endeavour. However, what is fundamental here is that their existence is to be regulated spatially and temporally: the time to sew crops, how to care for livestock, the places of concealment for weapons and gunpowder.

2.6 Crusoe’s island as heterochrony

For Foucault, many forms of heterotopias were intrinsically linked to time. Indeed, that Foucault acknowledges the ‘fatal intersection of time with space’ is a precursor to what he later goes on, in the same lecture, to describe as heterochronies, places linked to time in its fluid, ephemeral aspect, such as the festival, or, alternatively, places concerned with the material accumulation of time, such as the museum or the library. The colony, a heterotopia of compensation in its utopic ordering, was an exercise not only in spatial regimentation but also its

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211 Foucault, p. 27.
temporal equivalent, organised around times of work, prayer and reproduction, as Foucault describes in his lecture. 213 Evincing Foucault’s account of the organisation of time within New World colonies, Crusoe, even before the appearance of Friday and the mutineers, is shown constructing his own existence around spaces and activities of labour, and periods of spiritual reflection in an elementary colonial system. 214 The division of time according to various spheres of activity is an attempt to impose order on an Other space, in much the same way as Crusoe’s rigorous documentation of time is an attempt to catalogue it.

The documentation of time is communicated to the viewer principally through Crusoe’s attachment to his date-post and his diary, and the numerous shots in which these two objects figure is testimony to their importance in the narrative. They are instrumental in driving the linear narrative and they function as a visual point of correspondence with the narrative voice-over. On a symbolic level their significance lies in their object status as physical manifestations of time and of the intersection of time with space. The various shots of Crusoe documenting his life on the island in his diary are identical, with Crusoe’s book and hand filling the frame. Time and space find their inextricable association within the pages of the diary as Crusoe narrates his written words: ‘My eleventh month. Days passed in hunting wild foal, preparing food, trips to my lookout hill in search for sight of ships, one day much like another’. More explicitly, the date-post acts as an accretion of time juxtaposed with space. Its plaque reads: ‘I came on shore here the 30th of September 1659’. This object features in one of the most notable shot compositions in the entire film (see appendix RC 2). For all its significance in terms of this argument, this scene lasts a mere eight seconds. It is essentially a self-contained time-space montage, with the temporal metaphor of Crusoe’s date-post twirling in the centre of the frame, superimposed on to a spatial backdrop of the island’s coastline as the sun sets. However, when compared with other remarkable instances of superimposition in Buñuel’s films, this scene appears much less significant. Buñuel’s superimposed images are often constructed as a mechanism to foreground a particular sequence within a

213 Ibid., p. 27.
214 Distinguishing his adaptation from Defoe’s novel, Buñuel consciously monitored the number of Biblical references in the film, as, in his words, ‘meter muchas citas más de la Biblia me hubiera parecido pesado’. De la Colina and Pérez Turrent, p. 74.
surrealist aesthetic. In *Los olvidados*, in Jaibo’s death throes, the superimposition of the advancing mangy dog is read by Libia Stella Gómez as a possible example of the Freudian uncanny.\textsuperscript{215} Similarly, the collective dream sequence in *El ángel exterminador* and its various superimposed images are unsurprisingly read as ‘el mundo interior – pensamientos, ensñaciones y pesadillas – de los protagonistas’.\textsuperscript{216} In *Robinson Crusoe*, this shot acts as a narrative device on the one hand, communicating through cinematic editing the passage of time along with the accompanying voice-over. However, it also inextricably links time with space in the vein of a heterotopia, especially when we consider the previous sequence in the film.

As Crusoe stares out to sea, he regrets bitterly that he is ‘locked up by the eternal bars and bolts of the sea’. The succession of shots of the roaring waves that follows and which leads to the time-space montage outlined above, makes clear that the ocean is a constant prison guard and suggests Crusoe’s attempt to document his time spent on the island is useless. The numerous scenes in which the ocean figures in the film evoke Santaolalla’s observation of *The Young One*, a film she believes ‘hysterically accumulates images of water’.\textsuperscript{217} As a symbol of stasis, the sea thus stands opposite Crusoe’s adherence to Westernised time and its measurement in terms of days, weeks and years, evoked visually in terms of the date-post and diary, as well as aurally throughout the voice-over dialogue. To this end, the makeshift grave of Crusoe’s dog, Rex, inflects Crusoe’s documentation of time ironically. This brief scene shows Crusoe hammering the wooden headstone into the ground in close up, before the camera zooms out to frame Crusoe and the grave against the backdrop of the sea. The inscription ‘Rex 1673’ freezes this moment in time, opposing the sea in the background of the shot, the frontier separating the island from Crusoe’s home milieu, in a spatial and temporal sense.

According to Foucault, the heterotopia functions at full capacity ‘when men arrive at a sort of absolute break with their traditional time’.\textsuperscript{218} It is unsurprising, then, that Foucault deems the cemetery to be a heterochrony in that it symbolises

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\textsuperscript{216} Poyato, p. 161.
\textsuperscript{217} Santaolalla, p. 107.
\textsuperscript{218} Foucault, p. 26.
\end{flushright}
both the end of life and death eternal. The links between the cemetery and Crusoe’s island are clear throughout the film. Besides Rex’s grave, Crusoe’s effort to document his time spent on the island is both a testimony and a testament. Estranged from the outside world, Crusoe more acutely feels the accumulation of time and this is accentuated by his solitude. In an echo of island’s constitution of alternating spatial modes, Crusoe’s voice-over periodically suggests an indefinite sense of time, in the example given above, for instance, and later in the film when Crusoe likens the island to ‘[a] tomb, [a] prison’, belying his dogmatic categorisation of units of time. As the paradigm of the late seventeenth century bourgeois male estranged from his social milieu, Crusoe’s date-post and diary are vital tools in keeping alive a link with his culture while simultaneously attempting to impose a Westernised framework of time on a potentially perilous space. The tension between spatial regimes – the ordered reconstruction of the bourgeois labour/leisure dichotomy to counteract the island’s potential to render all other space meaningless – thus has its counterpart in the juxtaposition of static and transitory time.

The overall effect, then, of the desert island on Crusoe is ultimately the driving force of the narrative. At its simplest level, it is a documentation of a man’s negotiation of his environment and space is at the heart of this film. The ambiguity contained within the portrayal of spatial and temporal modalities leads to the island being a space that ‘exist[s] out of step and meddle[s] with our sense of interiority’.219 This tension underlies the entire film. It is therefore fitting that D’Lugo, commenting on the film’s ending where Crusoe seemingly returns to his place and time, and his man-servant Friday is taken from his, views the conclusion as ‘only a beginning for Buñuel, leading him to the subsequent series of films [...] that will enable him to rework that utopian myth’.220 Like Robinson Crusoe before it, The Young One is a film that accomplishes just this.

The Young One

Recounting the critical reception of The Young One, Rosenbaum outlines the plot of the film and frames his introduction with a hypothetical scenario; that a daring

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219 Johnson, p. 84.
220 D’Lugo, ‘Subversive Travel’, p. 100.
film were made about racism in the Deep South, with a storyline that ‘fairly sizzles’, championing a brave Buñuel for ‘taking on [these] volatile American materials’. However, the scenario is not hypothetical and, breaking his rhetoric, Rosenbaum acknowledges: ‘Buñuel did all the things I’ve mentioned in 1960, but hardly anyone noticed – and most of those who did were far from pleased’. In terms of the difficult thematic matter of the film – its depiction of a parasitic racism alongside the premature sexual awakening of Evvie, the film’s young protagonist, through the coercion of Miller, the older caretaker of the island game-preserve – Buñuel repeatedly affirmed his desire to eschew a Manichean stance and to avoid making a thesis film: ‘no pretender presentar una tesis, traté de comprender – no justificar – a las personas racistas’. The subject matter of the original story is no less provocative in spite of the substantial alterations made by Buñuel, Butler and Pepper. Though the character of Evvie and therefore the sexual exploitation of a minor was their addition to a narrative essentially concerned with a racial struggle, Matthiessen’s short story is littered with violence, more so than the film itself, with vivid descriptive passages exposing the latent bestial instincts of man and his bent towards annihilation. Buñuel’s predilection for the island as setting arguably allows him to explore these tropes within a contained environment in The Young One. In this way Rosenbaum says:

> [t]he island itself – where all the action, apart from a brief, early flashback, transpires – is a palpable, living presence [...] a character in its own right, closely identified with Evvie. Buñuel establishes this universe as elemental and predatory from the start.

2.7 An island of shame: undoing Eden

An island functions on a basic level as a microcosm of the world at large and can be both an extension of, and the opposite of, the mainland that governs it, working simultaneously on principles of mimetic representation and antithetical inversion, effectively transforming the island into what could be termed a heterocosm. The notion of heterocosmic spaces (though he does not label them as such) is

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221 Rosenbaum, p. 257.
222 De la Colina and Pérez Turrent, p. 113. On this point, see also Buñuel, Mi último suspiro, pp. 224-25.
223 Rosenbaum, p. 261.
suggested by Foucault in ‘Of Other Spaces’, and sites that are heterotopic are also largely heterocosmic.\textsuperscript{224} Foucault chooses the garden to demonstrate this:

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\text{[t]he traditional garden of the Persians was a sacred space that was supposed to bring together inside its rectangle four parts representing the four parts of the world, with a space that was still more sacred than the others that were like an umbilicus, the navel of the world at its center [...]. The garden has been a sort of happy, universalizing heterotopia since the beginnings of antiquity.}\textsuperscript{225}
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Importantly, Santaolalla utilises the allegory of the Garden of Eden when discussing the island game-preserve in \textit{The Young One}. For Santaolalla, the island of the film is Eden destroyed, a view that recalls the alternative English title of the film: \textit{Island of Shame}. In contrast to the Biblical garden, Miller’s island has never known innocence:

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\text{[t]his is no Garden of Eden – at least not one without irony. In fact, the man, woman and snake all reappear, but their part in the story modifies the Christian myth: neither does the snake whisper in the woman’s ear (though it bites and kills her dog), nor is Evvie the defiant, seductive bearer of fruit personified by her namesake.}\textsuperscript{226}
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In addition to the Bible, Santaolalla considers that the island as setting, together with the film’s depiction of ‘patriarchal control, subordination and restitution’, links \textit{The Young One} with Shakespeare’s \textit{The Tempest}.\textsuperscript{227} Kara Zimmerman views the island on which the shipwrecked Duke of Milan and his cohorts find themselves as a heterotopia for the same reason that Foucault considers the garden as such. Zimmerman ventures that the heterotopia in \textit{The Tempest} is, of course, the island itself, due to its position as a ‘homogenization of two incompatible natures – utopia and dystopia – being created simultaneously in the same heterocosm’.\textsuperscript{228} That which to the subjugated Caliban is an autocratic dystopia is likewise to Traver, the black fugitive fleeing a lynch mob on the mainland after being falsely accused of raping a white woman, while both Shakespeare’s Prospero and Buñuel’s Miller attempt to constitute their own

\textsuperscript{224} Foucault claims that ‘the heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible’. Foucault, p. 25.
\textsuperscript{225} Ibid., pp. 25-26.
\textsuperscript{226} Santaolalla, pp. 101-02.
\textsuperscript{227} Ibid., p. 109.
utopia as governors of their respective islands.\textsuperscript{229} Crucial to the understanding of the representation of heterotopic spaces in both narratives is therefore the question of power.

2.8 'You can't keep a man cooped up on this stinkin' island!': Miller's island as a heterotopia of deviation

Exploring the relationship between modernity and the heterotopia, Hetherington analyses the influence of Foucault’s discussion of Jeremy Bentham’s Panopticon design for penal institutions. Sites reserved for members of society whose behaviour has attracted the label of ‘deviant’, such as mental institutes or prisons, are, according to Foucault, profoundly heterotopic.\textsuperscript{230} Hetherington asserts that ‘[the Panopticon] was indeed an example of a heterotopic space associated with the alternate ordering of deviance, in contrast to earlier regimes of incarceration and punishment’.\textsuperscript{231} The advantage of the Panopticon, for Foucault, is its ability to move beyond the traditional observe/observed, subject/object dyad, as the observer, or penitentiary guard in Bentham’s original design, possesses a unique vantage point, enabling them to watch their subjects without themselves being watched.\textsuperscript{232} As the name suggests, it is an exercise in omniscience and omnipresence. Indeed, the French title of Foucault’s account of the historical development of the modern prison is 

_Surveiller et punir_, suggesting that the notion of surveillance, or inspection, is intrinsically allied with castigation, itself necessitated by some form of deviant behaviour. With a specific emphasis on the character of Miller, I now examine the island game-preserve in _The Young One_ specifically as a heterotopia of deviation.

For the caretaker of the game-preserve who plans to induct the barely adolescent Evvie into the world of adult sexuality, the island is the secluded

\textsuperscript{229} Prospero’s utopia is at the expense of others, as is Miller’s. Speaking of the enslaved Caliban, Prospero says ‘we cannot miss him; he does make our fire / fetch our wood, and serves in offices / that profit us’. William Shakespeare, _The Tempest_, The Arden Shakespeare, ed. by Virginia M. Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2011 [1999]), p. 193. Similarly, Miller barks his orders to Evvie: ‘Go on over to my cabin and build me a fire. That stove’s as cold as a dog’s nose. Go on, get!’.

\textsuperscript{230} Foucault, p. 25. The heterotopic qualities of these sites are generated on the basis of the inmates’/residents’ deviance from the behavioural norm and the consequent need for surveillance, as I shall explore here with regards to Miller.

\textsuperscript{231} Hetherington, p. 42.

environ which allows him to do so. Miller assumes the role of his own prison warden, permitting himself an authoritarian freedom on the game-preserve he guards, perhaps in an effort to counter-balance his ostensibly self-imposed exile. We could view his island in much the same manner as the island on which Prospero has attempted to administer his own brand of autocratic utopia: Miller is a law unto himself, controlling which persons are permitted to visit and which are not. As acquaintances and representatives of the mainland, the racist boatman Jackson and the Reverend Fleetwood are permitted to stay on the island, while the clandestine Traver is shot at by Miller when he learns of his presence. Miller’s authoritarianism is nonetheless temporarily abrogated when Jackson informs him that his presence is required on the mainland by the owner of the game-preserve, Mr. Hargreave. Miller replies simply, ‘If Mr Hargreave says come to town, I gotta come to town’. Although the game-preserve’s owner is never seen throughout the narrative, the mere mention of his name evidences the precarious nature of Miller’s longed-for utopia; Mr. Hargreave is one of several reminders that the island’s power system is intimately woven together with that of the mainland.

The viewer discovers that the boat which is the sole link between the island and the mainland comes only once per week, and throughout the course of the narrative Miller ventures to this ‘other’ space only once, although its presence can be continually felt throughout the narrative. There are myriad verbal references to the mainland: Miller points out the educational opportunities available to Evvie had Pee Wee opted to send her to school (an idea he abandons as his lust for Evvie increases); in addition, he remarks that, though she can ‘be out here looking like a swamp rat’, this is not the case in town, alluding to the island’s nature as a space of alternate social ordering. The invisible ‘other’ space even becomes visible for an instant via the disruption of diegetic time and space during Traver’s flashback when he first arrives on the island in a rowing boat as he flees the mainland lynch-mob. However, like the influence of the unseen Mr Hargreave, it is the physical presence of visitors from the mainland to the island in the form of Miller’s ultra-racist counterpart, Jackson, and Reverend Fleetwood that recalls the silent influence of mainland society on the island’s micro system of power. Though there is no denying the ideological differences between these two characters, ultimately they both function to a certain extent as external vehicles of surveillance, as
Jackson scours the island, desperate for any trace of Traver, or, ‘that dirty nigger’, and Reverend Fleetwood admonishes Miller when he learns of his violation of Evvie. Indeed, Santaolalla argues that ‘the island of [Matthiessen’s] original story obviously remained an appropriate location for a narrative about characters placed under scrutiny’. In the same way as the island can be seen paradoxically both as Miller’s sanctuary and his prison, Reverend Fleetwood and Jackson, owing to their status as outsiders, are akin to the invisible, scrutinising watchman of the Panopticon. What is more, this analogy is reflected in the name of the town on which they come: Hammerville. Martín notes that this name ‘debíó ser elegido con cierta intención’, alluding to its relentless violence against Traver, though, as the instigator of a heterotopia of deviation, Miller can also feel its force.

Foucault acknowledges the growing presence of heterotopias of deviation in modern society, providing examples such as the prison, the mental asylum, and even care homes. Given their purpose as spaces of confinement, the subject is placed there because their behaviour is deemed ‘deviant in relation to the required mean or norm’. While it is true that, to some extent, the island is Miller’s refuge, it is dualistic in its function and serves simultaneously as a site of banishment. Tellingly, during Reverend Fleetwood’s probing questions regarding his relationship with Evvie, Miller, out of sheer exasperation, retorts: ‘You can’t keep a man cooped up on this stinkin’ island! It had to happen!’ That which becomes a heterotopia of deviation for Miller begins as an abortive pseudo-utopia where adolescent girls serve to alleviate the pent-up sexual desires of an alpha-male. With Miller’s first violation of Evvie, as Traver unwittingly plays the clarinet outside the cabin, the island is transformed into a space of deviance, becoming further detached from the mainland by means of its alternate social ordering. The rape of Evvie is a patent attempt on Miller’s part to constitute his own form of social ordering in what he, and some early reviewers and scholars of the film, clearly view as his space. The film’s original shooting script is revealing here,

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233 Santaolalla, p. 99.
234 Martín, p. 768.
235 Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces’, p. 25.
236 Writing during the film’s showing at Cannes in 1960, one review in the Italian press centres on the theme of lolitismo as ‘Ewie [sic] makes her guardian fall in love with her, provoking reactions in him that are certainly not favourable to the black man’. [Ewie [sic] fa innamorare di sè il custode,
exposing the perversion and gender bias underscoring those patriarchal readings of lolitismo. In a cut scene following Evvie’s first violation, Miller approaches her menacingly:


In the final version of the film, after the close-up shot of Miller lying on top of Evvie, forcibly kissing her, the dawning of a new day is heralded by a dissolve into a high-angle shot of the island’s coastline. The shift to the spatial aspect of the island is significant here; it emphasises the heterotopic nature of the island for both Miller and Evvie, though albeit for different reasons, which I will explain subsequently. The dual aspect of the island for Miller, the liberation-imprisonment dyad, is what constitutes the island as a heterotopia; for Evvie, however, though it also represents a paradoxical prison, it derives its heterotopic qualities principally from its function as a site of crisis.

2.9 ‘You’re a woman now, Evvie’: Evvie’s island as a crisis heterotopia

Like Los olvidados, The Young One is also a film fascinated with life crises and both films could be said to deal with the difficult theme of failed adolescence. Durgnat believes ‘Ewie [sic] is one of Buñuel’s most haunting creations, innocent, therefore enigmatic; free, therefore calm. Physically she recalls Gin [sic] in La Mort en ce jardin. She might even be Gin [sic] before her corruption’.238 Likewise, Fuentes considers Evvie as a veritable magna mater, intrinsically linked to the sense of adventure that the island-environ presents.239 Though certainly interesting, neither Fuentes nor Durgnat’s considerations of Evvie capture any of the crisis that is so patently associated with her. Santaolalla is more perceptive of the turbulence facing not only Evvie, but the entire cohort on the island:

[a]s if in communion with the natural space they inhabit, humans are also in a transitional stage: Pee Wee from life to death, Evvie from childhood to

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 provo... reazioni non certo favorevoli al negro]. ‘Recortes de prensa sobre la película La joven de Luis Buñuel, 1960-62’, Madrid, Filmoteca Española, Archivo Buñuel (ABR-2030), item 140. Disturbingly, Buache is more adamant that ‘Ewie [sic] fully consented to make love and as a result the film does not [...] centre on a rape but on an act of love’. Buache, p. 114.


238 Durgnat, p. 118.

239 V. Fuentes, Buñuel en México, p. 100.
womanhood, Traver from alleged guilt to proven innocence, and Miller, perhaps above all, from a high-handed sexual and racial mindset to greater sensitivity and moral awareness.\textsuperscript{240}

Although it is certainly true that most characters in the film are faced with, and challenged by, stages of transition, in a biological sense it is Evvie who undergoes the most significant alteration.

Foucault’s discussion of a crisis heterotopia is somewhat limited. He suggests that such categories of heterotopia featured more prominently in ancient societies, where the various biological stages of life were imbued with greater importance, and perhaps also viewed with greater suspicion, necessitating their temporary segregation from the mainstream, as in the case of menstruating women.\textsuperscript{241} Save a few examples such as the boarding school, or the early twentieth-century honeymoon trip, the crisis heterotopia has all but vanished in modern society. \textit{The Young One’s island game-preserve}, I believe, constitutes for Evvie a crisis heterotopia, one in which her budding sexuality and adolescence are at once private and made public.

Evvie is first introduced sitting on a swing – a childlike activity – in the space directly in front of the two cabins, having just made the sobering discovery of her grandfather’s dead body. She is initially described in the film script as ‘blonde, thirteen, unkempt’.\textsuperscript{242} Throughout the film she is clearly more comfortable in her tomboy image despite her biological transition from girl to woman being suggested throughout the film. This is demonstrated most acutely by the scene in which Evvie, having just finished showering herself in the yard, meets Traver for the second time. Wrapped in a towel, Evvie’s body is fragmented by the camera, first via a close up shot of her legs as she dries them and later via a point-of-view shot from Traver’s perspective, who, no doubt aware of her age and the false accusations of rape made against him on the mainland, swiftly encourages her to better cover her pubescent body. The point-of-view shot seems to suggest that the young one’s sexuality is confronted and constructed through Traver’s male gaze, recalling Miller’s discovery of her blooming pubescence as she hands Miller an apple following dinner. This scene arguably marks the point at which her

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{240} Santaolalla, p. 99.
\bibitem{241} Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces’, p. 24.
\bibitem{242} AB 524, p. 4.
\end{thebibliography}
surroundings are transformed into a crisis heterotopia, as this is the point where Miller perceives her as ‘beginning to bud out’.

The reverse angle zoom shot, first showing Evvie’s face and hair as she hands Miller the apple, then showing Miller’s reaction as he sees Evvie in her dress, is unsettlingly suggestive. It is clear that Evvie’s sexuality is projected onto her principally through Miller’s gaze, though as a child she cannot fulfil what Laura Mulvey sees as the female’s role in erotic cinema as erotic spectacle.

Mulvey contends that the female in narrative cinema represents ‘to be looked-at-ness’ on an increasing scale: by the camera, by the male protagonists and by the audience. By means of identification, the (male) viewer vicariously possesses the female through the male protagonist. Though Mulvey’s theory certainly has its limitations – most notably, her neglect of female and queer spectators’ positions – it is perhaps this problematisation of the spectator’s position vis-à-vis the pubescent female and the unpalatable repercussions for spectatorship stemming from Buñuel’s representation of the abuse of a minor by an older male character that led to the early sexist, reactionary and, quite frankly, misogynistic reviews of the film, as detailed previously. Indeed, Mulvey suggests that the female connotes castration with her lack of penis and that, as a defence mechanism, the male unconscious can devalue and punish the female or fetishise her to neutralise her threat.

To this end, Marion Löhndorf writes that Evvie’s biological transition is rendered filmically as ‘an uncomfortable, taboo-evoking combination of innocence and seduction, childhood and sexuality’ through motifs such as the shot of her lower legs as she skips in high heels on the jetty. Nevertheless, Mulvey’s critique of what she terms ‘the determining male gaze project[ing] its phantasy on to the female figure, which is styled accordingly’ and

243 Ibid., p. 13.
245 Linda Williams outlines the challenges to Mulvey’s argument in subsequent feminist film criticism. For Williams, it is problematic that ‘activity and passivity have been too rigorously assigned to separate gendered spectator positions with little examination of [...] the mutability of male and female spectators’ adoption of one or the other subject position and participation in the (perverse) pleasures of both’. See Linda Williams, Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the ‘Frenzy of the Visible’ (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), p. 206.
246 Mulvey, pp. 13-14.
247 Marion Löhndorf, ‘...und wenn sie nicht gestorben sind...’, in Luis Buñuel: Essays, Daten, Dokumente, ed. by Gabriele Jatho (Berlin: Deutsche Kinemathek and Bertz & Fischer, 2008), pp. 65-84 (p. 70). [‘Eine unbequeme, an Tabus rührende Verbindung von Unschuld und Verführung, Kindheit und Sexualität’].
the (heterosexual male) spectator's identification with this gaze is interrogated early in the film's narrative and remains a point of contention throughout the film. After Evvie hands Miller the apple at dinner, he tries to kiss her. She runs away and sits on the bed before running over to the other side of the cabin. At this point, the camera cuts from its position inside the cabin to outside the window, looking in, where we witness Miller coercing Evvie and picking her up to carry her to the bed. The mise-en-scène here suggests a meta-cinematic comment on voyeurism as the window acts as a visual frame whilst rendering Miller's dialogue inaudible, giving primacy to the image. Moreover, the camera appears to be in subjective mode, attempting to track Miller and Evvie as they move out of the frame as in a point-of-view shot. Throughout this sequence as a whole, however, the focus of the camera's gaze is Miller rather than Evvie, as the viewer sees him wrestling with his desire while Evvie remains largely off screen. After Miller's advances, Evvie rushes into her cabin, locking the door. There is no attempt here to eroticise Evvie, which makes the reactionary Lolita narrative read by critics of the film even more surprising: the low-key lighting acts in contrast to the high-key lighting of Miller's cabin and Evvie deliberately ruffles up her hair, preferring the so-called 'swamp rat', non-sexualised appearance chided by Miller earlier. In fact, the entire sequence is foregrounded in Miller's deviant gaze, which by nature highlights the artificiality of Evvie's sexuality as it recurs throughout the narrative, triggering her crisis life-stage, since she cannot fulfil the role of an object of erotic desire that Miller forcefully projects onto her.

On a spatial level, the heterotopic qualities of the island are linked to Evvie's crisis life-stage. The fade-in shot of the island following the first night she spends in Miller's cabin is significant not only for its delineation of the insular space; for Evvie it marks the conflation of her waning childhood with her premature arrival to adulthood, imposed by Miller. Buñuel leaves the viewer in no doubt as to Miller's action here. The close-up shot of the faces of Evvie and Miller as the latter forcibly kisses the girl as she lies on the bed is striking. Significantly, Evvie opens her eyes when she feels Miller's touch, breaking the fourth wall as she gazes, terrified, into the camera and directly at the audience, again blurring the boundary between spectatorship and voyeurism, and highlighting Miller's deviant desire that Miller forcefully projects onto her.

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248 Mulvey, p. 11.
act. This is the juncture which forces Evvie to behave differently in her surroundings; whereas prior to Miller’s indecent act the viewer comes to associate Evvie with nature, placed as she is so frequently in the island’s natural mise-en-scène – among the trees, petting the deer kept in the yard between the two cabins – afterwards she is often confined within, or just outside, the cabins, augmenting the sense of claustrophobia. Santaolalla posits that the two cabins are ‘the most conspicuous emblems of Evvie’s entrapment’. Miller’s cabin is the locus of transgression for Miller, just as it is the locus of the limit-experience for Evvie. According to Foucault, an experience is ‘something you come out of changed’, suggesting a degree of self-discovery and a heightened self-awareness. The perception of experience shared by Nietzsche, Bataille and Blanchot attempts to ‘reach that point of life which lies as close as possible to the impossibility of living, which lies at the limit or extreme’, or a limit-experience. This concept of experience is categorised by the detachment of the subject from itself in order that it may arrive at its annihilation and dissociation. As Martin Jay explains, this radical experience by necessity ‘undermines the subject [...] because it transgresses the limits of coherent subjectivity as it functions in everyday life, indeed threatens the very possibility of life – or rather the life of the individual – itself’. For Bataille, the limit-experience is intrinsically linked to human sacrifice and to death, though it also finds representation in various liminal states such as madness and sexuality. Significantly, a substantial number of the sites Foucault names as heterotopias have the function of ‘containing’ the sufferers/perpetrators/former subjects of just such liminal states: the mental asylum, the prison, and the cemetery. Hetherington contends that ‘in one important sense heterotopia are the sites of limit-experiences, notably those associated with the freedoms of madness, sexual desire and death in which

249 Santaolalla, p. 102.  
251 Ibid., p. 31.  
252 Ibid.  
254 Hetherington, p. 44.
humans experience the limits of their existence and are confronted by its sublime terror’.  

The island, and more specifically its kernel in the form of the cabins in which the characters reside, are similar in their function to Foucault’s mental asylum or punitive institutions for they both conceal the limit-experience and make it possible in the first place (see appendix YO 1). In his transgressive act, Miller brings himself consciously to the limit of his desire. In ‘A Preface to Transgression’, Foucault affirms that ‘transgression carries the limit right to the limit of its being; transgression forces the limit to face the fact of its imminent disappearance, to find itself in what it excludes’. In other words, when paralleled with Foucault’s discussion of the limit-experience and the detachment of the subject, the very element of transgression implicit in Miller’s act facilitates his own limit-experience during which the subject gravitates towards a seductive, but ephemeral, self-annihilation. The bent towards an egocentric nihilism that finds its culmination in the transgression of the limit is a trait embodied – and enacted – by a good number of Buñuel’s protagonists: we could think of Él and Francisco’s attempt to sew up his wife’s vagina while she sleeps; the eye-slitting scene in Un Chien andalou; or the ‘desperate call for murder’ inherent in Gaston Modot and Lya Lys’s fervent attempts at fornication. Needless to say, Buñuel presents such characters without prejudice, remaining impartial to (and perhaps occasionally even revelling in) their exploits. In fact, with specific reference to The Young One, M. K. S. of the Monthly Film Bulletin contends that ‘the seduction of the minor [...] is in fact presented with a quietness and lack of sensationalism’. Although this reviewer acknowledges Evvie as a minor, the dubious reference to

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255 Ibid., p. 46.
257 Echoing Buñuel’s own words about L’Âge d’or, his sons Juan Luis and Rafael Buñuel invoke this term in their afterword to the edited collection of their father’s writings. Juan Luis Buñuel and Rafael Buñuel, ‘Afterword’, in Luis Buñuel, An Unspeakable Betrayal, p. 265.
258 André Bazin highlights Buñuel’s objectivity in two of the director’s most ostensibly cruel films, Tierra sin pan and Los olvidados, and warns that ‘[i]t is absurd to reproach Buñuel for having a perverse taste for cruelty’. Buñuel’s cruelty, he affirms, ‘is entirely objective; it is no more than lucidity’. André Bazin, ‘Los Olvidados’, trans. by Sallie Iannotti, in The World of Luis Buñuel, ed. by Mellen, pp. 194-200 (pp. 197-98).
her ‘seduction’ echoes the reactionary readings of the film with regards to spectatorship detailed above.

As a figure of surveillance from the mainland, Reverend Fleetwood prevents Miller’s abuse of Evvie. As he and Evvie are preparing his sleeping quarters in Evvie’s cabin, he discovers the true nature of her relationship with Miller and his dismay is palpable. Responding to the Reverend’s comment that she is a child and will have to share a room in the children’s home on the mainland, Evvie repeats in parrot-fashion Miller’s words: ‘I am not a child. Mr Miller told me yesterday I wasn’t’. The following zoom shot clearly fixes the Reverend’s look of dismay with a paradoxical lack of sensationalism highlighted in the film review above.\textsuperscript{260} With these words Evvie betrays her heterotopia of crisis, sealing her fate as Reverend Fleetwood feels compelled to remove her from the island and to bring the social mores of the mainland to bear on Miller’s behaviour. However, her eventual move to the mainland betrays a profound Foucauldian irony: in taking up residence in the children’s home, she is merely exchanging one crisis heterotopia for another, perpetuating her crisis life-stage and continuing her experience at the limit of society.\textsuperscript{261}

2.10 Trespassers will be shot: the open-closed island

Further to the island’s constitution of a heterotopia of both deviation and crisis, its general spatial characteristics imbue it with heterotopic qualities. Although an island is segregated from the space that surrounds it, it can be approached from almost any angle. This system of opening and closing is the paradox that, for Foucault, is often integral to heterotopias and which, for our purposes, allows us to further consider the heterotopic qualities of island game-preserve in \textit{The Young One}.\textsuperscript{262} The emphasis on spatiality within the film is confirmed in the very first shot of the opening scene: a tracking shot from the shore is focused on a small

\textsuperscript{260} The lack of sensationalism is due in part to the absence of non-diegetic music in this film. Aranda quotes Buñuel on his opinion of non-diegetic music: ‘Personally, I don’t like film music. It seems to me that it is a false element, a sort of trick, except of course in certain cases’. Buñuel in Aranda, p. 91. In this respect, the adventure score of \textit{Robinson Crusoe} provides a point of contrast with \textit{The Young One}.

\textsuperscript{261} For Foucault, the boarding school and military service barracks were among the few examples of crisis heterotopias still in existence, at least in institutional form. The children’s home is undoubtedly cast from the same mould. Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces’, p. 24.

\textsuperscript{262} Ibid., p. 26.
boat cautiously approaching the island. As Traver traverses the island’s border, the suggestion is that of vulnerability and it is clear that for Traver the island, given the sign erected on the beach – ‘Private game-preserve. Trespassers on this island will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law’ – is foreign territory. The wording of the warning sign betrays the island’s penetrability while affirming that the island functions along the same open/closed dichotomy as heterotopic sites.

In his discussion of the peculiar opening/closing mechanisms of heterotopias, Foucault maintains that, generally, these do not grant the visitor free access. However, there are other types of heterotopias that, despite appearing as the inverse of the former in that entry to them is usually unhindered, hide certain exclusions. To illustrate these seemingly uncomplicated apertures, Foucault employs the allegory of the traditional South American farmhouse open to the weary traveller. In entering the house, however, the traveller was not actually granted access to the family’s quarters; the door led directly to temporary sleeping quarters, to a superficial integration categorised by segregation. For Traver, the island initially behaves in a similar way, denying him access to its inner core, represented in the film by the two cabins and their surroundings, and compelling him to a clandestine existence, at least temporarily. Yet, even after his presence becomes known to Evvie and Miller, to the latter he remains effectively persona non grata, unwelcome at Miller’s dinner table. Notably, with the arrival of Jackson and Reverend Fleetwood, the ‘uninitiated’ Reverend effectively takes Traver's place, sleeping alone in what was formerly the cabin of Evvie and Pee Wee while Miller remains with Evvie in his cabin. Undoubtedly, Miller's decision to allocate Reverend Fleetwood the separate space is driven in part by a reverence towards a figure of influence within the mainland community, though this also serves both to mask Miller’s mistrust towards this external figure of social and moral authority as well as to uphold a degree of authority in controlling the opening/closing mechanisms of his island.

Furthermore, Foucault contends that ‘either the entry [to the heterotopic site] is compulsory […] or else the individual has to submit to rites and purifications. To get in one must have a certain permission and make certain

\[263\] Ibid.
gestures.\textsuperscript{264} This has led scholars to propose such organisations as the freemasons as heterotopic, though Foucault himself refers to the Muslim hammin and the Scandinavian sauna.\textsuperscript{265} Perhaps not so dissimilar to the selective and esoteric Masonic lodge, the game-preserve is presented as a closed space to the uninitiated such as Traver. Initiation comes in the form of approval by the autocratic Miller and unsurprisingly is dependent on conformity to his personal social model, in its turn derived from the gun-toting patriarchy of 1960s Deep South rural society that renders most forms of difference dangerous. The antithesis to Traver is Jackson, who follows Miller's social model with even more zeal than Miller himself. That Jackson is permitted access to the island without repercussion is evident in his manner of negotiating the space that surrounds him with confidence and ease. Following Miller's only trip to the mainland, a distance shot shows his arrival back on his territory. The unremarkable jetty is the true entrance, the true site of opening/closure, to the island for the initiated: as Miller disembarks on to the jetty the rudimentary sign intended as a warning for would-be trespassers looms large in the shot, obscuring a considerable part of the skyline, and, most significantly, reinforcing the inclusion/exclusion dyad (see appendix YO 2). In the scene prior to this, Traver can be seen peering through the trees from a concealed stretch of beach as he watches Miller's arrival, which obviously contrasts with his own.

Finally, the island's function as a game-preserve and resort can cast further light on the impact of the spatial dialectics of the island on Evvie and Traver. When Jackson informs Miller that a decision has been made to construct a clubhouse on the island to entice guests and generate revenue, Miller boasts that '[they] gonna fix me up, too. Butane, hot runnin' water. Be like livin' in a hotel'. Nonetheless, behind this façade of modernity in the form of luxurious amenities, the island's heterotopic qualities would continue to exist, although in a different form. In his discussion of heterotopias, Foucault employs the analogy of the American motel and its facilitation of adultery. The motel is a kind of placeless place, under the radar of society and social convention, where 'a man goes with his car and his mistress and where illicit sex is both absolutely sheltered and absolutely

\textsuperscript{264} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{265} On the reading of Freemasonry as a heterotopic organisation, see Hetherington, pp. 72-108.
The island, and more specifically Miller’s cabin, functions in the same way as it shelters and hides his lust towards Evvie. Moreover, the hotel and its derivatives have been viewed as heterotopias due to their frequent location on the outskirts of the city. With a focus on the etymological roots of the words ‘hospital’ and ‘hotel’, Kari Jormakka contends that:

\[ \text{[s]ince the late Middle Ages, for example, heterotopias such as hospitals and hotels were situated at the edge of towns as sites of indefinite social identity. The reason is clearly written in the etymology of the words ‘hospital’ and ‘hotel’. Together with the words ‘host’ and ‘guest’, they derive, via the Latin \textit{hospes} ‘guest/host’, from the Indo-European \textit{ghotis}. From the same root we also get the Latin \textit{hostis}, ‘stranger/enemy’ [...] and \textit{hostia} ‘sacrifice/victim’.}\]

The hotel, continues Jormakka, through its very function as a site of hospitality, necessitates a deconstruction of the inside/outside friend/stranger binary. In \textit{The Young One}, the spatial dynamics of the island as a secluded environment and a future commercial venture collude with the characters’ social backgrounds and biological transitions to underpin a perverted triad of \textit{hospes}, \textit{hostis} and \textit{hostia}. Miller is an autocratic \textit{hospes}, Evvie’s ambiguous biological transition – she is, in Miller’s words, a ‘wild thing’ – renders her \textit{hostia} and the ethnic outcast Traver is \textit{hostis} to the social model. In this respect, the originally planned ending according to the film’s shooting script is striking: following their climactic scuffle on the beach, Traver is killed by Jackson as the latter strikes him with a rock, recalling Jaibo’s murder of Julián in \textit{Los olvidados}. The disturbing image of Traver as ‘blood stains the whole front of his white shirt, trickles thinly from his mouth’ leaves Miller alone in the film’s final shot on a non-descript beach, calling out in vain to the travelling man. Traver’s planned passage off the island from its unofficial exit was intended to cost him his life.

\section*{2.11 Conclusion: failed utopias}

My consideration of \textit{The Young One} and \textit{Robinson Crusoe} as companion pieces is in part pragmatic. As previously mentioned, these two films constitute the sole English language productions in the director’s catalogue. Both are adapted from...
literary sources and both are set within the confines of an island. In these two films, according to Fuentes, Buñuel adheres to the conventions of Hollywood cinema ‘para subvertirlas desde dentro’, in a similar way to his subversions of popular Mexican film genres in his commercial films of the 1950s. The supposedly neat, happy resolutions of both films are haunted by the spectre of the oppressed and the repressed. Friday returns to Western civilisation with Crusoe as his servant first and friend second, while the sound-image incongruity as Crusoe stares back at his island and hears the phantom barking of Rex complicates the triumphalist narrative resolution. Evvie returns to the US mainland with Reverend Fleetwood as an orphan and Traver returns as a second-class citizen; while the former has undergone a serious ordeal, the latter, according to the original ending of the film’s shooting script, was never meant to leave the island alive.

Both island spaces derive their heterotopic qualities ultimately from their spatial dynamics. The geographical characteristics of an island can translate into psychological characteristics of insularity through the island’s physical and psychological state of alterity. However, alterity here is not shown positively, as a space of counter-hegemonic resistance. Indeed, the vulnerable and the subaltern characters in the films remain subjected to the influence of the respective dominant cultures on their islands: Traver is almost killed by the racist Jackson and Friday is forcefully ‘civilised’ by Crusoe. Neither island remains uncontested in its alterity. Although the dominant spaces of mainland America and Britain are not given visual representation in the respective films, their presence is markedly felt throughout both narratives. For D’Lugo Crusoe’s island becomes the site of impulse for commodification, leading him to attempt to appropriate nature and transform it into objects for possession, leading to the constitution of a salón en la selva. In a similar manner, the space of mainland America pervades the island game-preserve not only through dialogue but also via the commodification impulse. In one notable scene, perhaps in repentance for taking advantage of

269 Fuentes contends that while both films can be read innocently, they each conceal a darker message and ‘en ésta es donde encontramos el cine personal de Buñuel, por debajo de la línea de flotación de lo que tienen de películas comerciales del cine norteamericano’. V. Fuentes, Buñuel en México, p. 96.

270 D’Lugo, ‘Subversive Travel’, p. 98.
Evvie, or some misguided attempt to woo her, Miller promises to return from the mainland with some perfume for her. Later, as the film reaches its conclusion, we see Evvie transformed, sporting a hat, dress and high-heeled shoes.

Time is integral to Crusoe’s island’s constitution as a heterotopia. The contrast between the transit and the stasis of time is marked throughout the film as Crusoe attempts to impose his own system of time onto a space alien to the customs of his milieu. On the one hand, the time setting of The Young One is clearly depicted through its all-too-real depiction of racially motivated violence in the Deep South. On the other hand, the game-preserve remains a largely non-descript place which seeks to emphasise its spatial and temporal distance from the mainland (as when Jackson scolds Miller for not accompanying him on the ‘long, cold trip’ to fetch reinforcements to search for Traver). Referring to the duality established in the film via the persecuted and the persecutor, the former representing the city and the latter the country, Fuentes writes: ‘ya la figura circular de la isla, con su simbolismo, impone sus vueltas al hilo del relato, el cual se desdobra en dos, disímiles y afines’, though such a statement could easily apply to the idea of time in the film. In each, modernity appears marginalised, reduced largely to commodities, such as Evvie’s high-heeled shoes or the gold coins which Crusoe gives to Friday, explaining that they are of no use to him. To take the point further, and to expound the way in which both island spaces could be seen as anachronistic, we can consider them as heterotopias of crisis. Clearly, the game-preserve is a site of crisis for Evvie and Traver, just as it is for Crusoe in relation to his solitude and metamorphosis. As we have seen, heterotopias of crisis were fundamentally a feature of primordial societies, a different site reserved for those in stages of biological transition. For both Crusoe and Evvie, their crises entail more than solely a biological alteration and are arguably just as psychological as they are physical. A psychological crisis could be seen to involve a break with traditional perceptions of time, and as Foucault suggests, the heterotopia functions at its peak when there is a break with traditional notions of time.

272 V. Fuentes, Buñuel en México, p. 99.
I have argued here that the island spaces in *Robinson Crusoe* and *The Young One* can be considered as Foucauldian heterotopic spaces. These often ambiguous spaces can be seen to reflect the director's anti-Manichean, anti-thesis stance. The Buñuelian impulse against cinematic utopianism, present to some degree in even his most commercial Mexican films, is given representation in these two works via the island and the relationship of this Other space to that which surrounds it and those who inhabit it. In this way, a spatial analysis can cast new light on the themes that appear frequently in analyses of these films.

Ultimately, for Johnson, heterotopias, perhaps like Buñuel's cinema, offer no resolution or consolation, but disrupt and test our customary notions of ourselves. These different spaces, which contest forms of anticipatory utopianism, hold no promise or space of liberation. With different degrees of relational intensity, heterotopias glitter and clash in their incongruous variety, illuminating a passage for our imagination.²⁷³

Two other films from Buñuel’s Mexican period which can be said to hold little promise of liberation and which can be fruitfully examined from a spatial perspective are *La Mort en ce jardin* and *Simón del desierto*. Although the settings of these movies are the jungle and the desert respectively, like the companion films discussed in this chapter they evidence Buñuel's preoccupation with characters ‘in their longitudes and latitudes, their climates – their spaces’²⁷⁴. Moving from an analytical framework of heterotopias to one of liminality, I will examine the jungle and desert spaces to suggest that the protagonists in each of the films are located in the interstices, and will show how a spatial reading can inform and inflect the existing criticism on both works.

²⁷³ Johnson, p. 87.
Chapter Three

Betwixt and between: liminal space in La Mort en ce jardin and Simón del desierto

3.0 Introduction

In 1956 Buñuel adapted the Belgian novelist and playwright José-André Lacour's La Mort en ce jardin for the cinema. A politicised tale of suppressed uprisings against the fascist regime in a backwater diamond-mining village in an unspecified Latin American state, the film had drawn relatively little criticism until recently. Buache posits the narrative as another example, alongside The Young One, of Buñuel's penchant for eschewing a Manichean stance, though unlike in the latter film, in La Mort en ce jardin ‘nothing either begins or ends [...] Everything is transitory’. More disparagingly, Harcourt views Buñuel's input into the film as fairly minimal, lamenting what he considers the director's ‘artistic fatigue’. As outlined in Chapter One, recently the film has featured in Stone and Gutiérrez-Albilla’s companion volume to Buñuel and the inclusion of the film in this thesis continues its reappraisal. Due to the film's political theme, its status as a co-production and the language of the dialogue (French, not Spanish), comparisons have inevitably been drawn between this relatively minor work and two other lesser known Buñuel films which give focus to a discourse of political idealism in the face of fascist oppression, Cela s'appelle l'aurore and Le Fièvre monte à El Pao. One point of criticism in relation to La Mort en ce jardin is in response to the disproportionate amount of time spent on showing the miners’ revolution in the village at the expense of the later, and irrefutably more personal, part of the film whereby the cast of Buñuelian archetypes – including a priest, a prostitute and a deaf-mute girl – flee into an endless jungle. Nevertheless, even when mentioned in passing, the film's indelible Buñuelian stamp is often highlighted.

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275 Buache, p. 81.
276 Harcourt, p. 12.
277 Durgnat discusses Cela s'appelle l'aurore in terms of this film's role as the introduction to a ‘revolutionary triptych’ in which each film represents ‘a study in the morality and tactics of armed revolution against a right-wing dictatorship’. Durgnat, p. 100.
279 José Agustín Mahieu comments that La Mort en ce jardin 'posee un inequívoco sentido buñueliano’ in contrast to several other of the director’s more conventional Mexican melodramas.
Almost a decade later in 1964, Buñuel reunited with producer Gustavo Alatriste and his wife, actress Silvia Pinal, to direct the ultimate film of his Mexican period, *Simón del desierto*, released in 1965. Buñuel drew inspiration from the legend of Saint Simeon Stylites, a fifth-century ascetic who withdrew from the world to live atop a pillar in the Syrian desert, from which he would preach to those who made the pilgrimage to see him. According to the director, Saint Simeon had been a source of humour and fascination among his peers at the *Residencia de Estudiantes* in Madrid, especially Lorca, who 'apreciaba sobre todo esta descripción: «La mierda chorreaba por la columna como la cera gotea de los círios»'. The germ of this film had therefore been long implanted and irrevocably rooted within surrealist soil. Although the film's depiction of a naive ascetic seems to recall the narratives of *Nazarín* and *Viridiana*, Pauline Kael sees *Simón del desierto* as a truly unique film in the director's corpus:

*Simon of the Desert* is [...] a shaggy-saint story, and (unlike much of Buñuel's work) it is charming. The narrative style of *Simon* is so straightforward and ascetically simple that it may be easier to see what he is saying in this film than in his more elaborate divertissements about saintliness turning into foolishness – *Nazarín* and the complicated, allusive *Viridiana*, which was cluttered with Freudian symbols. [...] The tone of *Simon* is almost jovial.

At just over forty minutes long, this film is something of an oddity. As Baxter recounts, Buñuel originally conceived of *Simón del desierto* as a feature-length picture, though Alatriste's funds ran out before the film was finished and Buñuel was forced to cut the film short. In spite of production setbacks, however, *Simón del desierto* remains one of Buñuel's more striking films of his Mexican cinematic career and, importantly, one about which Ulrich Gregor wrote: ‘[this film] should also offer Buñuel specialists and exegetes a wealth of material with new meanings’.

*La Mort en ce jardin* and *Simón del desierto* seemingly have little in common on a narrative level. Moreover, from a technical perspective, the two refuse any
overarching parallels: *La Mort en ce jardin* is a Mexican-French co-production and Buñuel's second colour feature after *Robinson Crusoe*; *Simón del desierto* is solely a Mexican production shot in black and white and difficult to categorise – it is neither a feature-length film nor a short. However, an analysis that centres on the representation of space in the two films serves to present the two as ideal companion films, independently of established interpretative paradigms in Buñuel scholarship. As spaces that not only provide the striking scenic backdrop to the films' narratives, but also assume an active role in the characters' confinement in a transitional, transitory zone, the jungle and the desert locations of the respective films can both be considered liminal spaces. This chapter will therefore examine these liminal zones of the jungle and the desert in the respective films, and will explore the ways in which these spaces act as interstitial arenas in which structure and order are suspended, creating and perpetuating the protagonists' uncertain physical and psychological states.

*La Mort en ce jardin*

3.1 Liminality and the mining settlement of *La Mort en ce jardin* as an interstitial territory

Liminality as a concept was first introduced by the Belgian anthropologist Arnold van Gennep in 1909 as a theoretical framework to analyse rites of passage and initiation ceremonies within tribal societies. The etymological root of the term comes from the Latin *limen*, or threshold. Van Gennep postulated that passage rituals share a tripartite structure, writing:

> I propose to call the rites of separation from a previous world, *preliminal rites*, those executed during the transitional stage *liminal* (or *threshold*) rites, and the ceremonies of incorporation into the new world *post-liminal rites*.\(^{284}\)

Van Gennep posited that all rites of passage included a central, liminal phase, one in which the initiate, or the liminar, to use Victor Turner's terminology,\(^{285}\) was suspended in an intermediate stage between the realms of the profane and the sacred worlds.\(^{286}\) Though primarily concerned with liminality as human


\(^{286}\) Van Gennep, p. 1.
experience, van Gennep nevertheless did allude to its spatial dimension by evoking the so-called neutral zones of classical antiquity:

[the same system of zones is to be found among the semi-civilised, although here boundaries are less precise because the claimed territories are few in number and sparsely settled. The neutral zones are ordinarily deserts, marshes, and most frequently virgin forests.]

He goes on to explain that, because of the subjective ‘pivoting of sacredness’, the neutral zone appears sacred to those on either side of it, but to those within the neutral zone, the adjacent territories are sacred. It is the passage from one adjacent territory to the other which gives the subject his or her interstitial position and liminal state; in van Gennep’s own words, the subject ‘wavers between two worlds’. The neutral zone does not always occupy substantial terrain. In fact, such a zone can be contained within referents as diverse as a vast expanse of land or the threshold of a dwelling. In this way, although Buñuel’s most overt use of liminal space in *La Mort en ce jardin* is the jungle, the Francophone settlement can also be seen as a liminal territory.

Although *La Mort en ce jardin* has a running time of 99 minutes, it is only the final third of the film’s narrative that is played out in the jungle alluded to in the title. Though the primary focus here will be the jungle space and how this is both theoretically and physically an ‘in-between’ space, some discussion of the mining village is first necessary, as it is here that the characters’ position and condition as interstitial émigrés is foregrounded. The film opens with an unremarkable scene of labour as the diamond miners down tools for lunch. The site of the diamond mine – similar to the labour camp on the island of Ojeda in *La Fièvre monte à El Pao* – appears somewhat nondescript, as a paltry stream meanders through the striking yellow boulders. However, this scene functions

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287 Ibid., p. 18. The setting for both *La Mort en ce jardin* and *Simón del desierto* is just such a neutral zone.
288 Ibid.
289 Ibid.
290 Ibid., p. 19.
291 According to Fuentes, the film was originally presented to the censors with the title *La muerte en la selva*. V. Fuentes, *Buñuel en México*, p. 183.
292 Susan Hayward has highlighted how Eastmancolor, a system of colour cinematography that was used for the first time at the beginning of the 1950s and with which Buñuel made *La Mort en ce jardin*, was able to accentuate the three primary colours through the use of filters to add or subtract colour. For Hayward, the augmented yellow hues of the rocks in this initial scene are a reminder of human frailty, just as the green tones of the forest are later in the film. Susan Hayward, *Simone Signoret: The Star as Cultural Sign* (New York: Continuum, 2004), p. 125.
as an introduction to the rather complex politics of place in the film. The diamond mine and the nearby village are merely a kind of transitory home for the miners who have settled in a foreign country in the Americas to seek their fortune. As the labourers sit down to lunch, a rather aged man, Castin, nostalgically reminisces about the culinary delights of home, telling his peers of his desire to open a restaurant in Marseilles. Significantly, France will come to function as a marker, an ideological and idealistic construct used to frame first the space of the mining village and later the interstitial space of the jungle. Castin is interrupted by a group of soldiers who have appeared to evict the miners from the site. Their obfuscated legal jargon tells us that the diamond mine of the fictional Guluva valley is scheduled to be nationalised. This takeover of the mineral-rich diamond mine by the corrupt fascist state is the catalyst for the miners’ disquiet and subsequent revolt.

The increasingly intriguing politics of place is amplified through the miners’ unrest, and it is through their abortive coup that the structure of their community, or lack thereof, becomes apparent. Following the soldiers’ announcement that the mine is to come under state administration, Buñuel inserts a brief but pertinent shot of the workers entering their village of Cachazu. Here, and in the early scenes of revolution that follow, the viewer is given to understand that this is a dystopian Francophone diaspora in an unspecified South American state close to the Brazilian border. As has been outlined, for liminality the interstitial position is key. Cachazu’s exact location remains undisclosed and its interstitial position is highlighted early in the narrative, as the two principal referents flanking the village on either side are France, the birthplace and patrie of the labourers, and Brazil.

The liminal dimension of the mining village derives not only from its location between the reveries of remembered France and the Brazilian border, but also from the breakdown of structure within the town. In the local saloon, the

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293 In an interview, José-André Lacour stated that the scenes in the mining village were filmed in an abandoned village 200 kilometres from Mexico City. The village appears dilapidated, as if nature is encroaching on civilisation even before the group flees into the forest. 'Recortes de prensa sobre la película Jardín (La Mort en ce jardin) de Luis Buñuel, 1955-1962', Madrid, Filmoteca Española, Archivo Buñuel (hereafter ABR-1981), item 53.

294 Leahy contends that the film itself is liminal within the director’s corpus (though without explaining in any detail the workings of the concept), in her analysis of the film’s production and the use of French actors in a Latin American setting. See Leahy, pp. 324-39.
locus of proletariat solidarity against the fascist oligarchy, the rowdy miners lament their circumstances, and, despite a trite maxim courtesy of Father Lizardi, the local missionary – ‘the mightiest one day shall stand weakest the next’ – the group outlines its position against the autocratic governors. Although Buñuel clearly has the workers pitted against the soldiers, the oppressed-oppressor dyad is not as simple as this: oppressed characters such as the amoral prostitute Djin, the adventurer Chark and tradesman-turned-pimp Chenko in their turn oppress the more naive Castin and his deaf-mute daughter, Maria. In this way, they bear similarities with ambiguous (anti-)heroes popular in the Western genre, and the scenes in the mining village not only establish place (or a lack thereof), but also characterisation and the film’s supposed imitation of generic conventions.

The scenes of rebellion that follow are a palpable political commentary on despotic South American states, a theme to be later reprised in La Fièvre monte à El Pao and through the immoral Rafael Acosta, ambassador of the fictitious banana-republic of Miranda in Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie. This commentary has been read by Fuentes as an allegory of the Spanish Civil War. He goes on to note that the filming of La Mort en ce jardin coincided with a period of changing attitudes and values towards Latin America, when:

América Latina deja de ser esa especie de El Dorado que fuera para tantos emigrantes y aventureros europeos en los años de la posguerra, para convertirse en un lugar exótico de dictaduras, insurrecciones y vacaciones tropicales para la Europa de la sociedad de consumo.

The repressive state in this film finds itself at just such a juncture: the days of carefree opportunism are over, to be replaced by oppression and totalitarian dominance. The workers’ rebellion is thus a refusal to accept the rigid, unjust structure imposed on them by the fascist governors; in a manner of speaking, it is a move towards anti-structure in anticipation of a new, fairer structure.

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295 Leahy notes that Simone Signoret (Djin), for example, had previously been a character actor, known for playing garces (bitches). She also points out that the film employs Mexican and Spanish tropes such as melodrama and picaresque, as well as borrowing conventions from the Western and the Hollywood adventure film. Leahy, pp. 328-30.

296 For more on how both La Fièvre monte à El Pao and La Mort en ce jardin can be seen to harbour allegorical connections to the Spanish Civil War and the period of unrest leading up to it, such as the Asturian miners’ revolt of 1934, see Víctor Fuentes, Los mundos de Buñuel (Madrid: Akal, 2000), p. 129. Responding to Pérez Turrent’s suggestion that the film could be seen as a political metaphor, Buñuel suggests that ‘en realidad, la película es un poco anarquista’. De la Colina and Pérez Turrent, p. 101.

297 V. Fuentes, Los mundos de Buñuel, p. 135.
Liminality, as defined by Turner, is equated with the temporary suspension of structure; that is, it is essentially an ‘interstructural situation’.\(^{298}\) It is in the interstructural situation that the all-important transformation associated with the liminal state of the liminar occurs. The liminar is betwixt and between, a notable phrase often cited from Turner’s essay, for the period of the ceremony. According to Turner, the eradication of traditional structure within passage rites facilitates the promulgation of a sense of community and solidarity among liminars, a state that Turner terms ‘communitas’, defined as

> a relational quality of full unmediated communication, even communion, between definite and determinate identities, which arises spontaneously in all kinds of groups, situations, and circumstances. It is a liminal phenomenon which combines the qualities of lowliness, sacredness, homogeneity and comradeship.\(^{299}\)

Communitas, then, is akin to anti-structure, though for Turner this is invariably a positive state.\(^{300}\) Despite the portrayal of proletarian solidarity, Buñuel’s depiction of the Francophone mining village’s lurch towards revolution lacks a positive spin, as does the dissolution of structure when the persecuted group subsequently flees into the jungle.\(^{301}\) As an allegory of the Spanish Civil War, the miners’ revolt is indisputably a period of liminality, though the constructive connection to communitas is swiftly bypassed in favour of a more permanent deconstruction of the miners’ micro-society, in what ultimately seems likely to become a schismogenic state, a term coined by anthropologist Gregory Bateson. According to Bateson, contact phenomena between two groups within a specific culture can result in the elimination of both groups, the assimilation of the weaker group into the stronger, or the persistence of both factions in dynamic equilibrium within the same society.\(^{302}\)

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\(^{298}\) Turner *The Forest of Symbols*, p. 93.


\(^{300}\) As Arpad Szakolczai highlights, Turner’s ‘rediscovery’ of van Gennep’s concept of liminality in the late 1960s, further to the optimism he sees in communitas, has become synonymous with ‘the happy celebration of anti-structure and difference’ whilst ‘the dangerous, troubling, anxiety-generating aspects of uncertain periods of transition, conflict, and crisis were simply ignored’.


\(^{301}\) Interestingly, Conrad posits a vicious cycle with regards to the group’s jungle ordeal, a cycle which sees them unable to establish any structure in the liminal period: ‘what finally condemns most of them is their dependency [...] upon the very civilization which has cast them out and which they are unable to re-establish in miniature even for their own safety’. Conrad, ‘“A Magnificent and Dangerous Weapon”’, p. 343.

\(^{302}\) Gregory Bateson, ‘Culture Contact and Schismogenesis’, *Man*, 35 (1935), 178-83 (p. 179).
resembles the schismogenic state of Buñuel’s mining village in the film. Furthermore, Bateson distinguishes between ‘complementary schismogenesis’ and ‘symmetrical schismogenesis’. The former is closer to Buñuel’s own vision, functioning on a dominant-dominated paradigm in the vein of the workers’ struggle against fascist autocracy and cupidity, a struggle that will lead to a ‘progressive unilateral distortion of the personalities of the members of both groups, which results in a mutual hostility between them and must end in the breakdown of the system’.303 This point is neatly echoed by Szakolczai, and his choice of words is certainly pertinent to La Mort en ce jardin: ‘societies can maintain themselves in such situations of oppression and violence for a long time, without returning to normal order, if stable external reference points are absent’.304 As previously mentioned, for its residents the mining village finds itself between an absent France and an equally absent Brazil.

Although the liminal state was originally conceived in anthropological discourse as the physical or psychological state of the liminar during a rite of passage or initiation, its potential pertinence to the discourse on space has not gone unnoticed. With a focus on Turner’s work, Bjørn Thomassen affirms:

in Turner’s own words, liminality refers to any “betwixt and between” situation or object. It is evident that this understanding opens up space for possible uses of the concept far beyond that which Turner himself had suggested. Speaking very broadly, liminality is applicable to both space and time. [...] Liminal places can be specific thresholds; they can also be more extended areas, like “borderlands” or, arguably, whole countries, placed in important in-between positions between larger civilizations.305

Thomassen’s comments resonate clearly in the modern world where movement outranks stasis and where substantial numbers of asylum seekers, migrants and exiles (Buñuel included) have long been in flux. However, the transformation of the space of the mining settlement in La Mort en ce jardin into a liminal zone is twofold, its geographical location betwixt and between absent spatial referents compounded by the process of revolution taking place there. As Dag Øistein Endsjø signals, interstructural areas were for Turner imbued with a quality of liminality via a transition taking place there, while for van Gennep such spaces had

303 Ibid., p. 181.
304 Szakolczai, p. 157.
their liminal meaning projected onto them by the various cultures that contemplated them.\textsuperscript{306} Writing about the \textit{eschatia}, or geographical periphery, and how this represented a liminal space in the ancient Greek worldview, Endsjø posits that, further to Turner’s assumption that interstitial spaces (here, the mining village) were impregnated with a liminal quality due to the ritual taking place there, certain spaces can be considered to possess a more autonomous liminality independent of human agency.\textsuperscript{307} Similarly, Naficy utilises the concept of liminality to investigate the representation of tropes common to exilic cinema, such as displacement and border crossings, as well as the interstitial modes of production of such films. In the context of this cinema, Naficy considers airports and seaports to be liminal spaces of transition.\textsuperscript{308} As vast, virtually unpopulated spaces removed from the Western cultural sphere, the blank spaces of the jungle and the desert in \textit{La Mort en ce jardin} and \textit{Simón del desierto} possess a certain autonomous liminality, though meaning is undeniably projected onto them by the exiled group fleeing for their lives and the ascetic monk in his self-exile from society.

\section*{3.2 The liminal jungle}

The liminal period in which the fugitives find themselves is therefore inscribed spatially, and, as their liminal experience is elongated through time, so is its spatial equivalent.\textsuperscript{309} In the bar scene, as the miners discuss their revolt, Father Lizardi inquires as to the route that the tradesman Chenko takes with his boat in his trafficking of prostitutes to and from the village. The bartender replies that Chenko’s trajectory takes him to the Marqués plantation, close to the Mambuti river and the Brazilian border. Having broken out of the local prison where he has been held on suspicion of committing a robbery in a nearby town, Chark takes advantage of the extended skirmishes between soldiers and miners to make his

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{307} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{308} Naficy, pp. 243-48.
  \item \textsuperscript{309} This experience is, of course, linked to the fact that they are endangered, driven into a self-imposed exile and pursued into the jungle by the fascist soldiers. Thomassen comments that ‘to a degree, immigrant groups or refugees are liminal, being betwixt and between home and host, part of society, but sometimes never fully integrated’. Thomassen, p. 19.
\end{itemize}
escape. For his part, Castin takes shelter from the riot in Djin’s bordello, and, discovering that a price has been put on his head as a supposed instigator of the riot, persuades the mercenary madam to flee with him and his daughter Maria, entrusting his diamonds to her as proof of his love. Hunted by the authorities, Castin, Maria, Djin and Father Lizardi board Chenko’s boat in the dead of night, with the surprise addition of Chark, to flee unnoticed upstream towards Brazil. Various characters claim in their turn that crossing the Brazilian border will bring salvation, supposedly putting an end to their interstitial position. However, this deliverance proves harder to obtain than first envisaged, as the group has to abandon the boat and enter the foreboding mass of the jungle.

The jungle now becomes the primary locus of liminality in the film. Intuiting that this is for the director the more personal of the two halves of the film, Barbáchano, writes: ‘aquí [...] Buñuel se encuentra en su medio: unos pocos personajes a la deriva, en una situación límite, acosados por el hambre y la demencia’. Barbáchano’s choice of phrasing is most definitely pertinent to the spatial situation of the protagonists, encapsulating their figurative position adrift, in an ostensibly perpetual fruitless search for definite spatial referents. In a typically Buñuelian vein, time and space are liberated from their objectivist constraints within the liminal junglescape, with relativity acquiring new meaning. As the group takes shelter in a cave during their first night in the rainforest, Djin mocks Castin’s proposal to navigate by the position of the sun, as it is ‘impossible to know which way is which with all this twisting and turning’, while the desperate Castin is told by Chenko that the Mambuti river and Brazil could be anything from a three day hike away to a twenty day gauntlet – ‘it depends on the jungle’. Moreover, the visual representation of the jungle emphasises its intrinsic liminal quality. Significantly, the coming of each new day is marked by a high-angle shot of the seemingly endless canopy of trees, repeatedly reinforcing the liminal quality of the rainforest with no beginning and no end (see appendix LM 1). The cinematographic depictions of the endless tree canopy have their aural

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311 Barbáchano, p. 184.
counterpart. From the moment the group enters the jungle its soundscape is inescapable. This is perhaps one of Buñuel’s films in which the diegetic sounds of the characters’ surroundings are prominent to a large degree, more so even than the comparable sounds of nature in Robinson Crusoe. In this way, the blanket of sound can be said to function as an aural indicator of the group’s spatial liminality, immersed in the jungle. This aural and visual onslaught allows the jungle, as a site removed from the Western cultural sphere, to become a place ‘which seems to manage to create its own planes of reality, to alter consciousness, to trigger madness’, as the mental and physical states of the trekkers deteriorate.312

3.3 Corporeal and cohesive disintegration
As a physical counterpart to the dissolution of communitas, the desperate and disparate group suffers corporeal disintegration. With an almost laughable irony, following the Lieutenant’s comments that Chark and the gang will be eaten alive by the jungle as his men endeavour to pursue them into the undergrowth, there is a brief sequence in which Maria is shown trapped in an overgrown bush, her hair consumed by its branches and brambles. However, Maria is by no means the only character to be physically damaged by the jungle: Djin is shown limping miserably after twisting her ankle and Castin’s head wound incurred during the miners’ scuffles in the village is exacerbated. Moreover, not only does spatial disintegration and lack of structure have its corporeal correlate, it also exerts its influence on the psychological state of the characters. Durgnat perhaps pays more attention to this aspect of the film, pointing out that ‘from the moment Chark’s band enters the jungle, the film has an atmosphere of dream, as it prepares the inner disintegration of the characters’.313 There is Djin’s regression to an infant-like mentality. Perturbed by the inhospitable terrain and her twisted ankle, she lashes out at the good-natured Castin, her would-be suitor, and is scolded by Chark for sobbing as the group stoically attempts to sleep despite the heavy rain. As Szakolczai states, ‘we become “children” again when we leave behind a fixed

313 Durgnat, p. 108.
role, status, or identity; when we re-enter a liminal situation’. Undoubtedly, though, the main instance of the spatial liminal’s influence on the characters’ mental states is Castin’s abrupt descent into madness. We can again look to Turner to clarify this aspect of liminality: ‘liminality may be the scene of disease, despair, death, suicide, the breakdown without compensatory replacement of normative, well defined social ties and bonds. It may be anomie, alienation, angst, the three fatal alpha sisters of many myths’. As is evident in *La Mort en ce jardin* and in many other of Buñuel’s films – in the ending to *Simón del desierto*, for example, or *El ángel exterminador* in its entirety – anomie, alienation and angst become a Buñuelian triptych, colluding with the spatial (dis)location of the protagonists to devastating effect. For his part, Castin is not only physically trapped between two ideological and physical spaces, he is also in a state of hysteria – arguably between sanity and insanity. In this regard it is telling that, as he receives superficial comfort from the mercenary Djin, who tells him that his dream of opening up a restaurant in Marseille will become a reality, he responds by exclaiming ‘there will be nothing!’. This nihilistic outburst is an indication both of his delirium and their indefinite position in the never-ending jungle.

### 3.4 Tricksters in the *Transandino* aeroplane wreck

Just when the wanderers are at their lowest ebb, having unwittingly traced their own steps back to their campfire from the previous evening and failed to navigate the uniform junglescape, they find temporary salvation in the wreckage of an aeroplane that has crashed in the jungle. Before Chark returns with a suitcase of luxury supplies pillaged from the passengers’ luggage, the human trekkers are almost fully turned feral. In addition to their corporeal disintegration, there is a close-up shot of Father Lizardi digging up roots with his machete and Maria eagerly devouring them. Critics have invariably viewed the intrusion of the aeroplane wreck in the jungle space as the symbol of a ubiquitous consumerism, commenting occasionally on the auterist significations of the group’s surreal

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314 Szakolczai, p. 148.
discovery; this is arguably the site which allows Buñuel to develop a more personal cinema via the principle of contradiction. The jungle is at once a liminal space of ambiguity in which all spatial referents are abolished and, for Kyrou, it is also the space in which the affirmative cry of man finds its enunciation. Kyrou reads Buñuel’s film, not surprisingly, as yet another of the director’s critiques of religion, and the affirmative cry of man is pitted pathetically against religious mysticism, of little use in the jungle. As a consequence of Kyrou’s almost exclusive focus on the character of Father Lizardi, the degenerative effect on the group as a whole, and the active, rather than passive, role of space in their degeneration are given little mention. In exploring the spatial significance of the group’s miraculous discovery, we are able to consider alternative readings of this key sequence, independently of surrealism or religion. I hold that the plane wreck is not their salvation; rather, it is a trick that reveals the inherently liminal condition of the party.

The half-destroyed aeroplane and its contents seemingly provide the group, and the viewer, with a focal point: it is a clearly delineated spatial area within the uniform jungle and it offers corporeal reintegration by way of the goods strewn around the crash site. Furthermore, it is by the side of Lake Topochapa and supposedly close to the Brazilian border. It is ostensibly the focal point that Castin’s photographs of Paris, burned on the group’s campfire from the previous night, fail to be: his lament that ‘there will be nothing!’ has yielded something. The sequence begins with a focus on a suitcase in the trees, before the camera pans to show the decimated aeroplane. There follows a distance shot of Djin, incredulous, framed on one side by a tree trunk and on the other by the plane’s propeller. This brief shot recalls the earlier, striking mid-distance shot of the group trekking through a swamp, framed on each side by a tree trunk in a mise-en-scène redolent of a theatrical proscenium. The implication here is that the products of the

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316 See, for example, Fuentes, who considers the protagonist’s discovery of the aeroplane wreck ‘[un] homenaje al surrealismo dentro ya del mágico-realismo latinoamericano’ and that the consequence of the characters’ find is that they return to consumer society. V. Fuentes, *Los mundos de Buñuel*, p. 138.


318 In this respect, Kyrou’s reading is comparable to that of Buache, who believes that ‘Father Lizzardi is obviously the character who most interests Buñuel’. Buache’s reading is anchored firmly in the interpretive Buñuelian bedrock, as he continues: ‘Buñuel is once again pointing to the total pointlessness of Christian faith in adversity’. Buache, p. 86.
wreckage are a locus of spatial and cultural identification for the gang. It is a reconfiguration of Crusoe’s salón en la selva, but while Crusoe’s salón serves to compensate for his isolation, the group in La Mort en ce jardin rely on the wreck to mask their sense of uprootedness.

The consequences of the group’s find also have an effect on the narrative and the viewer. As Chark and Djin talk against the picturesque backdrop of the lake, the genre and gender codes and iconography seemingly established at the start of the film when Djin sleeps with Chark in her bedroom convey a traditional romantic reconciliation at the culmination of an adventure quest narrative. Suddenly concerned about her appearance, Djin says, ‘I’m ugly, right?’ With Chark’s chivalrous response (‘You don’t look good’), they leave to take a bath in the lake. It appears that the group has found the goods and Chark has got the girl.319 The following scenes depict the physical transformation of the group, except the delirious Castin who continues to bear the somatic effects of the jungle: Father Lizardi is dressed once again in his priestly garb, Maria is scolded by Lizardi for collecting the jewellery of the crash victims and Djin is shown in an expensive black dress and red lipstick, dressed as if ‘for a night at the opera’.320 This supposed narrative resolution is swiftly undercut by Buñuel; indeed, the logo on the aeroplane chassis is suggestive of its failure. In the shot of Djin making herself up, we can make out the plane’s logo – Transandino – on a piece of machinery behind her (see appendix LM2). Like the fugitives, the plane is forever lost in its transitional transit, not managing to successfully navigate the jungle, and is an ironic reminder that their salvation within this closed world is not guaranteed.

The group’s physical transformation from ‘rags to riches’ is significant in revealing their true nature as Tricksters. The Trickster is a key figure in liminality, as Agnes Horvath and Bjørn Thomassen explain. Traditionally, the Trickster

is a vagrant who happens to stumble into the village, appearing as if he came out of the blue. He tries to gain the confidence of villagers by telling

319 Leahy’s analysis of this scene is interesting. She argues that it is Chark who is eroticised, with the key lighting coming from the left of the frame and highlighting his tanned skin, while Djin, on the left of the frame, remains with her back to this light. Leahy, pp. 335-36. As will be discussed, subsequently it is Djin who undergoes the most dramatic physical transformation back to the sexualised vamp.
tales and cracking jokes, thus, in the most elementary manner, by provoking laughter.\footnote{Agnes Horvath and Bjørn Thomassen, ‘Mimetic Errors in Liminal Schismogenesis: On the Political Anthropology of the Trickster’, \textit{International Political Anthropology}, 1.1 (2008), 3-24 (p. 13).}

The Trickster figure can, in the breakdown of political and social structures, assume control, perpetuating the liminal situation for his or her own gains. Given his status as an outsider in the mining village, Chark would appear to be most closely approximated with the Trickster. Indeed, Rebolledo believes that Chark is characterised by a ‘non-belonging to the Buñuelian universe’, given that ‘his presence reveals the political and social repercussions of all the characters, although he never participates in their conflicts’.\footnote{Carlos Rebolledo, \textit{Luis Buñuel} (Paris: Editions Universitaires, 1964), p. 108. [‘Shark [sic] n’est déterminé que par sa non-appartenance à l’univers buñuelien’; ‘Sa présence révèle les incidences politiques et sociales de tous les personnages, bien qu’il ne participe jamais à leurs conflits’].} The counterpart to the Trickster, however, is the Master of ceremonies, traditionally the member of a tribe leading the liminars in their interstitial period and who ‘maintains order once the stabilities of everyday life are dissolved’.\footnote{Horvath and Thomassen, p. 13.} As the finder of the plane and the leader of the group, as well as an outsider, Chark’s role is thus problematised. Rather, we could see the discovery of the aircraft as a catalyst for revealing the group as a whole as a collection of Trickster figures. Importantly, the Trickster superficially mimics the behaviour of others, rather than unconsciously imitating it; as Horvath and Thomassen put it, the Trickster is ‘a good mime’.\footnote{Ibid., p. 15.} The characters’ superficial consumerism is evident in their dressing up. Though they all appropriate the crash victims’ belongings, minus Castin, this superficial consumerism is particularly evident in the narcissistic Djin whose blonde curls, ruby lips and mercenary demeanour cast her as a vampish Marilyn Monroe.\footnote{Going further, Hayward suggests that Djin’s red lips and prominent teeth evoke the Freudian/surrealist image of a vagina dentata. Hayward, p. 126.} The act of dressing up here is significant. Szakolczai highlights Turner’s consideration of theatre performance as a liminal ritual, noting that in a condition of permanent liminality ‘individuals are required to identify with the roles they are supposed to play all the time, all their lives, and their role will \textit{become} their life’.\footnote{Arpad Szakolczai, \textit{Reflexive Historical Sociology} (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 222.} Indeed, Peter Evans’s observation that ‘[f]aced with the certainty of death, Djin makes a statement about life, gesturing colourfully and defiantly against the fate that
awaits all’,\(^{327}\) points directly towards the exuberant, ostentatious *mise-en-scène* around her performance: on the verge of tears after declaring her love for Chark and dressed in a figure-hugging black ball dress and lavished in jewels, a point-of-view shot as Castin prepares to shoot her shows Djin lighting her cigarette with a large piece of wood from the campfire. Following the discovery of the aircraft, Buñuel’s characters, as critics such as Fuentes have signalled, revert to type, perpetuating their ‘roles’ whilst paradoxically exposing the mechanics of the theatrical mode and the superficiality of identity.\(^{328}\) As Hayward phrases it with reference to Djin’s soiled-to-sultry transformation: ‘[t]he masquerade is nearly complete’.\(^{329}\) Put simply, the Tricksters are tricked by the aeroplane wreck.

At the same time, the viewer’s expectations that the discovery of the plane and the lake in the quest narrative will reach its fulfilment in the group’s salvation are undermined through cinematography and sound. After Castin has murdered Djin and Father Lizardi, Chark hides with Maria overnight. The establishing shot the next morning is of the lake rather than the jungle. Nevertheless, the shot composition reveals that this is no less a liminal space than the endless canopy of trees. The only distinguishing feature of the lake is a small island; the expanse of water stretches to the horizon and the distant hills. Furthermore, as Chark kills Castin and sets out down river with Maria on the dinghy, the soundscape of the jungle is still heard.

### 3.5 An ambiguous reaggregation

Many critics and Buñuel scholars have read the ending of *La Mort en ce jardin* in a relatively positive light, encouraged perhaps by Buñuel’s comments when discussing the film.\(^{330}\) According to the director, the unlikely couple Chark and Maria are ‘saved’ because of their respective cold-blooded pragmatism and innocence, roughly foreshadowing Viridiana’s relationship with Jorge in

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\(^{328}\) V. Fuentes, *Los mundos de Buñuel*, p. 138.

\(^{329}\) Hayward, p. 127.

\(^{330}\) Fuentes, for example, contends that the couple possesses ‘una dimensión salvífica’. V. Fuentes, *La mirada de Buñuel: cine, literatura y vida* (Madrid: Tabla Rasa, 2005), p. 163.
Viridiana.\footnote{Buñuel comments that Maria ‘se salva por su inocencia, no porque sea sordomuda. Y el aventurero se salva por algo muy distinto: porque está mejor capacitado para las pruebas difíciles, es el más fuerte y tiene más sangre fría’. De la Colina and Pérez Turrent, p. 102.} Certainly, following the decimating effects of Castin’s madness on the group as a whole, Chark and Maria are the sole survivors, though from a spatial perspective the two have not escaped their interstitial position; they remain betwixt and between.\footnote{The duo’s apparent salvation is undermined when we consider their similarities to the nameless protagonist of Horacio Quiroga’s short story ‘A la deriva’. Like Quiroga’s ‘hombre’, Chark and Maria trek through virgin forest before setting off on their journey down the river Mambuti. Though they do not face imminent death as Quiroga’s protagonist does, they are equally adrift on the borderlands of Brazil and their adopted homeland, while the man in Quiroga’s tale succumbs to the viper venom from an earlier snakebite, floating in his canoe at the intersection of Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay. See Horacio Quiroga, Cuentos, 6th edn, ed. by Leonor Fleming (Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra, 2001), pp. 130-34.} As mentioned above, the final shot of the film – a long distance shot of the pair floating down the Mambuti river – eschews positive interpretation as much as it does negative; it is in its ambiguity that the liminal is perpetuated.

Echoing Kyrou’s comments regarding the subversive structure of Tierra sin pan, Durgnat posits that La Mort en ce jardin functions according to a ‘yes, but’ Buñuelian dialectic:\footnote{Durgnat, p. 108.} before the group can cook the snake they have killed for food, it is miraculously resuscitated before Father Lizardi’s eyes, swarming with thousands of red ants; the wreck of the aeroplane, a contemporary reconfiguration of Crusoe’s salón en la selva, offers the tantalising promise of corporeal reintegration through the acquisition of the material belongings of the deceased passengers, yet does not deliver; Chark and Maria’s journey downriver seems to suggest salvation, but, as Buache asks, ‘will they survive? And for how long?’. Buache ultimately circumscribes the theme of ambiguity, which he identifies as at the heart of this film, within a theological narrative: the ‘biggest sham of all’, according to him, is God.\footnote{Buache, p. 85, p. 81.} Contrastingly, Jean Fac posits a heroic salvation narrative that concords with Buñuel’s own opinion that Chark and Maria are saved, and points to a reading of the film coloured by expectations of the character-driven adventure genre.\footnote{ABR-1981, item 68. Fac believes ‘without society, man is lost; but, however, in this purgatory, he acquires a sort of grandeur’. ‘Sans la société, l’homme est perdu; mais, pourtant, dans ce purgatoire, il acquiert une sorte de grandeur’.} Teasing out the spatial resonances of ambiguity exemplified through the concept of liminality, the reading of the film
elaborated here offers a thematic inflection on this salient trope, avoiding allegorical interpretations to focus precisely on the film’s inconclusive conclusion. It is precisely from the ambiguous middle ground, betwixt and between the ‘yes’ and the ‘but’ that the liminal quality of both the characters and their milieu arises.

**Simón del desierto**

In spite of its relatively short running time, the unexpected and impromptu finale of Buñuel’s final Mexican film, *Simón del desierto*, has attracted much attention from critics and Buñuel scholars who have remarked upon the ways in which it disturbs the spatio-temporal continuity of the film’s narrative in a move which anticipates the episodic structure of *La Voie lactée* and Buñuel’s later films, as noted in Chapter One.\(^{336}\) Together with *El ángel exterminador*, Buñuel’s penultimate film produced in Mexico, *Simón del desierto* can be seen as closer in style to the director’s first two surrealist movies, *Un Chien andalou* and *L’âge d’or*, than to more commercial works made in Mexico and, as Acevedo-Muñoz contends, is an appropriate conclusion to Buñuel’s Mexican corpus, representing ‘the logical conclusion, the closure, of that period of Buñuel’s career’.\(^{337}\) Through an analysis of the spatial properties of this film, I wish to suggest that, although *Simón del desierto* may be a fitting finale to Buñuel’s Mexican period in that it foreshadows Mexican ‘new cinema’, as Acevedo-Muñoz points out, like *La Mort en ce jardin* it is a film whose spatial liminality renders any conclusion inherently problematic.

### 3.6 Simón’s desert

As the credits roll during the opening sequence of the film, the viewer is confronted with a vast expanse of desert space. The high-angle camera first pans the landscape, picking up nothing more than a handful of arid cacti before settling on a group of pilgrims and monks chanting a haunting *Te Deum*, trickling through the dunes. Having reached Simón’s column, the hooded monks and the following crowd appear insignificant as they are shown from above, among the dunes, interspersed with ground level, medium shots that frame the crowd against the

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\(^{336}\) Buñuel himself made this connection: ‘hoy, me parece que *Simón del desierto* podría ya ser uno de los encuentros de los dos peregrinos de *La Vía Láctea*. Buñuel, *Mi último suspiro*, p. 283.

distant hills of the desert. From the initial sequence of the film, then, the isolation and extension of the desert are emphasised. This space is integral to Buñuel’s portrayal of the monastic life of Saint Simeon Stylites, one of the most notable figures in the early Christian tradition of the desert fathers. Writing about the desert as a space of monastic retreat and contemplation in late antiquity, Claudia Rapp states that ‘beginning with the late third century, the Egyptian desert was populated by the pioneers of the desert life, the desert fathers’. The desert is a transcendental space, at once everywhere and nowhere, a void that is impossible to fill, as Rapp signals, admittedly from a generalised Western viewpoint: ‘the desert [...] symbolizes an empty and threatening space, devoid of people and far removed from all the advantages and achievements of human society’.

In the same way as the diverse and mutable open landscapes of Mexico’s Pacific coastline were transformed into the island off the coast of Carolina in The Young One, or into the liminal jungle in La Mort en ce jardin, here the parched landscape of El Valle del Mezquital, Ixmiquilpan, becomes the fifth-century Syrian desert. As with Buñuel’s portrayal of the jungle in La Mort en ce jardin, it is apparent that traditional aesthetics were not of great concern to the director, as outlined in Chapter One. From a Western perspective, both the jungle and the desert are exotic spaces, though Buñuel highlights the ambiguity, even the banality, of such landscapes, as opposed to the artistic aerial panoramas of rolling desert dunes of Death Valley in Antonioni’s Zabriskie Point (1970), for example. Just as with the filming of Tierra sin pan some thirty-two years previously, Buñuel had once again chosen a space on the margins, inhospitable and industrially underdeveloped. Eduardo McGregor, the Spanish actor cast as Daniel, the naive young monk ordered in one scene by Simón to abandon the monastery and not to return until he has grown a beard, recalls that

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339 Ibid., p. 94.
340 Felix Martialay makes the connection between the landscape of Simón del desierto and that of Tierra sin pan, positing a pathetic fallacy in their depictions: ‘[u]n desierto. Paisaje quemado por el sol. Un paisaje-personaje en muchos films de Buñuel, como si la calcinación de las Hurdes se hubiera condicionado ese «ser» miserable, reseco, inhóspito, que se funde con la miseria itinerante de Nazarín, o la enteca figura del enano buñueliano tan frecuente en su cine’. Felix Martialay, ‘Simón del desierto de Luis Buñuel’, Film Ideal, 211 (1969), 6-11 (p. 8).
El Valle del Mezquital [...] recibe su nombre del mezquite, un árbol que refleja el rigor del paisaje, árido e inhóspito. Allí habitan unos indios, los otomíes o ñañú, en unas condiciones de miseria espantosa. [...] Ese espacio semidesértico, tan despoblado de flora, fue la localización escogida para representar la llanura de Siria en una de las filmaciones más accidentadas en la carrera de Luis Buñuel.341

The desert of Simón del desierto is as much a blank canvass as is the jungle of La Mort en ce jardin, both peripheral spaces which become central to the narratives of the respective films. I use the term ‘blank canvass’ to refer to the liminal characteristics of both locations that are derived from their position on the margin and their homogenous form. The two are portrayed filmically as boundless expanses of open space in which spatial referents or geographical coordinates are ambiguous. I have discussed the interstitial position with regards to the mining village and jungle in La Mort en ce jardin, that is, their position between the ideological space of France and also Brazil; Simón’s desert is more problematic in this respect. Unlike in the former film, here the bulk of the narrative takes place in the desert and the viewer is not privy to any other locations off-screen. The throng of pilgrims, for example, comes from such an unseen off-screen space which, presumably, is where the monastery is located. Nevertheless, it is enough simply to acknowledge that a space beyond the desert exists. The film’s title, after all, is the protagonist’s alignment with a seemingly vacuous, marginal space writ large. Simón is characterised immediately by his removal from society and the title alludes to the possibility that his may be an irrevocable detachment.342

Furthermore, the concept of van Gennep’s comments regarding the territorial delineation of neutral zones in classical antiquity is pertinent to Simón’s spatial liminality. In this era, where each country was separated from another by a sort of no man’s land buffer zone, the desert became an archetypal neutral zone, set aside for potential battles.343 The act of passing between one country and another through such a neutral zone is, for van Gennep, essentially a transition during

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342 Dey contends that ‘in spite of his own best efforts to distance himself, the ascetic is contextualised from the outset: throughout the film, he is del desierto, stressing his inability to move beyond – to experience transcendence in an ethical sense’. Dey, p. 227.
343 Van Gennep, pp. 17-18.
which the subject ‘wavers between two worlds’,\textsuperscript{344} precisely the in-between location in which Simón anchors himself.

If the topography of Simón’s scrubland is indicative of the ascetic’s horizontal liminality, the pillar on which he stands serves to suspend him in a vertical interstitial position, too. For Durgnat, Simón, ‘lost in the wild blue yonder’, is the embodiment of ‘the first astronaut, alone on a Space Platform’.\textsuperscript{345} The opening scenes of the film show Simón relocating from his modest pillar to a gigantic, profoundly phallic column that has been specially constructed for him by a pious benefactor. Gleaning the irony in the preacher’s promotion, Wood suggests ‘even in the realm of renunciation there are opportunities for professional advancement’.\textsuperscript{346} Wood is also one of the few critics to remark upon a further patently Buñuelian sardonic irony: Simón’s ‘promotion’ occurs after he has been on his first pillar for precisely six years, six months and six days – the number of the Beast in the Book of Revelation, an ominous portent which undoubtedly heralds the later appearances of the Devil, played by Silvia Pinal, as she taunts Simón. His change of pillar is no doubt important to the narrative, and is indicative of the protagonist’s desire to distance himself from earthly concerns through an increased propinquity to God, albeit by a few metres. The short sequence as Simón walks among his followers from one pillar to the other will be the only incidence of the desert father’s feet on terra firma; abjuring all things earthly in his naive quest for seraphic benediction leads him to reject even his own mother, a possible incarnation of the long-suffering Virgin as she camps out at the foot of her son’s pillar in the hope of filial affection.\textsuperscript{347} In his deliberate positioning of himself between the celestial and the terrestrial, Simón’s liminal location is two-fold, in a so-called neutral zone and between two supposedly opposing planes. The cinematography is also key in perpetuating and giving visible representation to his liminal location. A myriad of high-angle shots depict the solitary figure of Simón against the vast expanse of sky in addition to distance shots which frame him and

\textsuperscript{344} Ibid., p. 18.
\textsuperscript{345} Durgnat, p. 138.
\textsuperscript{347} Rupturing his most concrete bond with the earth plane, he tells his mother, ‘el amor que te tengo no podrá interponerse entre el Señor y Su siervo’.
his column against the endless desert, for example. Additionally, shots such as the high-angle, low-angle reverse shot during Simón's conversations with his regular visitors (the monks, the dwarf goatherd and the Devil), as Dey indicates, are also utilised to exaggerate the physical and emotional detachment of Simón from his contemporaries.\textsuperscript{348}

Just as the jungle of \textit{La Mort en ce jardin} lacks definite spatial reference points, so does the desert. Although I have noted the proliferation of pilgrims and monks coming from an off-screen space, the direction from which they enter the frame and from which they depart is of little relevance. The only definitive landmark is Simón’s pillar, around which the camera continuously navigates. Perhaps the most significant indication the viewer obtains of the ascetic’s irrevocable liminal position is through his encounters with the Devil. Pinal’s voice is heard off-screen before we first see her appear from behind Simón’s former, shorter pillar, wearing an early twentieth-century schoolgirl’s outfit and rolling a hoop. It is important that Durgnat reads the hoop as a symbol of eternity, without beginning or end:\textsuperscript{349} the hoop is a visual metaphor for the indefinite interstitial position of the protagonist as well as an allusion to the cyclical nature of the diegetic world, an idea I will come to shortly. As the Devil-schoolgirl finishes her little ditty about Simón’s penchant for scrubbing his teeth with Syrian urine, the two engage in an apparently banal conversation, but one that is in fact quite revealing:

\begin{center}
Simón: ¿Qué vienes a hacer aquí?  
Devil: A jugar.  
Simón: ¿De dónde vienes?  
Devil: De allí.  
Simón: ¿Y adónde vas?  
Devil: Allá.
\end{center}

This is the first instance of a multitude of essentially meaningless adverbial locutions of place peppered throughout the narrative (see appendix \textit{SD 1}). Though the answers the Devil gives to Simón may appear glib, they confirm that the space in which Simón dwells is betwixt and between indefinite spatial referents and unseen space, in the middle of here and there, from which there is no escape. And it is not only the Devil who provides such indefinite expressions of place; Simón,

\textsuperscript{348} Dey, p. 239.  
\textsuperscript{349} Durgnat, p. 138.
during the course of his satanic ordeals, frequently utters the exclamation ‘vade retro, satanas!’ Unfortunately for the ascetic, the Devil’s continued appearances throughout the film suggest that there is no going backwards or forwards in a world which is so uniformly bleak it is almost oneiric. Indeed, the Devil’s retort to Simón during her third and final appearance indicates this: as an increasingly weary Simón issues a rather feeble ‘vade retro’, the Devil asserts ‘¡ni vade, ni retro, ni nada!’.

3.7 The desert as smooth space

Helpful to this exploration of the spatial liminality of Simón in his desert is Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s concept of smooth and striated space. This supposed binary pair is elaborated via a number of models to provide analogies to what is a rather abstract concept. Smooth space, the antithesis of striated space, is one in which ‘the points are subordinate to the trajectory’ as opposed to the traveller’s movements through striated space in which ‘lines or trajectories tend to be subordinated to points: one goes from one point to the other’.350 As such, the distinction between the two is visible in the randomly arranged fibres of felt and the striated form of imbricated woven fabric in a so-called technical model, or the contrast between the smooth vector and the striated point in the navigation of the seas (or the desert) in a maritime model. The spatial paradigm of striated-smooth, then, can have its counterpart in a sedentary-nomadic binary.351

In a differentiation which seems to evoke Yi-Fu Tuan’s musical model of space and place, whereby space is coterminous with play or continuity, and place is equated with pause or breaks,352 Deleuze and Guattari posit that ‘in striated space, one closes off a surface and “allocates” it according to determinate intervals, assigned breaks; in the smooth, one “distributes” oneself in an open space, according to frequencies and in the course of one’s crossings’, which goes some

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351 Ibid.
352 Yi-Fu Tuan, Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003 [1977]), p. 6. This is, of course, not to suggest that the result of spatial striation is necessarily something approaching a more familiar, localised space, or place, for Deleuze and Guattari posit that the archetype of smooth space – the sea – has undergone striation through the imposition of geographical models of navigation such as the latitudinal-longitudinal system. See Deleuze and Guattari, p. 479.
way to explaining why smooth space is a space of ’affects, not belongings, haptic, not optic’. Fittingly, Deleuze and Guattari assert that the ocean, steppe, and desert belong to this category of space as their topography invites a nomadic way of life and sensory negotiation. On the other hand, the archetypal striated space is the city, highly regimented and grid-like, its verticality to be negotiated optically. Despite his rigid degree of fixity to his column, Simón is patently a nomad, as we understand that ‘we can say of the nomads, following Toynbee’s suggestion: they do not move. They are nomads by dint of not moving, not migrating, of holding a smooth space that they refuse to leave’. In his self-imposed liminal state, Simón is holding his nomadic smooth space, not moving from point to point but existing permanently in the trajectory, in the vain hope of a spiritual epiphany. A key aspect of the traversing of smooth space, and one that provides a link with the concept of liminality as proposed by Turner, is the degree of ‘becoming’, to use Deleuze and Guattari’s expression, that this act entails: ‘voyaging smoothly is a becoming, and a difficult, uncertain becoming at that’. For Turner, the liminal state is ‘transition [...], a becoming, and in the case of rites de passage, even a transformation’. Thus, any physical, psychical or ethical metamorphosis should occur in liminal – in this sense, we could perhaps also read smooth – space. Although Simón’s desert home is certainly a liminal zone, the transformative element inherent in this spatial area is occluded through the protagonist’s refusal to acknowledge his innate connection to the earth plane. Simón, therefore, is forever stuck in a potential becoming never begun.

Despite its apparent rigidity, however, the smooth-striated space pair does not in practice function within a dichotomy; its nature is fundamentally cyclical and dialectic. Deleuze and Guattari make clear:

[s]mooth space is constantly being translated, transversed into a striated space; striated space is constantly being reversed, returned to a smooth

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353 Deleuze and Guattari, p. 481, p. 479.
354 Ibid., p. 482.
355 Ibid.
356 Turner, Forest of Symbols, p. 94.
357 Simón’s refusal to engage with his contemporaries, to recognise and give countenance to the Other, forms the backbone of many readings of the film. Dey, for example, argues that Simón’s disavowal of his ethical obligation to approach others in order to bring himself closer to the deity he serves is his ultimate downfall. Dey, pp. 238-45. Buache suggests that the ascetic wages a ‘ding-dong battle with sin without getting his hands dirty’. Buache, p. 153.
space. In the first case, one organizes even the desert; in the second, the desert gains and grows; and the two can happen simultaneously.\textsuperscript{358}

For instance, just as the city is the archetypal striated space, so the sea is the smooth equivalent. Even so, Deleuze and Guattari assert that the oceans were the first to be subjected to the desires of Western civilisation for striation, with the latitudinal/longitudinal grid being superimposed on the seas to aid navigation.\textsuperscript{359}

In her discussion of the desert as the chief arena of nomadism in Arab cinema, Laura Marks writes: ‘the more we examine the relationships between the smooth and the striated in desert space, and the relations of life and death that their movement describes, the more difficult it is to distinguish them’.\textsuperscript{360} For Marks, desert space is contested space, at once smooth and striated, as ‘a true cinema of the desert sees the desert in relation to the outside forces that shape it’.\textsuperscript{361} This, however, is not the case in \textit{Simón del desierto}. Notwithstanding the differences between the contemporary Arab road movie, about which Marks is writing, and Buñuel's depiction of what is supposedly the fifth-century Syrian desert, in Buñuel's film the outside forces which shape such space remain unseen: the viewer never sees the monastery, home to the monks that provide Simón with food and water, nor the town from which the pilgrims journey to witness his miracles. The smooth-striated-smooth cog appears to have ground to a halt in \textit{Simón del desierto}, never rotating beyond smooth, at least for the protagonist. This interruption in the system is what permits the spatial-smooth to transpose itself onto the ontological-smooth, as it were; the ascetic's spatial liminality has suffused his mental detachment. This is evident in particular in Simón’s dream sequence, before the Devil’s first appearance, which shows him running and playing at the foot of his pillar with his mother before resting his head on her lap as she asks him whether he ever thinks of her. Letting a handful of sand slip through his fingers, he replies: ‘Nunca, madre. No tengo tiempo’. It is possible to live striated on the dunes, just as it is equally feasible to occupy a smooth space in the most striated of spaces – the city – as Deleuze and Guattari are careful to explain,\textsuperscript{362} though this is

\textsuperscript{358} Deleuze and Guattari, pp. 474-75.
\textsuperscript{359} Ibid., p. 479.
\textsuperscript{361} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{362} Deleuze and Guattari, p. 482.
not the case for Simón. He is a nomad, an occupant of smooth space, by dint, as explained above, of not moving.

3.8 The desert as Deleuzian originary world

The smooth and the liminal can in turn be related to Deleuze’s exposition of the originary world in film. In *Cinema 1*, the first of two volumes concerned with the cinematic image, Deleuze focuses his attention on the movement-image. He argues that the cinematographic medium provides us not with ‘an image to which movement is added, it immediately gives us a movement-image’. Cinema is uniquely positioned to show the continuity of movement, and ‘the essence of the cinematographic movement-image lies in extracting from vehicles or moving bodies the movement which is their common substance, or extracting from movements the mobility which is their essence’. The term movement-image does not denote a singular image; it is an umbrella term that Deleuze uses to encompass specific varieties of movement-images he goes on to identify in cinema, one of which is the impulse-image. This type of movement-image is located between two major components in the taxonomy of the cinematic image, according to Deleuze: the affection-image and the action-image. The affection-image is often represented by a close-up shot of the face while the realism of the action-image is depicted by the traditional medium-shot. As Conley explains, ‘affective images are found in *lieux quelconques* or “any-places-whatsoever,” and they are charged with emotion while action is given to “determinate milieus” and “behaviors” appropriate to them’. The affection-image works to ‘abstract [the object of the close-up shot] from all spatio-temporal co-ordinates’ within an any-space-whatever, a particular space which appears fragmented and lacking in homogeneity. Simón’s desert is clearly not an any-space-whatever, resisting fragmentation through its bleak uniformity. The action-image, however, ‘is the domain of realism, of qualities and powers actualized in a concrete, specific space-time’ and is the model on which traditional narrative cinema is based.

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364 Conley, p. 46.
365 Deleuze, p. 96.
preponderance of high- and low-angle shots and distance shots in *Simón del desierto* evidences neither the affection- nor the action-image: just as the preacher’s perpetual existence atop the pillar is related to his surrounding environment cinematographically, rather than being abstracted from this as in the affection-image, so his surrounding environment, through its incessant uniformity and unspecified location, cannot be considered a concrete, specific space-time, as in the realist action-image.

As opposed to the action-image, which is grounded in realism, the impulse-image has its roots in naturalism, an aesthetic mode which, according to Deleuze, ‘is not opposed to realism, but on the contrary accentuates its features by extending them in an idiosyncratic surrealism’.\(^{367}\) Inherent to this naturalistic cinema, and underscoring in a subliminal vein the more realist geographical and historical milieux within the diegesis, is the originary world, a place regulated by animalistic drives. Deleuze explains:

> [t]he originary world may be marked by the artificiality of the set (a comic opera kingdom, a studio forest, or marsh) as much as by the authenticity of a preserved zone (a genuine desert, a virgin forest). It is recognisable by its *formless character*. It is pure background, or rather, a without-background, composed of uniform matter, sketches or fragments, crossed by non-formal functions, acts, or energy dynamisms which do not refer to the constituted subjects. Here the characters are like animals: the fashionable gentleman a bird of prey, the lover a goat, the poor man a hyena. This is not because they have their form or behaviour, but because their acts are prior to all differentiation between the human and the animal. These are human animals. And this is indeed the impulse: the energy which seizes fragments in the originary world.\(^{368}\)

Deleuze goes on to categorise both the studio jungle of *La Mort en ce jardin* and Simón’s desert as originary worlds.\(^{369}\) Given the formless character of the originary world, this bears the hallmark of smooth space, which is essentially ‘amorphous’, and with ‘no background, plane, or contour’.\(^{370}\) Indeed, it is not difficult to see how the arid plains of Simón’s desert can be considered formless in appearance. As regards the function of these originary worlds, Sandro explains that these worlds extract impulses from modes of behaviour in the determinate

\(^{367}\) Deleuze, p. 124.

\(^{368}\) Ibid., pp. 123-24. My emphasis.

\(^{369}\) Ibid., p. 125. Although Deleuze proposes that the jungle of *La Mort en ce jardin* is an originary world characterised by its studio artificiality, this appears a mistaken assumption. Baxter writes that the shoot took place on location near Lake Catemaco in Mexico. Baxter, p. 247.

\(^{370}\) Deleuze and Guattari, p. 477, p. 496.
milieus and give rise to the fetish object, simultaneously present in the real milieu and originary world.\textsuperscript{371} As evidence of this we might think of the animated postcard, the re-animated snake and the entire aeroplane wreck in \textit{La Mort en ce jardin}, the fixation of the dwarf goatherd on his goat’s udders in \textit{Simón del desierto} and the Chinese urns-turned-toilets in \textit{El ángel exterminador}.

One of the primary proponents of naturalistic cinema according to Deleuze is Buñuel. In his paper examining the themes of confinement and dislocation in the director’s cinema, and how these plot devices give rise to the Deleuzian impulse-image, Sandro maintains that ‘Buñuel, like Zola, subjects his characters mercilessly to the pressures and demands of their social settings, their \textit{milieus}’.\textsuperscript{372} As Deleuze explains, ‘[t]he originary world is [...] both radical beginning and absolute end’, both of which are linked by what he terms ‘a line of the steepest slope’.\textsuperscript{373} The slope acts as a bridge between the real milieus and the originary world, underscoring it and encouraging an entropic degradation, ‘a cruel passage from primal origin to ultimate destruction’.\textsuperscript{374} The slope is therefore inextricably linked to chronology, as ‘it has the merit of causing an originary image of time to rise, with the beginning, the end, and the slope’.\textsuperscript{375} Significantly, the bestial impulses of the originary world are said by Deleuze to coalesce in what is the ultimate degradation: ‘a great death-impulse’.\textsuperscript{376} The relevance of this slope of degradation to \textit{Simón del desierto} underscores the allegorical readings of this film; that is, that Simón ends up in the hellish disco. Deleuze contradicts this reading. Buñuel’s, he says, is a particular brand of naturalism; his line of steepest slope is not actually a slope at all. The radical beginning in Buñuel’s cinema often occurs at the end of the narrative: the group fleeing though the originary world in \textit{La Mort en ce jardin} is (re)turned to the bestial, while the incredible conclusion of \textit{Simón del desierto}, as I will show, suggests a perpetuation of the protagonist’s self-imposed exile, albeit in the Big Apple of the swinging sixties. The point is that Buñuel’s cinema operates cyclically, as ‘in Buñuel [...]’, entropy was replaced by the cycle or the eternal

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\textsuperscript{371} Sandro, p. 37.  
\textsuperscript{372} Ibid., p. 36.  
\textsuperscript{373} Deleuze, p. 124.  
\textsuperscript{374} Bogue, p. 83.  
\textsuperscript{375} Deleuze, p. 124.  
\textsuperscript{376} Ibid.
return' in which the saintly and the malicious find themselves indiscriminately.\textsuperscript{377} It is the trope of repetition which returns us to liminality. Turner posits that, as an interstructural situation, liminality forms part of a cycle whereby structure dissolves to leave anti-structure before subsequently giving way once again to a redefined structure.\textsuperscript{378} In both of the films discussed in this chapter, however, Buñuel's penchant for an open, ambiguous ending eschews the re-imposition of structure, which would appear to be equated with an unambiguous teleological narrative. Instead, Buñuel prefers to continue his repetition in the originary world/liminal space. There is more to be said about this point in relation to both films and I shall return to it in the concluding section of this chapter.

3.9 From desert to disco

It is to the film's finale that I now turn.\textsuperscript{379} The Devil's third and final appearance heralds the protagonist's spatial dislocation as he is magically transported through time and space to end up in a nondescript discotheque in modern New York City. There is a medium close-up tracking shot of a coffin, apparently self-propelled through the desert scrubland.\textsuperscript{380} The weary Simón clearly knows what the ominous object contains, crossing himself and asking for divine succour. The coffin lid opens and out steps the Devil, this time clad in a revealing toga. The ascetic's Hail Marys are of no use to him now, she warns, and instructs him to prepare himself for a long voyage, the destination of which will be a place where he will witness 'las heridas rojas de la carne'. This description has undoubtedly given rise to various critics' allegorical readings of the nightclub at the end of the film as a postmodern hell, a reading with which I disagree and to which I will propose an

\textsuperscript{377} Ibid., p. 131.
\textsuperscript{379} I am aware that in doing so, I have passed over a considerable section of the narrative, including several scenes that regularly feature in writing on the film, for example the scene between the monk and Simón in which the former tries to teach Simón the concept of property and material possession. I discuss this sequence briefly when I return to consider Simón del desierto in section 5.3 of Chapter Five. For detailed analyses of this and other significant scenes, such as the Devil's second appearance, see, for instance, Dey, pp. 224-54, or Buache, pp. 151-56.
\textsuperscript{380} Buñuel laments the fact that the rope with which the coffin is dragged through the desert is visible, but admits that 'hay un momento en que, cuando el rodaje se pone pesado y hay que repetir tomas demasiadas veces, me digo: «Se acabó, que vaya así»'. De la Colina and Pérez Turrent, p. 140.
alternative. The Devil’s comment ‘vienen a buscarnos’ is Buñuel’s cue to cut to a low-angle shot of an aeroplane traversing the sky above what is supposedly the desert of fifth-century Syria; the film’s oneiric dimension is never more apparent than in the leap from late antiquity to modernity as the following dissolve shows Simón’s empty pillar become the pulsating megalopolis of New York.

The footage of New York opens with disorientating aerial shots of the cosmopolitan centre before the camera moves to street-level, framing the high-rise blocks from an extreme low-angle, read by Durgnat as a multitude of modern columns. The camera then pans the interior of a nightclub, passing over a writhing corporeal sea before settling on Simón and the Devil, both of whom are dressed fittingly in more modern attire. Indeed, Wood believes Simón’s appearance to be reminiscent of a French intellectual, though what is important here is that he remains a Deleuzian nomad. There is once again a brief but telling exchange between the Devil and Simón. Responding to his decidedly languid ‘vade retro’, Pinal delivers with gusto a decisive ‘vade ultra!’. With this rebuttal, the viewer realises that, while the (post)modern ultra may have triumphed over the archaic retro, the rules of the game remain the same: the continuation of the ambiguity surrounding spatial referents confirms that the striated space par excellence, the city, is ultimately a smooth space, a postmodern desert, and the decadent nightclub is anything but an oasis of tranquillity. Thus,

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381 In addition, the name of the band playing in the nightclub is The Sinners. The shooting script of the film suggests that anyone viewing the scene for the first time ‘se creería juguete de una pesadilla’. Luis Buñuel and Julio Alejandro, ‘Guión de Simón del desierto’ (1964), Madrid, Filmoteca Española, Archivo Buñuel 1479 (hereafter AB 1479), p. 75. As for critics’ comments regarding this space as a postmodern hell, Fuentes comments that Simón has passed ‘de la cima a la sima [...] En dos planos hemos pasado de las expectaciones de un vuelo de transcendencia a un descensus ad infernos’. V. Fuentes, Buñuel en México, p. 157. For Stefan Gross, an apocalyptic vision underscores the entire film: ‘society is Hell. Loneliness is Hell. We are Hell. The disco is Hell. The sinners make the music. Hell is other people. The desert is Hell. The disco is the desert’. Stefan Gross, Paradoxe Säulen – Athletik der Askese: Luis Buñuels Simón del desierto und die Realität des Surrealismus (Frankfurt am Main: Vervuert, 1998), p. 265. [‘Die Gesellschaft ist die Hölle. Die Einsamkeit ist die Höle. Die Höle sind wir. Die Disko ist die Höle. Die Sünder machen die Musik. Die Höle sind die anderen. Die Wüste ist die Höle. Die Disko ist die Wüste’].

382 The sequence is almost identical to that of L’Âge d’or, where the foundational stone of Rome gives way, after the intertitles, to a disorientating aerial shot of the city itself.

383 Durgnat, p. 138. The suggestion in full is that the multitude of skyscrapers is part prison, part ant colony, augmenting the viewer’s sense of claustrophobia and disorientation.

384 Wood, ‘Damned if you do...’. Interestingly, in the shooting script Simón is described as resembling The Beatles. See AB 1479, p. 76.
Buñuel anticipates the view of cultural theorists such as Szakolczai, namely, that modernity has become equated with a perpetual liminality.\footnote{Szakolczai proposes that, in order for the conceptualisation of the middle stage of rites of passage to be extended into liminality on a larger scale across a given society, it is necessary for social structures to collapse beyond repair. Also necessary, Szakolczai argues, is the absence of Masters of ceremonies, the ‘guardians’ (to borrow Szakolczai’s term) who ensure a safe passage through the liminal period and the suspension of structure. Szakolczai gives the communist regimes in Europe following the Second World War as examples of a perpetual liminality in modernity. Arpad Szakolczai, \textit{Reflexive Historical Sociology}, pp. 215-26. The modern-day Simón is misled by the Trickster figure of the Devil, being brought not to a reaggregation into society, but forced to exist in the disorientating urban jungle of 1960’s New York among a mass of bodies to which the individual must capitulate.}

Also apparent is that behind – or rather beneath – the discotheque’s shimmering façade of hedonistic rock and roll lies an originary world as liminal as that of the desert. This originary world, this time underscoring a place of self-indulgence in the twentieth century, is both radical beginning and absolute end, to echo Deleuzian terminology. Simón cannot leave to go ‘home’ as another alienated ascetic has begun his own tenancy in the desert, and the Devil informs him that he will have to stay ‘para siempre’. Conley’s observation that, ‘[f]or the director the originary world carries the bonus of being a site for caustic reflection that goes well beyond the time and space in which it is placed’, can point in this respect to the transcendental, limitless quality of the realistic milieu of the nightclub.\footnote{Conley, p. 47.}

Furthermore, the frenetic floundering of the partygoers’ limbs is a dance aptly-titled \textit{carne radioactiva} and is ‘el último baile, el baile final’, the absolute end to Simón’s radical starting point of forever. The dancers’ gestures are described in the shooting script as ‘inquietantes, los gestos a veces graciosos, a veces obscenos, las contorsiones, las actitudes y el caminar imitando a monos, perros, gallinas, etc… todo ello, contribuyendo a formar una alegoría inquietante de nuestra época’, before the script calls for such eclectic dance-styles as ‘chicken back’, ‘cheetah the monkey’ and ‘watusi’.\footnote{AB 1479, p. 75.} As previously stated, the originary world is prior to any division between human and beast. Here, then, the originary world of the desert is conflated with that of the disco. They are contiguous planes of formless character underscoring their respective milieus in which actions are neither human nor animal (see appendix \textit{SD} 2). In this way, the nightclub is much less an allegorical hell than it is an interstitial, uncertain purgatory; to read it as the former is to over-simplify its connection to the originary world of the desert and to impose a
neat, teleological discourse on what is ultimately shrouded in ambiguity. The fundamental difference, therefore, between allegorical readings of the film’s ending as a modern hell and my own is one of directional planes; that is, a vertical (allegorical) reading versus a horizontal (spatial) reading: Simón’s ‘fall’ naturally implies a definitive ending-place (hell), yet his nomadic existence gives primacy to the unfurling horizontal. It is in this vast, formless expanse that the smooth, the originary and the liminal lie.

3.10 Conclusion: liminal teleologies – starting from zero
The endings of both films analysed in this chapter are, as I have noted, deeply ambiguous, on a psychological and spatial level. Although La Mort en ce jardin ends with a distance shot of Chark and Maria as they sail down the Mambuti river, anchoring the narrative in a realist (albeit fictional) place, the intrepid survivors find themselves in as ambiguous a space as ever. Similarly in Simón del desierto, the ascetic appears in a nondescript yet believable nightclub setting in New York City. On the surface, the characters of both films appear to have escaped their ‘in-between’ locations – for better or worse – thanks to an ostensible narrative telos: by dint of her innocence and his pragmatism, Maria and Chark are spared death; because of his weakened spiritual resolve, Simón is transported to an apparent hell. Positing a teleology in these and other of the director’s works certainly facilitates an ethical or thematic reading of his films. According to Cristiana Malaguti, although Buñuel’s characters appear to operate from a self-determinist perspective, ‘in Buñuel the dynamism around the text always unfolds in a teleological manner’.388 Ironically, however, Buñuel’s own teleological model often functions to negate any notion of design, at least any design which is neat in its conclusion, through what Deleuze has termed ‘the cycle, or endless return’.389 Malaguti notes that even in the most open-ended of his films there is not a trace of certainty or of redemption.390 In addition to the two films discussed here, we could think of the ending to Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie, where the characters

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389 Deleuze, p. 131.
tirelessly continue their perpetual walk through a decidedly liminal, non-descript countryside space as the camera zooms out, or the final distance shot of Ramón Vázquez after he has freed the chained prisoners in *La Fièvre monte à El Pao*, for which he will presumably face execution. As the liminal period draws to a close, so does the degree of ambiguity and uncertainty it represents, as Turner states: '[in the third state, or reaggregation] the ritual subject, individual or corporate, is in a stable state once more and, by virtue of this, has rights and obligations of a clearly defined and “structural” type'. In this way, it is exactly the conclusion of certitude denied by Buñuel’s narrative telos which appears to work towards an end of ambiguity, especially in the two films discussed in this chapter.

That Buñuel’s narratives are constructed cyclically does not escape Malaguti as she echoes Deleuze’s comments on this point: ‘in Buñuel time assumes the mythical dimension of the eternal return, the predominant rhetorical figure is that of *repetition*’. In addition to the liminal qualities contained within such a repetition, she identifies yet more in the director’s treatment of time:

> [w]e have a resetting [azzzeramento] of narrative time, especially in the presentation of the characters themselves, who usually lack any historical roots or any referent outside of the economy of Buñuelian discourse; in general this concerns orphans, such as the protagonists of *Susana* and *The Young One* (1960), or individuals who interpose a rift between present and past, and between present and future (the religious men of *Simón del desierto* (1965) and of *Nazarin* [sic] (1958)).

The resetting of time is clearly pertinent to *Simón del desierto*, given that the ascetic finds himself permanently on the limen between present and future, but it is also palpable in *La Mort en ce jardin*. Within the jungle space, both the temporal and spatial dimensions shift from their objectivist matrix to become anchored in subjectivity. If that were not enough, the ending of the film sees Maria orphaned as her father, Castin, descends into insanity, murdering Djin and Father

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391 Turner, *Forest of Symbols*, p. 94.
392 Malaguti, p. 25. ['In Buñuel il tempo assume la dimensione mitica dell’eterno ritorno, la figura retorica predominante è quella della ripetizione’].
393 Ibid., p. 25. ['Abbiamo un azzeramento del tempo interno del racconto, innanzitutto nella presentazione stessa dei personaggi, per lo più privi di una qualsiasi matrice storica o di un qualche referente esterno all’economia del discorso buñueliano; in genere si tratta di orfani, come le protagonisti di *Susana* e di *Violenza per una giovane* (1960), o di individui che interpongono una frattura tra presente e passato, e tra presente e futuro (i religiosi di *Simón del desierto* (1965) e di *Nazarin* (1958)).]
394 Interestingly, Barbáchano believes *Simón del desierto* to be atemporal, an observation lent weight by Buñuel’s comments regarding the narrative setting of the film: ‘no me interesaba dar un tiempo definido en la historia’. Barbáchano, p. 201; de la Colina and Pérez Turrent, p. 140.
Lizardi, and is subsequently shot dead by Chark. In this way, Maria finds her liminal period compounded; she is between a past with her father and a future alone, or possibly with Chark. This is Deleuze’s cycle of return in action, a constant intrusion of liminality in the temporal aspect of the narrative.

The spatial setting of both films is undoubtedly liminal and both the jungle and the desert possess intrinsically liminal attributes. Endsjø suggests that in his investigations into liminality as a cultural process, Turner overlooked the autonomy of space, taking the view that space acquires liminal meaning via ritual processes. Endsjø writes:

[as culturally recognised places are carved out of an originally undefined territory, huge areas will also remain outside of these culturally recognised frames. Turner, however, did not recognise how these spatial ‘remains’ also represent cultural constructions. He thus failed to appreciate how spatial entities were perceived to possess an *autonomous* liminal status within a given worldview.](395)

In the tradition of the desert fathers, the desert represented the geographical and economical periphery, on the margins of the polis and distanced from worldly concerns. Similarly, the jungle is an undefined, natural territory, removed even from the cultural frame of the mining village. This intrinsic liminal quality finds its equivalent in Deleuze and Guattari’s theory of smooth space, as I have signalled. Both the jungle and desert spaces are haptic, best negotiated by sensory rather than technological means in the vein of their nomadic inhabitants. As discussed earlier, smooth space subordinates the point to the overall trajectory. This is evident in *La Mort en ce jardin* and *Simón del desierto*: the characters of both films find themselves – whether they wish to or not – the occupants of smooth space, nomadic exiles through volition or circumstance, tracing circles in the jungle or residing permanently in the trajectory.

Finally, a concern with space, although not often acknowledged in any sustained way, underpins both of these films. Writing about *Simón del desierto*, Annie Goldmann asserts that the film’s primary thematic is a comment on the lack of *place* for a man such as Simón: ‘in its admirable simplicity this film poses the

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395 Endsjø, p. 357.
difficult question of the place of the believer in the modern world.\textsuperscript{396} Hers seems to be a nihilistic reading of the film, suggesting that in the twentieth century there is neither God nor Devil, and Simón has no reason to exist.\textsuperscript{397} This has obvious links with Szakolczai’s view of modernity as perpetual liminality. In this regard, the film can be fruitfully read as a comment on a lack of place in the modern world, not only for believers, but for almost anyone. Similarly, Acevedo-Muñoz writes that 	extit{La Mort en ce jardin}, along with Buñuel’s other French language co-productions of the 1950s, features ‘geographically isolated settings and characters that are foreigners, exiled, detached from their origins, and immersed in situations that they cannot escape, control, or understand. They struggle to find their place’.\textsuperscript{398} If the Buñuelian impulse against cinematic utopianism, as I suggested in Chapter Two, has its manifestation in the heterotopic island spaces of 	extit{Robinson Crusoe} and 	extit{The Young One}, his championing of ambiguity finds its most overt visual representation in the liminal spaces of 	extit{La Mort en ce jardin} and 	extit{Simón del desierto}. Spatial concerns are also at the heart of what are arguably Buñuel’s two most auteurist productions of the 1950s, \textit{Los olvidados} and \textit{Nazarín}, as I will show in the following chapter. Set in the city and countryside respectively, a concerted focus on the body in place can serve to unite the two films, independently of their depictions of typologies of external spaces and reveal once again how a spatial reading of the two films can enhance and inflect existing criticism on the films and open up new avenues of analytical exploration.

\textsuperscript{397} Ibid., p. 464.
Chapter Four
The body-self in place: the place-worlds of Los olvidados and Nazarín

4.0 Introduction
In late 1950 Buñuel released what has become one of the most notable works of his entire corpus. The unflinching depiction of the Mexican underclass via a gang of Mexico City street children in Los olvidados provides a point of departure from Buñuel's first two Mexican films, Gran Casino, a musical which 'clearly sought to emulate the success of Golden Age musicals',\(^{399}\) and the comedy El gran calavera. Despite the unequivocal failure of Gran Casino at the box office, the success of the subsequent El gran calavera meant that producer Óscar Dancigers allowed Buñuel to undertake a more original project of his choosing. Because of its depiction of disenfranchised youths and its unremitting focus on the everyday reality of life in the slums, Buñuel's film has been likened to both Nikolai Ekk's Road to Life (1931), a Soviet drama concerning wayward youths, and Italian neorealism.\(^{400}\) Sebastiaan Faber suggests that, rather than poetic tragedy, the film can be seen as adhering more closely to naturalism, as '[the] characters’ fate, after all, seems completely determined by the famous triad of milieu, moment and race – that is, their environment, historical moment and genetic make-up’.\(^{401}\) To a certain extent, this is indeed true. The deluge of violence and criminality may appear gratuitous,\(^{402}\) but is based on Buñuel’s own observations of the lives of the dispossessed within

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\(^{400}\) Bazin holds that Los olvidados distorts the myth propagated by Ekk’s paradigm – namely that ‘misery makes an evil counselor, and redemption comes through love, trust, and hard work’, whereas Buñuel seeks to show ‘the evil objective cruelty of the world’. See Bazin, pp. 195-96. For a discussion of the broad similarities and contrasting elements between Los olvidados and the Italian neorealist genre, see Julie Jones, ‘Interpreting Reality: Los olvidados and the Documentary Mode’, Journal of Film and Video, 57.4 (2005), 18-31.

\(^{401}\) Sebastiaan Faber, ‘Between Cernuda’s Paradise and Buñuel’s Hell: Mexico through Spanish Exiles’ Eyes’, Bulletin of Spanish Studies, 80.2 (2003), 219-39 (p. 236). Faber also finds flaws in a naturalist reading of the film, due to its tendency to assimilate the causes of social issues into a medical discourse. I would agree, given the vitriolic reactions by Buñuel’s bourgeois Mexican acquaintances to the film, suggesting the difficulty on the observer’s part of retaining a clinical, impartial distance from the world on screen.

\(^{402}\) Aranda believes this to be so: ‘Violence, always present in Buñuel, here seems to be pitched to a forced note. The astonishing brutalities shock us with a regularity that becomes predictable’. Aranda, p. 143.
the arrabales of Mexico City. As such, Xavier Bermúdez argues that the importance of Los olvidados lies in its depiction of an unsavoury reality:

[e]ra, y continúa siendo, necesario que el cine reflejase con toda la crudeza posible la miseria de un mundo, como único y desesperado modo de conseguir que de ese mundo desaparezca la miseria, o al menos como única manera de no justificarla y bendecirla.

Seven years later, Buñuel began work on Nazarín. For Baxter, this film is an example of Buñuel’s more auteurist Mexican works that helped – albeit sporadically – to re-launch the filmmaker internationally. Like Los olvidados, Nazarín proved successful at Cannes, receiving the International Prize. Based on Benito Pérez Galdós’s novel of the same name, the narrative depicts the (r)amblings of Padre Nazario, ‘un hombre puro [...] fuera de lo común’, as he drifts indiscriminately about the Mexican countryside accompanied by two unlikely female ‘disciples’, Ándara and Beatriz, while attempting to bring comfort to the diseased and the dying. Foreshadowing Viridiana and Simón, the aloofness of the eponymous protagonist here is the cause of his naivety. Indeed, just as Edwards posits that Buñuel’s first three films constitute a surrealist triptych, so Ulrich Gregor proposes a grouping of Nazarín, Viridiana and Simón del desierto predicated on a thematic and ethical reading of these films, as in each it is the protagonists’ submission to a Christian morality of self-negation and sublimation that brings about their downfall. However, Durgnat believes the film’s hero remains separated from the ‘middle-class pharisaism that contaminates official Christianity’. The film’s enthusiastic reception by Catholic institutions also highlights the difference between Nazarín and the later Viridiana: while the latter was decried in the Vatican newspaper L’Osservatore Romano, the former came close to being awarded the Prize of the International Catholic Cinema Office.

403 Concerning pre-production research for the film, Buñuel says, ‘iba a los barrios bajos de la Ciudad de México [...] iba a hablar con una chica que tenía parálisis infantil. [...] Consulté detalles en el Tribunal de Menores, con un psiquiatra’. De la Colina and Pérez Turrent, p. 49.
405 Baxter, p. 248.
406 De la Colina and Pérez Turrent, p. 103.
407 Gregor says the basic structure of Simón del desierto is similar to that of Nazarín and Viridiana, where ‘Christian ideas crumble anyway before reality without the ability to change, and the saint will end overwhelmed with doubt, under the form of an allegorical epilogue’. Ulrich Gregor in Aranda, p. 225.
408 Durgnat, p. 112.
409 Ibid., pp. 111-12. The film was not embraced by every institution influenced by Catholicism. Producer Manuel Barbáchano Ponce’s application to shoot the film in Spain invited an excoriating
Whereas the previous chapters of this thesis have set out to analyse two films on the basis of their shared spatial characteristics – heterotopic islands and liminal desert and jungle spaces – this chapter will shift the analytical emphasis somewhat from typologies of external space to focus specifically on the body (and, by extension, the self) in space as read through Los olvidados and Nazarín. While Buñuel, in early press interviews for the film, described Los olvidados as a social documentary,\textsuperscript{410} effectively creating an affinity between this and the earlier Tierra sin pan,\textsuperscript{411} with regards to Nazarín he resists any similar such claims to realism, stating: ‘no me proponía hacer una película con esa clase de verosimilitud, sino sobre un cura excepcional’.\textsuperscript{412} Los olvidados is set against the backdrop of a Mexico City undergoing rapid but disproportionate modernisation during the presidency of Miguel Alemán (1946-52); the setting for the itinerant Nazarín, however, is given less importance. Galdós’s novel is recast in the countryside of Mexico under Porfirio Díaz around the turn of the twentieth century. Certainly, the respective settings of the films are important here; nevertheless, I wish to emphasise that I am not building my argument upon a premise of the urban as opposed to the rural. Rather, I will give consideration to the filmic depiction of the body’s being-in-space – regardless of the typology of that space. Both works can reveal much about Buñuel’s treatment of the body and its interaction with its surroundings.

Key to this chapter, then, will be how the relationship between the corporeal and the psychological, and the places that the characters encounter, is constituted and

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\textsuperscript{410} In an interview with the newspaper Novedades in 1950, Buñuel states that his motivation for making Los olvidados was ‘[u]na línea o género que venía cultivando desde que hice “Tierra sin Pan”’. See Carmen Peña Ardid and Víctor M. Lahuerta Guillén, eds., Los olvidados. Guión y documentos (Teruel and Zaragoza: Instituto de Estudios Turolenses, Gobierno de Aragón, Caja Rural de Teruel, 2007), p. 559. Numerous Mexican and European press cuttings related to the film are meticulously collated in this volume. See especially pp. 466-633. For an analysis of the generic hybridity of Los olvidados see J. Jones, ‘Interpreting Reality’.\textsuperscript{411} For Mark Polizzotti, Los olvidados would not have been possible without Tierra sin pan. In his view, ‘[w]hat Land without Bread and Los Olvidados share more than anything [...] is a tone, both visual and moral. It is our sense of shock they mean to provoke, rather than our sense of humour; it is our complacency they seek to undermine’. Mark Polizzotti, Los Olvidados (London: BFI, 2006), p. 18.\textsuperscript{412} De la Colina and Pérez Turrent, p. 105. It is worth adding that it was not until he left Spain for the USA and Latin America that Buñuel became interested in Galdós. What is more, Buñuel believed that the novel itself was not ‘de las mejor logradas’. Ibid., p. 104. For a detailed comparison of Galdós’s novel and Buñuel’s film, see John H. Sinnigen, Benito Pérez Galdós en el cine mexicano: cine y literatura (Mexico City: UNAM, 2008), pp. 190-245.
represented filmically. As a framework for investigation, I will draw extensively on the philosopher Edward Casey's concept of the place-world.

4.1 The place-world

Casey's work centres on the relationship between what he calls the geographical self, that is, a combination of the corporeal and the psychological as located in place, through the convergence of geography and philosophy. For Casey, 'the self has to do with the agency and identity of the geographical subject; body is what links this self to lived place in its sensible and perceptible features'. Casey is by no means unique in his emphasis on the body and its relationship to the lived environment; as Phil Hubbard and others signal when they suggest that '[i]t seems logical [...] that any understanding of the spatiality of society must examine the geographies of the body'. They make clear that the body's emergence as a central factor in the discipline of human geography is a relatively recent one. Like Casey, they attribute the disregard of the body in part to the Cartesian modality of mind and body as discrete entities, encouraging the subordination of ontology to epistemology. In an attempt to reconcile the body and the psyche with the world in which we live, Casey attempts a more nuanced explication of the linkages between the human subject and place, writing that this relationship:

is not just one of reciprocal influence (that much any ecologically sensitive account would maintain) but also, more radically, of constitutive coinherence: each is essential to the becoming of the other. In effect, there is no place without self and no self without place. What is needed is a model wherein the abstract truth of this position [...] can be given concrete articulation without conflating place and self or maintaining the self as an inner citadel of unimplaced freedom.

413 Casey, 'Between Geography and Philosophy', p. 683.
415 It should be noted, however, that geographies with 'other' focuses (for example, queer or feminist), actively seek to reposition the 'othered' body at the centre of spatial discourse. See, for example, Geographies of Sexualities: Theory, Practices and Politics, ed. by Kath Browne, Jason Lim and Gavin Brown (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007). This is a strand of work within film studies, too. See, for instance, Lee Wallace’s Lesbianism, Cinema, Space: The Sexual Life of Apartments (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009).
416 Casey, 'Between Geography and Philosophy', p. 684.
Place and self, Casey holds, are discrete entities that nevertheless play an integral role in the actualisation of the other: the self is always implaced.\(^{417}\)

The place-world of the geographical self derives from the self's 'inhabitation of places in a circumambient landscape', where place is taken to be 'the immediate environment of [the] lived body – an arena of action that is at once physical and historical, social and cultural'.\(^{418}\) The place-world, then, corresponds to the immediate lived and enacted world of the self. In the cases of the street gang of *Los olvidados* and the wandering Nazarín, the place-world is contained respectively within the claustrophobic slums of Mexico City and the open bucolic vistas of the Mexican countryside. Casey proposes three distinct ways in which the subject, in mind and body, engages with the place-world; these mediatrices between self and place, to use Casey's terminology, are habitus, habitation and idiolocality, all of which will be dealt with in this chapter through a geographical-philosophical reading of the two films at hand.

In employing the term habitus, Casey acknowledges his debt to the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, and in particular Bourdieu's *Outline of a Theory of Practice* in which Bourdieu introduces the habitus as 'the universalizing mediation which causes an individual agent's practices'. Habitus, for Bourdieu, is a 'system of durable, transposable *dispositions*' generated by the structures of a particular type of environment or condition (for example, social class), and through the re-enactment of which the subject is able to comprehend their environment.\(^{419}\) Linking Bourdieu's concept more directly to space, Casey affirms that 'a given habitus qua settled disposition or "habitude" is thus the basis for action in any given sphere – indeed, in any given place'.\(^{420}\) If habitus is the scheme by which the subject unconsciously acts in any given environment, then habitation, the act of holding place – Casey evokes the Latin root of the verb *habere* (to have, hold) – is 'the primary way in which the geographical subject realizes its active commitment

\(^{417}\) Casey's earlier work on place explains the term 'implacement'. Unlike its virtual homonym emplacement, implacement evokes the immediate placement of the subject and communicates the action of 'getting in or into, and it carries connotations of immanence that are appropriate to the inhabitation of places'. *Casey, Getting Back into Place*, p. 367, n. 9.

\(^{418}\) Casey, 'Between Geography and Philosophy', p. 684.


\(^{420}\) Casey, 'Between Geography and Philosophy', p. 686.
Habitation is thus a product of the enactment of habitus, ‘of taking the habitus that has been acquired and continually re-enacting it in the place-world’.\textsuperscript{421} Idiolocalism, as opposed to habitation, shifts the focus from the body in place to place in the body. Through idiolocalism, the persistence of place in the body and, by extension, the psyche (though this is a crucial aspect largely overlooked in Casey’s article) is explored – that is, the ways in which places mark their subjects, be it ephemerally or permanently.

An investigation of the construction of and engagement with what we can take to be their respective place-worlds will be vital in furthering the observations made in the previous two chapters of this thesis – namely that space is far from a passive container of the narrative, but is also a vehicle of representation in itself. Like Casey, I shall largely maintain the space/place distinction whereby space is the more generalised, less personal component of spatiality while place is the more intimate, lived aspect of space. Here, then, as opposed to the external configurations of island heterotopias and jungle/desert liminality, we are moving towards a more philosophical elucidation of space and place through their relation to the body and the self. It is an approximate move from the outside in, approaching the more intimate concept of a home-place, an aspect to be continued in the following chapter. First, however, a discrete elaboration of the self-place relationship is needed. As in previous chapters, I will draw extensively on critical literature on the two films to show that a spatial analysis can be informed by the philosophically-inspired readings that each film has traditionally attracted.

This chapter will first focus on \textit{Los olvidados} and the street gang’s negotiation of their immediate surroundings. Marcel Mauss’s writing on habitudinal body techniques will be of benefit when discussing the gestures and corporeality of the protagonists, while a discussion of Julia Kristeva’s concept of the abject will contribute to a fresh reading of the psychological effects of the street gang’s implacement in the \textit{arrabales} and the danger that the city poses to Pedro in particular. As opposed to the foreboding place-world of \textit{Los olvidados}, that of \textit{Nazarín} is presented with a good deal of ambiguity and ambivalence. Nazarín’s calling as a peripatetic priest brings him and his female disciples into

\textsuperscript{421} Ibid., p. 687.
\textsuperscript{422} Ibid.
contact with a multitude of non-descript locations. The extent to which the priest’s need to disavow the material realities of the body in order to spiritually nourish the soul, and the consequences of this for his successful habitation, that is, engagement with and commitment to place, will be considered in light of the sick body, suggesting the detachment of Nazarín from his place-world as he moves ceaselessly from one location to the next in search of the downtrodden and the diseased. Indeed, upholding Casey’s axiom that the body is always implaced is not, as Casey himself acknowledges, to say that the body is always securely in place, and it is in part this instability, a perceived disjuncture between the protagonist and his surroundings not seen in Los olvidados, that adds to what Ignacio López sees as the film’s philosophical message, which pertains to ‘las acciones ordinarias de los seres humanos, considerando la importancia que éstas tienen en el entendimiento de la capacidad solidaria de aquéllos’.

Los olvidados

The opening sequence of Los olvidados is an incongruous prologue to the rest of the film. The pseudo-documentary style of the sequence as the viewer is shown stock footage of the cities of London, Paris and New York, together with the voice-over narration, recalls the openings of La ilusión viaja en tranvía and El río y la muerte. Suddenly, however, the focus shifts solely to Mexico. The voice-over narrator leaves the viewer with little doubt as to the setting of the narrative; city and country share a metonymic bond as we are told that Mexico is ‘la gran ciudad moderna’. Just as the city is a microcosm for the nation, so the individual is representative of a larger section of the general population, both on a national and international level. Even before the viewer is introduced to the street gang, then, their link to the downtrodden classes and ‘semilleros de futuros delincuentes’ is forged. Buñuel himself highlights the artificiality of this opening, which was added later in a bid to disarm Mexican audiences accustomed to what Fuentes has termed ‘[la] visión ideologizada, triunfalista, del México de la revolución.

423 Casey, Getting Back into Place, p. 104.
425 Buñuel says, ‘[f]ue una idea mía para que pasara la película’. De la Colina and Pérez Turrent, p. 53.
institucionalizada’ within their national cinema by resituating the reality of wanton poverty within a global context.⁴²⁶ Miriam Haddu sees the film as departing from the arrabal subgenre through its rejection of the tragi-comic elements common to films of this type, in particular Ismael Rodríguez’s Nosotros los pobres (1948) or Alejandro Galindo’s ¡Esquina, bajan…! (1948). For Haddu, the slums of Los olvidados are ‘place[s] full of misery and anger, of frustration and violence’.⁴²⁷ Despite this ostensibly globalist opening, however, Tuñón argues that the film is definitively Mexican in character: ‘Los olvidados es una película muy mexicana. Su esquema argumental es el melodrama, aunque su tono de documento modera las emociones que nunca se desbordan, de manera que es un melodrama atípico’.⁴²⁸

The children are first seen immediately following this opening of the film. Although this short sequence serves mainly to introduce speculation surrounding the character of Jaibo, recently escaped from a correctional facility, it immediately creates a link between the children and their environment. The establishing, mid-distance shot frames Pedro and the group of youths as they engage in child’s play on the street against a backdrop of derelict and dilapidated buildings that will become one of the film’s most visible motifs. The group is absorbed in a game as they mimic the actions of a bullfight complete with a makeshift cape and sword. This could be considered an indicator of their underlying childlike innocence prior to the shocking scenes of theft, brutality and child murder that will occur later in the narrative, effectively disarming the audience. However, their horseplay is significant here for another reason, as it serves to connect the body-self with place in a deeper, more nuanced way, and it does so through habitus.

4.2 Habitus and the body techniques of the street children
I have already briefly commented on the dual nature of habitus as generative and generated: it is, in Bourdieu’s words, ‘structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures’.⁴²⁹ The habitus, then, a system of enacted

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⁴²⁸ Tuñón, p. 75.
⁴²⁹ Bourdieu, p. 72.
dispositions, is part structure and part agency. For Bourdieu, the subject is the locus of cognition and action, whose actions are shaped by and in turn perpetuate the particular social structure of which they are part (Bourdieu suggests that class is one possible common denominator in habitus, though this is not to limit the habitus within a primarily Marxist framework). The subject, in turn, acts within a given 'field', that is, the social (placial) arena in which the agent is placed, both physically and hierarchically. Additionally, Marcel Mauss undertakes an explication of human action in the form of body techniques, or 'the ways in which from society to society men know how to use their bodies'. He posits that body techniques are culturally specific and socially inscribed. Mauss offers the example of the act of digging. According to his observations during the First World War, British soldiers struggled to use French spades, and, as a consequence, could only work productively with British-made spades. For Mauss, then, similarly to Bourdieu, the habitus – unequivocally of the body – is a product of sociality. The particular corporeal habitus of a given culture is therefore acquired through education, which, Mauss avows, is ultimately a form of imitation: effectively, mimetic representation of the body, which he describes as 'man’s first and most natural instrument'. Bourdieu also stresses the role of education/imitation in a particular group's understanding of the structures of habitus, provided pedagogy remains separated from institutionalism and is conveyed through practice. Mauss's theorisation of body techniques underscores more overtly than does Bourdieu the role of the body in the generation of structures and codes through which members of a particular social group can understand one another. As interesting as Mauss's theorisations of bodily movement are, however, they remain flawed through their gender bias and occasional anecdotal basis. I suggest that Mauss's writing on body techniques is better understood as a point of departure from which to go on and examine in more detail the body's movement through space.

432 Ibid., p. 99.
433 Ibid., p. 104.
434 Bourdieu, p. 87.
The body techniques of the street gang in *Los olvidados* are striking. Most conspicuous of all in the opening scene, perhaps, is the imitation of bestial behaviour during the make-believe bullfight. The extreme close-up shot of the toothless boy, grimacing and grunting like a bull suggests that Buñuel’s anti-aesthetic stance extends from shot composition to the corporeal. Jones draws a parallel between this extreme close-up and similar shots of the impoverished Hurdanos in *Tierra sin pan*.435 This is more than a mere allusion to Buñuel’s earlier film, as Jones would have it; it forms the basis of a tangible link between the two films as the boundary between human and animal becomes increasingly blurred throughout the narrative. Animal imagery is pertinent to my exploration of the place-world within the film and I will return to this point in my discussion of the psychological persistence of place within the body. There follows a shot of a smaller boy, known in the script simply as Chamaquito,436 as he dexterously scales a column, monkey-like, in the courtyard before we see Jaibo, newly-escaped from the correctional facility, as he swiftly vanishes into the crowd on the street to evade the patrolling police.437 In the vein of Bourdieu’s habitus as a structured and structuring set of dispositions, the gang’s corporeal adroitness is both a product of their disadvantaged place-world and a perpetuation of their place within its hierarchy.

A key feature of the children’s behaviour in the film is hurried motion. The boys’ rapid movement suggests their agility and intimate knowledge of their place-world, and is indicative of the youths’ body techniques and how these are used to their advantage in place. More so than in other of the director’s films in this period, especially those in urban settings such as *El Bruto* or *La ilusión viaja en tranvía*, the actions of the forgotten boys unfold at an often frenetic pace. We could think of the mid-distance shot of Pedro, Jaibo and Pelón sprinting back towards the marketplace after they have savagely beaten the blind Carmelo, the high-angle shot of Pedro running away from home after stealing his mother’s bread and meat, or Jaibo’s flight from the police officers that leads them to shoot him at the end of

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435 J. Jones, ‘*Los olvidados* and the Documentary Mode’, p. 25.
436 *A chamaco* is a colloquial Mexican term used to mean a ‘kid’. The script is published in Peña Ardid and Lahuerta Guillén, eds., pp. 77-300.
437 Tuñón has commented on the movements of Jaibo (played by Roberto Cobo, a dancer) here: ‘lo vemos deambular por la ciudad, con movimientos libres y ágiles’. Tuñón, p. 80.
the film. Rapid and extensive movement has been considered by some theorists as a corollary of urbanity. Michel de Certeau evinces the role of the pedestrian in creating – we could say placialising through his/her implantation within – the city. According to de Certeau, walking is more than a means to an end; pedestrian footsteps actualise urban spaces.438 Through linguistic analogy, de Certeau explains how what he terms the pedestrian speech act is able to bring the city to life:

[i]f it is true that a spatial order organizes an ensemble of possibilities (e.g., by a place in which one can move) and interdictions (e.g., by a wall that prevents one from going further), then the walker actualizes some of these possibilities. In that way, he makes them exist as well as emerge.439

De Certeau’s walker is invariably male and closer to the bourgeois flâneur than the street children depicted in Los olvidados, but the concept remains the same: the slums are actualised for the gang through bodily movement and their possibilities are extracted through body techniques generated by the habitus common to its inhabitants.440

For the disenfranchised boys of Los olvidados, crime is an artisan practice. After the unsuccessful attempt to steal Carmelo’s bag as he sings in the marketplace, the boys’ adroit criminality is evident in one striking scene in which the teenagers accost the legless man wheeling himself along in a trolley, stealing his wallet and jacket before lifting him out of his vehicle and kicking it down the street. The cinematography here demonstrates the actualisation of the boys’ habitus of criminality within their environment at the same as it augments the viciousness of the attack. The establishing shot tracks the disabled man as he pushes himself along the pavement, before this cuts to a high-angle one depicting the gang as they emerge from out of the frame. After the man refuses to give the boys his cigarettes, the camera remains at an objective distance, documenting the youths in their co-ordinated display of artisan criminality. Stealing his jacket and

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438 Michel de Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life, trans. by Steven Rendall (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), p. 97. De Certeau inverts the traditional space/place distinction upheld by many spatial theorists, whereby space is depersonalised, expansive and with mathematical properties, while place is a delineated area within space. For de Certeau, space is an inherently personal, practised place. See de Certeau, pp. 117-18.
439 Ibid., p. 98.
440 As Bourdieu states, ‘[t]he homogeneity of habitus is what – within the limits of the group of agents possessing the schemes (of production and interpretation) implied in their production – causes practices and works to be immediately intelligible and foreseeable’. Bourdieu, p. 80.
cigarettes, they leave their victim powerless on the pavement before running out of the frame in various directions. Their familiarity with criminality simultaneously reflects their position within the micro-structure of the slums and their own role in perpetuating this structure. Habitus, as Bourdieu indicates, is ‘lex insita, laid down in each agent by his earliest upbringing, which is the precondition not only for the co-ordination of practices but also for the practices of co-ordination’.441 In a similar vein, Javier Vargas posits that the film’s exterior locations – the marketplace, the square, the avenue – represent ‘la patria violenta que alimenta con cruel condescendencia la fortuita unión de voluntades que los adolescentes practican’.442 As evidenced in the gang’s assault on the legless man, a practice shown to be firmly entrenched in the youths’ habitus, and underscoring the narrative more generally, is the denigration of the body.

4.3 ‘Cuerpo roto-ciudad rota’

Here, I am concerned primarily with the disabled/disintegrated body and the ways in which these bodies are positioned within the place-world. Tuñón highlights Buñuel’s focus in his cinema on what she terms the ‘cuerpo roto’, evident already in the infamous eye-slitting close-up three minutes in to Un Chien andalou. For Tuñón, the pattern is duplicated at the start of Los olvidados with the medium close-up of the toothless grimace of the boy pretending to be the bull.443 If corporeal perfection is untenable within the slums, corporeal integrity is similarly precluded: Carmelo is blind; the unknown man in the wooden trolley is legless; the mother of Meche and Cacarizo is permanently prostrate in agony. Even the bodies of the street children, though used to their advantage as I have detailed above, are fragmented cinematographically: ironically, Jaibo’s legs are introduced into the frame as the amputee wheels into him; Marta and Meche are similarly cut off at the waist in two separate scenes as the camera focuses on their bare legs as they wash; Julián’s lifeless legs protruding from behind a bush communicate to the viewer his death as Jaibo clubs him with a branch; Pedro is cut off at the shoulders as he peers under the bed to be met with the bleeding body of Julián in the dream

441 Bourdieu, p. 81.
442 Javier Vargas, ‘Los olvidados, de Luis Buñuel: espacio y personajes de una misma poética’, in Buñuel: el imaginario transcultural, ed. by Lillo, pp. 91-98 (p. 95). My emphasis.
443 Tuñón, p. 78.
sequence. Bikandi-Mejias notes that this somatic dismemberment via the lens is an example of the grotesque mode, itself part of the carnivalesque tradition. This observation is especially relevant to Viridiana, with its gargantuan pastiche of da Vinci’s The Last Supper, though Bikandi-Mejias is certainly not incorrect in his affirmation that ‘[e]sta desmembración de la figura humana nos retrotrae a la forma de composición artística preferida de la vanguardia modernista: el collage’. Tuñón suggests that the cuerpo roto has its counterpart in the ciudad rota: ‘la ciudad que presenta Buñuel más parece una ciudad rota, desintegrada, enferma y supurante, como los cuerpos de varios de los personajes del filme’. We can therefore posit a symbiotic relationship between the place-world and its inhabitants predicated on the inescapable presence of the spatial and corporeal Other. The visibility of the deformed-disabled-disenfranchised body in the protagonists’ place-world is augmented by the ubiquitous yet disintegrated nature of the place-world itself. Discrete locations such as the marketplace, the domineering skeleton of the social security hospital under construction and Cacarizo and Meche’s stable, surface repeatedly as ‘snapshots’ of the place-world and its various appendages. Indeed, the editing of the film, its passing back and forth between discrete and fragmented – though familiar – locations, is somewhat reminiscent of the corporeal collage that Bikandi-Mejias speaks of. On both occasions that Pedro is outside of the slums – the sequence in the upmarket district of the city in which he is approached by a paedophile, reminiscent of the scene in the bicycle market in Vittorio De Sica’s Ladri di biciclette (1948), and the scenes which take place in the Escuela Granja, both unique elements in the placial collage – his presence seems incongruous, and he will ultimately return to his place.

4.4 The abject and the idiolocal

445 Ibid.
446 Tuñón, p. 80.
In considering the ways in which the abject manifests itself within Pedro’s place-world, I am shifting the focus from habitus and the body to idiolocality and the self. Idiolocalism, one of the three components of the relationship between self and place according to Casey, is based on reciprocity, that is, how the self is marked by the places in which it has been, and the ways in which the self sets out to meet places.\(^\text{448}\) The abject, as theorised by Julia Kristeva, is rooted in Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis and implies a dissolution of corporeal and psychological boundaries. The experience of abjection, for Kristeva, is a necessary primer of human culture, bound up in part with the feeling of revulsion in order to protect us from that which threatens us. Faeces and the human corpse are the prime examples of the abject due to their rupturing of somatic and psychological boundaries:

> [t]hese bodily fluids, this defilement, this shit are what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, on the part of death. There, I am at the border of my condition as a living being. My body extricates itself, as being alive, from that border. Such waste drops so that I might live, until, from loss to loss, nothing remains in me and my entire body falls beyond the limit – cadere, cadaver.\(^\text{449}\)

Kristeva’s recourse to Lacanian psychoanalysis, in particular the induction of the infant into the world of the symbolic as it begins to learn language, and its distancing from the maternal via the father, suggests that the female – and more accurately/acutely – maternal body is inherently abject. Importantly, Kristeva posits a jouissance within the abject, an ecstasy which derives from our loss of self in a pre-Oedipal state and to which we must not submit.\(^\text{450}\)

The abject in Los olvidados is communicated primarily through the maternal body, that of Pedro’s mother, Marta. However, it is also discernible on a spatial level, and forms part of the street-boys’ place-world. Evans has convincingly argued that Freud’s notion of the uncanny – Unheimlichkeit – is

\(^{448}\) Casey, ‘Between Geography and Philosophy’, p. 688. Casey uses the term ‘lived body’ here – a term that occurs also in his earlier work on the place-world. I suggest that the term ‘self’ indicates a more fairly weighted balance between the somatic and the psychological.


\(^{450}\) Kristeva writes that ‘jouissance alone causes the abject to exist as such. One does not know it, one does not desire it, one joys in it [on enjouit]. Violently and painfully. A passion’. Ibid., p. 9. This alluring quality of the abject necessitates a feeling of rejection and repulsion which shields us from the disturbance of order. In this way, abjection represents, along with Freudian sublimation, a defence mechanism.
palpable in this film. The uncanny, a feeling of uneasy familiarity, manifests itself in the spatial as well as the corporeal, arising ‘from the projection of unconscious fears and desires onto one’s surroundings and the people with whom one comes into contact’.  

Likewise, Casey stresses that the feeling of alienation we may experience in place is a psychosomatic symptom of displacement and that, at the heart of our implacement, there is always the threat of the unheimlich – literally, the unhomely. I believe that the abject is also present, permeating the matrix of self and place through idiolocalism. For Kristeva, the abject is ‘essentially different from “uncanniness,” more violent, too’, due to the fact that ‘abjection is elaborated through a failure to recognize its kin; nothing is familiar, not even the shadow of a memory’. Besides the fleeting reference to the uncanny nature of dwelling, Casey makes no reference to the abject within the place-world, yet it is seemingly pertinent when we consider David Sibley’s comments on exclusion and the Other. Sibley is concerned with the socio-spatial exclusionary practices of cultural hegemony against the Other – gypsies, the poor, racial minorities – and he proposes that ‘[a]bjection seems [...] the key to an understanding of exclusion’. 

The social, spatial and economic divide between affluent suburbs and poor inner-city slums is an example of strongly classified spatial units. According to Sibley, clearly delineated boundaries are used to minimise the threat of contagion or pollution – literal as in disease or figurative as in a threat to the power structure – and strong classification serves to reinforce feelings of abjection. Kristeva herself suggests that the condition of the abject resides in the spatial: 

[t]he one by whom the abject exists is thus a deject who places (himself), separates (himself), situates (himself), and therefore strays [...]. Instead of sounding himself as to his “being”, he does so concerning his place: “Where am I?” instead of “Who am I?”

I shall therefore examine the role of the abject in the depiction of the claustrophobic world of the inner-city slums in the film, with particular emphasis

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451 Evans, The Films of Luis Buñuel, p. 81. The numerous Freudian symbols in Los olvidados are indisputable, prompting Bazin to venture that ‘Buñuel has furnished us with the only contemporary aesthetic expression of Freudian symbolism that works’. Bazin, p. 197.

452 ‘This dis-implacement, or “dysplacement” as it could also be called, is endemic to the human condition in its ineluctable “uncanniness”; Unheimlichkeit, not-being-at-home, is intrinsic to habitation itself’, Casey, Getting Back into Place, p. 34.

453 Kristeva, p. 5.


455 Ibid., pp. 80–81.

456 Kristeva, p. 8.
on Pedro’s dream sequence as an instance of the film’s depiction of the psychological and somatic expression of idiolocalism.

As an exploration of the fantastic within a predominantly realist narrative, critics have often used Pedro’s dream as a springboard for a discussion of Buñuel’s depiction of Freudian iconography (Bazin’s comment regarding the visual proof of Freudianism offered by Los olvidados is undoubtedly a reference to the dream sequence). I agree with Evans that the mise-en-scène is key to any psychoanalytical reading of the film. The focus, as he rightly identifies, is on the feminine (Marta). Indeed, he acknowledges the links that Pedro’s mother has to the abject. In the dream, Marta appears as ‘the monstrous-feminine [...] castrator and not, following classic Freudian theory, as castrated, as dreaded agent, as victim of mutilation’.457 One aspect of mise-en-scène that Evans touches on is perhaps the most obvious: the domestic setting. Pedro’s dwelling provides neither rest nor emotional or physical sustenance. Here, it acts as the arena in which the dangers of the outside world are played out; thus, Julián is subjected to another agonising death under Pedro’s bed while Jaibo, in stealing the chunk of meat offered by Marta, usurps the affection that Pedro craves and reinforces the prophetic bond between the pair. The ramshackle abode is foreboding in its familiarity, a feeling that disquietes the viewer who has seen it before, though not quite as obscure as it is now. Neither has the viewer seen Marta as she now appears: the abject mother, seductive and repulsive.458

We could posit a corollary between Marta’s body and the city here. As Victoria Rivera-Cordero highlights, Buñuel ‘presents a new vision of Mexico as a mother who fails her children’.459 The body of the mother becomes idiolocalised in Pedro’s imagination – that is, Marta becomes a cipher for her son’s place-world,

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458 This observation is echoed in terms of the abject by Bermúdez, who writes that, in Don Carmelo’s machista view, ‘el miembro puro masculino será contaminado por la sucia hembra’. Bermúdez, p. 113.
459 Victoria Rivera-Cordero, ‘Transatlantic Visions: Imagining Mexico in Juan Rejano’s La esfinge mestiza and Luis Buñuel’s Los olvidados’, Romance Notes, 46.3 (2006), 309-17 (p. 315). Rivera-Cordero’s comment alludes to Octavio Paz’s El laberinto de la soledad and Paz’s theorisation of Mexico (Marta) as a Malinche-type figure while Mexicans (Pedro) are hijos de la Chingada – the gash created by the verb chingar being essentially abject. For more on the intertextual references between Los olvidados and El laberinto de la soledad, see Acevedo-Muñoz, Buñuel and Mexico, p. 74, and Faber, pp. 237-38.
expressing the *idios* not only of the *barrio* but of the nation. Through the figure of Marta in the dream, the tenacity of place for Pedro is revealed. To this end, Vargas’s view that ‘la patria violenta [...] alimenta con cruel condescendencia la fortuita unión de voluntades que los adolescentes practican’ obtains special significance. As mentioned, numerous Buñuel scholars have referred to Paz’s *El laberinto de la soledad* to underscore Marta’s relationship to the Mexican paradigm of La Malinche. By positioning the character of Pedro’s mother within a national narrative, the violence of the patriarchal nation is implicitly feminised: through the figure of Marta, the *idios* of ‘la patria violenta’ is expressed, and her disdainful attitude towards her son encourages ‘la fortuita unión de voluntades’ that he enacts. Furthermore, the use of the verb ‘alimentar’ is conspicuous: the culinary metaphor resonates with Kristeva’s discussion of food-stuffs as abject – a point I will come to shortly – as well as recalling the chunk of gristle that Marta offers her son in his dream. Blood as a visual trope is key here: the bloody flesh symbolises the giving of life between mother and child (snatched by Jaibo) at the same time as it points to Jaibo’s snuffing out of Julián’s life as he reappears, bleeding under the bed (see appendix *LO* 1).

Casey explains what he terms the ‘incoming’ aspect of idiolocality, whereby the self bears the traces of the places it has been. This psychologically-rich resonance of the place-world is important here. Marta is the incoming, exiling, castrating, abject mother who horrifies her son not with her lack, but with her abundance. The bloody slab of flesh that she offers her son could be read, as Evans says, as her torn vagina, an instance of oral *jouissance* and loss of self: ‘food is the oral object (the abject) that sets up archaic relations between the human being and the other, its mother’. This torn vagina, essentially formless and without border, as is the abject, is the symbol of a perverse gestation-generation that has its links with the nascent modernisation of the protagonists’ place-world. The recurring example of this supposed modernisation is the uncanny iron skeleton of

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460 Casey says that ‘idiolocality invokes the subject who incorporates and expresses a particular place’ just as ‘the bearer of idiolocality is none other than the lived body, the proper subject of place’. Casey, ‘Between Geography and Philosophy’, pp. 688-89.
461 Vargas, p. 95.
463 Evans, *The Films of Luis Buñuel*, p. 86.
464 Kristeva, pp. 75-76.
the unfinished social security hospital that forms the backdrop to several key scenes of violence within the film, most notably Jaibo’s murder of Julián. The unfinished hospital should stand as an example of modern Mexican infrastructure under President Alemán, yet it, like the vagina, remains formless and abject, bound up with criminality and murder. For Pedro, this is a specific place within his environment that has indelibly marked his self through trauma. As Casey explains, trauma is one way that places can come in to us tenaciously: ‘once having being in a particular place for any considerable time – or even briefly, if our experience there has been intense – we are forever marked by that place’. Pedro wishes to stay with Marta – the familiar/familial – but he cannot, and is condemned to a life beset by abjection, in a state of exile, looking, to paraphrase Kristeva, for his place, rather than his self. His search for his mother, in this sense, is re-enacted in his movement through the dense place-world of the arrabal. The viewer, too, is often made to wonder as to Pedro’s location: when he awakens in the garbage heap and is hounded by two vagabonds; when he finds work at the shabby fairground; when he is approached by a paedophile in a commercial district; and when his corpse is tossed into the rubbish dump at the film’s climax. He is, to quote Kristeva, ‘an exile who asks himself where?’ Furthermore, the film’s ending is Pedro’s irrevocable transformation into the abject. The image of his corpse rolling down the hill into the garbage heap, itself an abject space, indicates that Pedro has ultimately been subsumed by his place-world, forever marked by the abject.

Finally, that the barrio is filled with animals is relevant, both in terms of the abject and the idiolocality of place. Animals link the inhabitants of the slums: Pedro’s mother breeds chickens; Meche and Cacarizo’s family have a makeshift stable filled with chickens, goats and donkeys; Pedro and Ojitos are followed by a pack of stray dogs in the marketplace at night; the double exposure technique used during Jaibo’s death throes superimposes the image of a mangy canine. Besides the pertinent symbolic link between humans and their animal

465 Kristeva says: ‘[a]ny crime, because it draws attention to the fragility of the law, is abject, but premeditated crime, cunning murder, hypocritical revenge are even more so because they heighten the display of such fragility’. Ibid., p. 4.
466 Casey, ‘Between Geography and Philosophy’, p. 688. This branding of the body/self by place bears many similarities with the limit-experience which I discussed in terms of Evvie’s rape by Miller in The Young One. See Chapter Two, section 2.9.
467 Kristeva, p. 8.
counterparts in the film, animals can also be seen as metaphors for the traumatic effects of place on the body and the psychology of the characters.\textsuperscript{468} The cockerel that bears witness to the boys’ savage beating of Don Carmelo in front of the imposing frame of the unfinished hospital has its parallel in the dog in the frame in the high-angle shot of Jaibo and Pedro speaking to Julián in the chichachonería prior to the latter’s murder which, in turn, has its parallel in the donkey in the stable where Jaibo kills Pedro. In short, the trauma of the slums is animalistic. Where the \textit{idios} of place comes tenaciously into the body, Casey speaks of an \textit{impressionism} of place, whereby ‘this presence is held within the body in a virtual state, ready to regain explicit awareness when the appropriate impression or situation arises’.\textsuperscript{469} Thus, in the chicken coup shortly after Pedro’s arrival on the Escuela Granja, Pedro clubs a chicken to death in the same fashion as Jaibo beats Julián and Marta beats the cockerel. Pedro’s etching on the wall of the isolation room immediately after this incident gives further representation to this, depicting one bird clubbing another to death – the impressionism of place represented via the bestial self (see appendix \textit{LO 2}). This etching acquires an even deeper significance when we consider that, as Polizzotti notes, the cocky Jaibo is identified in the film script as ‘el gallón de la banda’.\textsuperscript{470} The threat of life in the \textit{arrabal} is reified for the viewer through the conflation of man and beast, and the \textit{idios} of place therefore actualises the habitus of violence even away from the slums. Furthermore, the animalistic is a form of the abject, as Kristeva points out: ‘[t]he abject confronts us, on the one hand, with those fragile states where man strays on the territories of \textit{animal}'.\textsuperscript{471} Her use of the word ‘territories’ is interesting here as the children in the film are not simply shown to be acting on animal impulses; their own \textit{territory} is rendered abject through its connection to the bestial, evident already from the opening scene and the toothless boy’s bovine-like mimesis.

\textsuperscript{468} For a more detailed discussion of the animal – especially avian – imagery in \textit{Los olvidados}, and how this lends itself to a Freudian reading of the film, see Evans, \textit{The Films of Luis Buñuel}, pp. 82-87.
\textsuperscript{470} Polizzotti, p. 59.
\textsuperscript{471} Kristeva, p. 12.
**Nazarín**

Octavio Paz commends the artistic vision of *Nazarín*, writing:

> [e]stas películas [*L’Âge d’or, Los olvidados, Robinson Crusoe, Nazarín*] pueden ser gustadas, y juzgadas, como cine pero también como algo perteneciente al universo más ancho y permanente de esas obras, preciosas entre todas, que tienen por objeto tanto revelarnos la realidad humana cuanto mostrarnos una vía para sobrepasarla.472

I share Paz’s sentiments regarding the transcendental nature of *Los olvidados* and *Nazarín*, both in relation to their poetic nature as well as their profound humanism, though without subscribing to the dismissive view that the bulk of Buñuel’s more commercial Mexican features are little more than studio potboilers. Edwards posits a degree of similarity between the two films in that they share a straightforward storyline. In terms of the subject matter, however, Edwards affirms that *Nazarín* differs from *Los olvidados* in its more complex, episodic structure. In the latter, perspective is limited as the viewer almost always sees the same group of characters whereas the former ‘is much more panoramic: Nazarín’s journey along the highway and byways of life’.473 Edwards’s observation can be applied to my spatial reading of the two films. In the following analysis I will continue in this geographical-philosophical vein to investigate the extent to which Nazarín’s habitation is successful. In addition to the question of habitation and how this is given representation in the film, it will also be fitting to investigate another aspect of the place-world suggested by Casey: that of landscape.

### 4.5 Nazarín in the *Mesón de los Héroes*: preliminary observations of the self-place relationship

The film’s opening sequence centres on the squalid tenement block, on the top floor of which Nazarín has taken up lodgings. Ironically, this dilapidated block is named *Mesón de los Héroes*, a title that parodies its eclectic mix of residents: working-class labourers, groups of children playing in the courtyard and a gang of heavily made-up prostitutes. Although the narrative begins in the city, as a point of

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contrast with the various locations within the impoverished neighbourhoods of Mexico City in *Los olvidados*, the initial action in *Nazarín*, before the protagonist sets out into the world, is contained almost solely within this housing block. Shortly afterwards, Nazarín calls to señora Chanfa, the hardened landlady of the *Mesón*, as he has been robbed yet again. The interior of Nazarín’s apartment is sparse; in the shooting script it is described as ‘rayando en la miseria’.

The spatial dynamics already at play in the opening sequence are significant: not by chance has Nazarín taken up residence on the upper floor of the building, removed from those around him. To this end, Fuentes posits a similarity between Nazarín and Simón, writing: ‘[e]l comienzo del filme es una prefiguración de Simón del desierto. Nazarín aparece en lo más alto de la casa de vecindad [...] aislado de la realidad circundante’. Both preachers are removed, to varying degrees, from the sphere of everyday life, and thus this opening sequence is to be understood in terms of its role as a prefiguration of what is to come as Nazarín sets out on his peripatetic path. Furthermore, in terms of habitation, the film immediately precludes any connection between character and place, for Nazarín happily leaves behind his place in the city in favour of a life roaming the countryside after the prostitute Ándara has set fire to his room. In a scene that gives rise to the middle class pharism of Christianity on which Durgnat has commented, Nazarín tells his stupefied friend and fellow priest, Don Ángel, that he wishes to accept alms and move to the countryside, ‘donde podré sentirme más cerca de Dios’. Settled dwelling here is not a home as such and place becomes mere location, and it is telling that in their conversation with Padre Nazario, the engineers at the beginning of the film who are working to connect the tenement block to the power grid conclude of the priest that ‘no pretende mejorar su posición’, an insight which invites both a socio-economic and a literal (spatial) interpretation.

Just as the events which unfold in the tenement block communicate the protagonist’s detachment on a spatial level, so they also reveal more about his

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detachment from the realities of the body. One scene in particular is evident here. Following her brawl with another prostitute, Ándara arrives at the priest’s quarters in the middle of the night with a grisly flesh wound on her shoulder. The two then begin the first of several theological discussions. Ándara wishes to know if the dead have any realisation of their passing; Nazarín responds, ‘lo sabe tu alma, que es inmortal’. Though they will later attempt to mimic Nazarín’s way of living, this is the first indication that the viewer gets of the chasm between the priest and his two female followers who, unlike their messiah, exhibit a patent preoccupation with the flesh. Echoing Evans’ reading of the bloody chunk of meat in Pedro’s dream sequence in Los olvidados, Fuentes sees in Ándara’s flesh wound a visual marker of her sex. Similarly, his second ‘disciple’ Beatriz is immediately depicted as obsessed with the carnal through her sporadic convulsions. During Ándara’s fight with the prostitute Carmella, a close up shot of Beatriz’s face, blinking rapidly, signals her first reverie. She fantasises about her machista ex-lover Pinto, proceeding to bite his lip in an act of sadomasochistic erotic frenzy until he bleeds. As I shall suggest, both Ándara and Beatriz’s integral connection to the corporeal serves to anchor them both in a more functional place-world through habitation. This connection is alien to Nazarín.

Nazarín’s habitus, framed by the spiritual, leads to his disengagement with place, much like Simón. However, unlike Simón, Nazarín’s detachment from his surroundings is made all the more notable given that the protagonist is constantly confronted by place and by people. After Ándara has set fire to his apartment to remove all traces of her stay there, he sets out into the world. During the priest’s trajectory, the viewer witnesses his brief stint as a manual labourer laying a train line in the countryside, his attempt to cure Beatriz’s feverish niece in her home village, his willingness to come to the aid of the moribund members of a plague-ridden town, his arrest on the outskirts of a third town and his humiliating march along with other prisoners back to Mexico City. What is striking here is that, against the ever-changing backdrop to the film, Buñuel’s protagonist remains the same. For instance, as Nazarín passes Beatriz in her home village, the latter is astounded that, having left the city, the two have once more crossed paths, proclaiming the serendipitous reunion to be a miracle. Tellingly, Nazarín

476 Ibid.
responds: ‘¿Por qué, hija? El mundo es muy grande’. This response betrays the priest’s disengagement with the material plane, of which place is a fundamental aspect, bound up with corporeal awareness. As Joseph Grange writes, ‘[w]e sense vastness because our body feels its own limits and thereby grasps the ‘feel’ of voluminous space’.\textsuperscript{477} It appears that the priest has not grasped the feel of voluminous space, as the world seems for him a plane of unremarkable encounters. To this end, it is also fitting to note the protagonist’s predilection for the term ‘camino’: when abandoning his place among the labourers laying the train track he excuses himself by saying ‘voy a seguir mi camino’; later, he encourages the dying woman in the plague-infested town to think that life ‘es sólo un camino’. In effect, a physical-metaphysical binary pair forms around the idea of the road and the journey, ironically undermined through the protagonist’s disengagement with place, and the myriad travelling shots of Nazarín and his female followers are offset by the ambiguity contained within the priest’s supposedly figurative use of the word ‘camino’.

\textbf{4.6 Nazarín’s unsuccessful habitation}

Don Willis offers a pertinent analysis of \textit{Nazarín}, shedding light on the social – rather than the spiritual – repercussions of Nazarín’s estrangement. For Willis, ‘[t]he primary polarity in \textit{Nazarín} [sic] is not faith/lack of faith or even theism/humanism, but passion/detachment’. Though not inherently concerned with the spatial, Willis’s argument is conducive to an exploration of the protagonist’s habitus:

Nazarín [sic] is mild, likeable, unprepossessing, and has a slight self-consciousness of movement that seems to come from self-effacement. But his subdued and matter-of-fact manner, although it effectively stifles self-importance or self-righteousness, also unfortunately stifles in him the possibility of spontaneity or responsiveness to others.\textsuperscript{478}

The impossibility of spontaneity of response is ultimately a stumbling block to the protagonist’s contemplation of his place-world and his implacement within it. In effect, Nazarín is defined from \textit{without}. In his discussion of the identity of places

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{478} Don Willis, ‘Nazarín: Buñuel’s Comic Hero Revisited’, \textit{Sight and Sound}, 48 (1978), 5-7 (p. 7, p. 5).
\end{footnotes}
and the dialogue between this and our personal experience of place, Relph posits that the individual can experience place as an existential outsider. By this, Relph intends ‘a self-conscious and reflective uninvolved, an alienation from people and places, homelessness, a sense of the unreality of the world, and of not belonging’. Relph writes, '[f]rom the outside you look upon a place as a traveller might look upon a town from a distance; from the inside you experience a place, are surrounded by it and part of it'.\textsuperscript{479} It is pertinent that Relph would have the concept of outsideness as analogous to a traveller approaching a distant town. There are several instances of the protagonist entering or leaving a series of non-descript villages in the film. Most telling, perhaps, is the third town, where Nazarín and Ándara are arrested by the local police for the fire in the Mesón. Both Ándara and Beatriz are shown to be actively engaged within the town’s social fabric: a tracking shot depicts Ándara begging for alms on residents’ doorsteps before she meets her admirer, the dwarf Ujo, while Beatriz is shown at the communal water fountain, intending to wash the group’s dirty clothing when she is accosted by her ex-lover, Pinto. In short, Ándara and Beatriz come into contact with place and with people; despite their nomadic existence with Nazarín, the two women are seen to be more successful in their habitation of place – they are engaged from within. By contrast, Nazarín is shown to be an existential outsider. He is never shown in the town; he remains among the ruins of a former edifice on a nearby hill, his elevated position negating his active implacement and encouraging his conscious state of existential outsideness.

Casey signals: ‘[w]hen I inhabit a place – whether by moving through it or staying in it – I have it in my actional purview’.\textsuperscript{480} As opposed to the frenetic movements of the children in \textit{Los olvidados}, Nazarín demonstrates little commitment to physical action. His stint as a railroad labourer is short-lived; he does not protest his arrest, and when he is later locked in a cell with other prisoners, he does not defend himself against the brutish criminal accused of parricide. Put simply, Nazarín cannot be seen to \textit{hold} place through his docile body, which suggests a disjuncture between the protagonist and the various locations of the narrative. Alluding to the notion of a place-world which is

\textsuperscript{479} Relph, p. 51, p. 49.
\textsuperscript{480} Casey, ‘Between Geography and Philosophy’, p. 687.
constantly in flux – as is the case in Nazarín – Casey writes: ‘in any journey through the place-world, we live out our bodily habitudes in relation to the ever-changing spatiality of the scenes we successively encounter’.\textsuperscript{481} Habitation is used to refer to both sedentary and nomadic ways of dwelling, and Casey continues: ‘the self relates to the place of habitation by means of concerted bodily movements that are the activation of habitudinal schemes, their explication and exfoliation in the inhabited place-world’.\textsuperscript{482} As the sequences listed above suggest, then, Nazarín’s failure to demonstrate the required bodily habitudes indicates his disengagement with situation, a term I use to encompass both location and the action that takes place there. The sequence in which the priest agrees to work on the construction of the railway line is paradigmatic here. As the other labourers warn the protagonist that he has taken the place of several men awaiting employment, he makes to leave. Continuing his \textit{camino}, he stops briefly twice – once after the man overseeing the workers pelts him with a stone and again to pluck a leaf from an olive tree. In this seemingly contrived appreciation of nature, Nazarín is shown to be irrevocably distanced from materiality: as he stops to admire the tree, gunshots ring out off-screen, a result of the escalating tension between the boss and the workers caused by Nazarín’s hasty departure. Willis is receptive to this reading of the film, writing: ‘[t]o Nazarin [sic] “nature” means “God”; but “nature”, in the film’s context, means “detachment”’.\textsuperscript{483}

4.7 ‘Un paisaje cualquiera’: the banal landscape

A consideration of landscape here will be conducive to my elaboration of the place-world. Given that the camerawork in Nazarín largely avoids showing the open vistas of the Mexican countryside, here the term landscape must be considered independently of the romantic connotations it has come to acquire.\textsuperscript{484} As opposed to the conception of landscape as a cluster of topographical features within the visual field of the observer, for Casey landscape provides an opportunity for the expansion of the geographical self. He writes that ‘[t]he empty

\textsuperscript{481} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{482} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{483} Willis, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{484} On Buñuel’s fixation on the mundane in this film and Gabriel Figueroa’s role as director of cinematography, see Sally Faulkner, \textit{Literary Adaptations in Spanish Cinema} (Woodbridge: Tamesis, 2004), pp. 142-43.
armature of place-cum-self needs to be fleshed out, in two opposed but complementary directions: downward into body and outward into landscape.\textsuperscript{485} Landscape, then, is seen as a derivative of place, gathering and giving unity to distinct yet contiguous places. Landscape's function within the place-world is primarily one of demarcation, a necessary component of implacement:

[i]n my embodied being I am \textit{just at} a place as its inner boundary; a surrounding landscape, on the other hand, is \textit{just beyond} that place as its outer boundary. Between the two boundaries – and very much as a function of their differential interplay – implacement occurs. Place is what takes place between body and landscape. Thanks to the double horizon that body and landscape provide, a place is a locale bounded on both sides, near and far.\textsuperscript{486}

What is striking in terms of \textit{Nazarín}, however, is that Casey's model is not seen to function as expected, and this appears to be a deliberate choice on Buñuel's part.

The film's shooting script evidences this point. After \textit{Nazarín} has left his home in the city following the fire started there by Ándara, he first approaches the band of workers constructing the rail track. A reverse tracking shot reveals \textit{Nazarín}, who has seemingly appeared from nowhere, as the employer of the labourers walks towards him. In the mid-distance, primitive pylons stretch away across parched earth towards rolling hills. According to the script, this is simply 'un paisaje quebrado', and the aesthetic denotations of this direction suggest on a deeper level that the protagonist's implacement here is destined to fail as the landscape itself is ruptured and broken.\textsuperscript{487} Later, \textit{Nazarín} comes across a colonel and his wife travelling along with a priest. Their horse has broken its leg and \textit{Nazarín} offers to help the party. The establishing shot here is not of \textit{Nazarín} framed against a backdrop of prairies and hills – though the viewer does catch a brief glimpse of this – but of the horse's head as the creature lies in the road. Indeed, given that the setting for this scene is described as 'un paisaje cualquiera', any aesthetic appreciation on the viewer's part should be incidental and transient.\textsuperscript{488} Likewise, when the trio approaches the plague-riddled village, the establishing shot is one of disease and death, showing a young victim perishing from his illness on the path leading to the village while other residents flee.

\textsuperscript{485} Casey, 'Between Geography and Philosophy', p. 689.
\textsuperscript{486} Casey, \textit{Getting Back into Place}, p. 29.
\textsuperscript{487} AB 541, p. 42.
\textsuperscript{488} Ibid., p. 55.
Landscape is again secondary: to narrative, as the audience is encouraged to focus attention on the cause of the exodus and not on ‘[el] camino cualquiera’; and apparently to Nazarín himself as he is initially shown approaching the village in the aloof manner to which the viewer has become accustomed.

This intentional invisibility of landscape through its banalisation colludes with the protagonist’s neglect of his bodily realities to impede his implacement. Implacement occurs, as Casey has noted, in the arc between the body and its surrounding landscape. The border to the changing place-world is contained in landscape. Relph intimates as much when he affirms that ‘[landscape] cannot be embraced, nor touched, nor walked around. As we move, so the landscape moves, always there, in sight but out of reach’. The effect of Buñuel’s emphasis on a prosaic mise-en-scène is the dissociation of Nazarín from his environment. Furthermore, as I have previously signalled, that the body is always located somewhere does not necessarily signify that the body is always securely in place. Nazarín is distanced from his corporeality; his body is therefore never fully in place. Unlike in Los olvidados, where the emphasis on corporeality and the claustrophobic nature of the children’s surroundings culminates in the representation of a dense, portending place-world, the arc between body and landscape in Nazarín is undone at both ends as the priest’s bodily awareness and, therefore, spatial awareness, appear of little concern.

4.8 The sick body

The protagonist’s subordination of the realities of the body to the belief in the soul has implications for his engagement with place. As Nazarín exchanges the confines of his tenement block for ‘el olor de las flores del campo’, he is seen to redouble his efforts to focus his attention on the metaphysical. The principle way that this is shown visually is through food. Several times throughout the film, the

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489 Ibid., p. 61.
491 Food is a prominent motif in the Buñuel’s cinema. Bikandi-Mejias positions the use of food within a carnivalesque trope due to the focus that this brings to the body’s orifices. With specific reference to Nazarín, Rubinstein submits that ‘[i]n its perverse attentions to food, Nazarín stands second only to The Discreet Charm in the Buñuel canon’. See Bikandi-Mejias, pp. 27-28 and Rubinstein, ‘Buñuel’s World’, p. 241.
characters are seen to eat and drink. Though their meals are modest, the act of eating is given purposeful representation. Early in the film, Nazarín is seen to eat a plate of tortillas prepared for him by señora Chanfa ‘con gran apetito’, while a little later, still in his apartment after agreeing to shelter Ándara, he is shown ‘maseando el último bocado’ of another meal. This is last time that the spectator witnesses Nazarín eating, yet during their amblings, Ándara is seen to eat with gusto a warmed taco and to drink from a water jug in the police station after she and Nazarín have been arrested. Even before the group has abandoned the city, she and Beatriz are shown enjoying a serving of *pulque* shortly before Ándara, ensconced in the priest’s apartment, nursing her stab wound, uses a bottle of tequila, ‘para las heridas por dentro y por fuera’. The act of eating, for Nazarín, becomes conspicuous through its absence, confirming the importance that the protagonist places on succour as opposed to sustenance. As I will show later, this position appears reversed in the film’s conclusion.

The need for material sustenance signals a healthy body, and Ándara and Beatriz are in tune with their corporeal needs. However, in contrast to those of the protagonists, there is a phalanx of unhealthy bodies in this film. If disabled and disfigured bodies populate the slums of *Los olvidados*, in *Nazarín* there are diseased and dying bodies. One sequence in particular is pertinent here: that of the plague-ridden village. Much of the scholarly attention on this key sequence has focused on the dialogue as Nazarín attempts to administer the last rites to Lucía, the dying woman, and the ways in which her insistence on the carnal comforts of her lover, Juan, are at odds with Nazarín’s vision of religious transcendence. I will show how this episode, beyond the traditional physical/metaphysical binary

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492 AB 541, p. 15, p. 29.

493 The plague is a virulent strain within the director’s cinema, marked not only by the ailing body, but the dysfunctional one, too. Besides its obvious guise in *Tierra sin pan*, witness the languid stupor and descent into madness of Nóbile and his dinner guests in *El ángel exterminador*. Silvia Pinal has remarked of this film: ‘todos llegamos a una conclusión de que era una peste [causada por] nuestras fallas, nuestras agresiones [... ] que no nos deja movernos ni progresar’. ‘Interview with Silvia Pinal’, *El ángel exterminador*, dir. Luis Buñuel (Criterion, 2008) (on DVD) disc 2.

494 On this theme, see V. Fuentes, *Buñuel en México*, p. 134 and Willis, p. 6. De la Colina and Pérez Turrent view the ethics of the plague sequence as representative of those of the entire narrative, namely that ‘[e]l Mal es la Peste. Es imposible detener la peste, pero dentro de ella se pueden dar la esperanza y el amor’. De la Colina and Pérez Turrent, p. 109. This resonates with the film’s dichotomy of Christian charity and human reality, as identified by critics, and feeds into the protagonist’s detachment from place, as I show here.
through which it has been interpreted, can be read in light of the sick body to further explore Nazarín’s disengagement with place.

The plague sequence begins with a long shot of a ‘camino cualquiera’ that leads to the damned village as the residents flee. The trio is confronted with a dying man on the road. Faulkner’s comment that Ándara and Beatriz are representative of the body rather than the spirit is pertinent here, for both women approach the village and the man with caution, conscious of their own mortality. Nazarín, however, is quick to come to the man’s aid. Eamonn Rodgers believes that his manner contains a masochistic streak:

[t]hough in practice he has to cope with situations where he is called upon to show concern for others, engagement with what lies outside himself is seen essentially as a masochistic search for sufferings and trials which will test his self-discipline.

Following Rodgers, Nazarín’s engagement with the sick body is essentially hollow: the ambiguity contained within the infirm and the afflicted, between life and death, enables him to focus his attention on the souls of the dying and, through a masochistic process, his own. Seen another way, the degenerative threat of illness to the body is re-envisioned through the priest’s habitus as a generative force for the spirit. Such is the protagonist’s sense of satisfaction during this episode that he is described in the script as ‘un hombre distinto. Se diría que aquél es su ambiente y en él se goza’. The use of the verb ‘gozar’ is interesting: ethically, Ándara’s enjoyment of food and tequila and Beatriz’s daydreams of carnal pleasure are ultimately no more shameful than Nazarín’s masochistic reveling in the ambience of disease. Indeed, when coupled with Faulkner’s view that the two women stand for the body to Nazarín’s spirit, and Willis’s view that Nazarín’s displays of emotion are predominately ‘mechanical’, the two women could be said to exhibit a greater morality – certainly within the Buñuelian narrative – in that they embrace their carnal condition.

Considering the infirm person’s relationship to place, Trigg writes:

[a] sense of being “here” is thus peculiar to the experience of being placed. As proof of this relation, it is notable that the experience of disembodiment

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495 Faulkner, p. 145.
497 AB 541, p. 65. My emphasis.
498 Willis, p. 6.
coexists with a lack of orientation. The diminishment of being-here, such as we may experience after not sleeping for several nights or when we fall ill, usually results in the inability to retain the continuous unity of bodily presence. [...] It is not simply that our bodies suffer from the symptoms of illness, such as fatigue or fever. Rather, the whole world is mediated through the ill body, so that place and time assume a highly singular appearance that conforms to the strains of the human body. In such a case, [...] the intimacy between self and world, so far assumed as a taken-for-granted given of the life-world, is experienced as a self-conscious lack.499

In this way, the tacit engagement between place and self is undermined by the ill body so as to render a degree of estrangement from both in the sufferer. The estrangement effected by infection is communicated visually in this episode. One of the most remarkable shots of the film occurs at this moment: a child is seen stumbling along a side-road, dragging behind her a bed sheet.500 The frame acts here not as a stable reference point, but rather as a destabilising one as the child almost wanders out of its left edge and the reverse tracking shot reveals more linen hung out to dry, momentarily obscuring the lower right-hand part of the shot (see appendix N 1). This shot ‘contains all the desolation of the disease; its effect, the way it empties the world, rather than its showy, baroque horrors. The sheet is all the girl has left of her home’.501 In his zeal to come to the aid of the plague victims, Nazarín aligns himself with diseased and defunct bodies. After entering the village and consulting with the mayor, the trio is shown going into a house to comfort a crying infant. The recently deceased body of the child’s mother is quickly covered by the priest with a sheet, leaving only the feet visible (a shot reminiscent of Evvie’s dead grandfather’s feet protruding from under the blanket in *The Young One*) and it is not coincidental that Nazarín charges Ándara and Beatriz with the infant’s care while he focuses his attention on the dead mother.

Following a brief scene in which Juan, the lover of the dying woman, Lucía, informs the town’s mayor that the government-sponsored help is arriving, the camera cuts to a disorientating shot of Beatriz, from the shoulders down, as she washes a cloth in a bowl of water in Lucía’s house. Once again, the protagonist’s thoughts are of the hereafter and he advises Lucía: ‘piensa que esta vida es sólo un

499 Trigg, p. 114.
500 Buñuel considered staining the sheet with faecal matter and vomit – by-products of the diseased body – but admitted: ‘no soy tan naturalista, no me atrevo’. De la Colina and Pérez Turrent, p. 109.
camino’. The exchange between the two as the dying woman refuses the last rites with an unequivocal ‘no el cielo... Juan’ is much documented. Willis finds that ‘carnality is new to Nazarín [sic]’, and that the protagonist is compelled to confront ‘an order – personal, sexual – unknown to him’.\textsuperscript{502} The clash of one order against another – one habitus against another – is never more jarring in Buñuel’s cinema.

In the same way that Nazarín remains largely aloof from place as an existential outsider, Lucía’s desire appears as the expression of an existential insideness, ‘of knowing implicitly that this place is where you belong’.\textsuperscript{503} The protagonist does not belong, either in this place or to this order: when Juan returns, Nazarín and Beatriz are thrown out of the residence. Willis perceptively remarks that ‘Nazarín’s [sic] neutrality in physical affairs leaves him in effect bodiless’,\textsuperscript{504} an assertion which renders his later sermon to the two women on the bittersweet nature of death – ‘Así es la muerte, alegre y triste. Alegre porque nos libra de las cadenas de la vida y triste porque amamos nuestra carne’ – an empty platitude. To be rendered effectively bodiless is to be rendered without place, according to Casey:

\begin{quote}
[j]f there are experiences in which my body does not figure, then these experiences will lack a here, or will possess only a quasi or pseudo here. Hence herelessness inheres in certain intellectual and mystical experiences in which we rejoin a conceptual or religious “there,” an “on the other side” [...] that has no proper here.\textsuperscript{505}
\end{quote}

Crucially, Nazarín remains alone in his detachment from both body and place. Beatriz, responding to Nazarín’s lamentation that he has failed Lucía, exclaims: ‘yo también quería así’, referring principally to the corporeal comfort that Juan provides to his lover, rather than a desire that Nazarín should deliver Lucía’s soul to the religious ‘there’, as Casey would have it. Realising Beatriz’s engagement with the material aspects of the body – and therefore habitation – Nazarín leaves ‘doblemente vencido’.\textsuperscript{506}

\section*{4.9 A return to place?: The film’s ending}

\textsuperscript{502} Willis, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{503} Relph, \textit{Place and Placelessness}, p. 55.
\textsuperscript{504} Willis, p. 6. My emphasis.
\textsuperscript{505} Casey, \textit{Getting Back into Place}, p. 51.
\textsuperscript{506} AB 541, p. 69.
The orthodox reading of the film’s ending is predicated on a religious-humanist binary. Encapsulating this view, Edwards concludes that '[f]rom the ashes of spiritual disillusionment, Nazarín is finally born again into the world, the priest rejected for the man'. Though his reading of the film’s conclusion reveals a similar ingredience of religious pride, for Rubinstein there is no binary. He concludes that Nazarín, aware now of his unjustified pride, becomes a Christian through his new-found humility. I propose a reading which moves beyond the two in its focus on what has frequently been invoked as a by-product of the protagonist’s secular/religious epiphany: place. Both Edwards and Rubinstein refer to this aspect of the film – for Edwards Nazarín is born again into the world, while for Rubinstein the landscape in the film’s conclusion is that of the Gospels – and it is instrumental in the viewer’s understanding of the ending.

Following his and Ánada’s arrest for the tenement block fire, Nazarín is condemned to join a gang of prisoners frogmarched through a series of villages on their way back to the capital to be jailed. Locked in a cell and beaten by a man accused of parricide, he speaks with another prisoner who says: ‘usted pa’l lado bueno y yo pa’l lado malo. Ninguno de los dos servimos para nada’. This can be seen as the protagonist’s first epiphany, as the viewer witnesses a close-up shot of the priest’s face, lined now with contemplative realisation. Willis writes that ‘Buñuel, who took his hero out of the film a few scenes earlier, now restores him to it, with an altered perspective’. Though I have argued that Buñuel has encouraged a schism between the priest and his place-world from the first moments of the film, rather than merely a few scenes previously, this contemplative realisation is one of purpose and place: to be taken out of the film, as Willis points out, and then returned to it, is to begin to be re(im)placed. The second re(im)placement will occur at the very end of the film. When offered a pineapple by a roadside fruit seller, Nazarín at first refuses the act of charity then tearfully returns to accept it. Fuentes has commented on the way in which the film’s cinematography works to communicate the idea of imprisonment in the final sequences:

509 Willis, p. 7.
[e]n este andar de Nazarín por desolados parajes (seguido por múltiples planos, en muchos de los cuales la cámara, a ras de tierra, enfoca los pies de los presos) hay como un movimiento circular: el desandar de los caminos por los que se lanzó «a estar más cerca de Dios», para encontrarse mordiendo el polvo y rodeado de gente baja.510

Besides communicating a sense of confinement, the close-up shots of the prisoners' feet as they walk are representative of the connection between the body and the earth. The protagonist's body, previously denied, now begins to come to the fore. The bandage on his head is not an emulation of Christ's crown of thorns, but a visual reminder of Padre Nazario's own flesh; where food and drink were previously 'bitterly secular', the pineapple he accepts is an acceptance of his corporeal urgencies (see appendix N 2).511 Likewise, the protagonist is affected by this gesture of kindness, shown to be weeping as he eventually walks out of the frame as the film ends. To be affected by a gesture is to be seen as being 'here' in every sense of the word, as '[p]art of the absoluteness of the here is that I cannot detach it from my body-self and thus from the place to which this body-self now gives access'.512 Whether the ending represents Nazarín's embrace of his fellow (wo)man or his renewed sense of Christian humility is debatable. Both of these readings, however, necessitate a reciprocal relationship between self and place: the schism between the ethereal priest and his place-world has begun to diminish. In accepting his own flesh, integral to his self, Nazarín has started to move towards a primitive habitation:

[b]y the end of the film it is not so much a case of contrasting shots reflecting the gap between the world and Nazarín's spirituality but of the gap narrowed progressively to the point where the priest is seen to be aware of his own worldliness.513

4.10 Conclusion: placing the body

Trigg has asserted that 'the totality of experience of place begins and ends with the body', going on to affirm – in a similar vein to Casey – that '[t]he body activates place. But the same is true in reverse: Place activates the body'.514 The framework for analysis in this chapter is a departure from that of the previous two,

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510 V. Fuentes, Buñuel en México, p. 134.
512 Casey, Getting Back into Place, p. 52.
514 Trigg, p. 10, p. 11.
representing a shift from depictions of exterior space towards the complex matrix of the body-self and place. Such an analysis necessitates an exposition of the reciprocal nature of place and body-self; a geographical-philosophical consideration of the place-world allows for this. In borrowing from the disciplines of phenomenology and geography, I have proposed film-focused readings with the aim of illuminating the representation of both self and place. My readings do not necessarily constitute a radical departure from common readings of the respective films but are instead an inflection of their critical focuses, and herein lies their strength: Evans’s discussion of the uncanny within the slums depicted in *Los olvidados* has links to Tuñón’s investigation of the symbiosis between the *cuerpo roto* and the *ciudad rota*; similarly, Edwards’s reading of the narrative of *Nazarín* as the hero’s physical and spiritual journey into the world chimes with Willis’s assertion that at the heart of the narrative is a dichotomy of passion/detachment.

A common theme in the often philosophical analyses of these films, then, is place—an aspect of the films which, building on previous readings, I have brought to the fore.

Unlike those of *Nazarín*, the places in which the characters in *Los olvidados* are positioned are frequently cramped and dingy locations, augmenting the viewer’s sense of claustrophobia. The *idios* of place is writ large in this film. As I have shown, the attention that Evans draws to the Mexican national narrative of La Malinche within the film, embodied by Marta, is an expression of idiolocalism. Casey explains the power that place exerts over people as an emulsifier of entities, with the potential to determine interpersonal relationships as place comes lastingly, or fleetingly, into the self. In this way, the ‘how’ and ‘why’ are intrinsically linked to the ‘where’. The idiolocal, therefore, ‘is not merely idiosyncratic or individual; it is also collective in character’. Marta thus represents the familiar figure of the consuming, rejecting, abject Malinche and her inscription in place. The street children’s body techniques are generated by, and necessary to, their place-world of the *arrabal*, demonstrating a required – if reluctant – in-depth engagement with the discrete places of their immediate surroundings.

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515 Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, p. 23.
Where the urchins of *Los olvidados* demonstrate a commitment to their surroundings through their foregrounding of the body, Nazarín repudiates his connection to his surroundings through a denial of his. Throughout the narrative he is aligned with the infirm and the dead body, praying for Beatriz’s sick niece and tending to the victims ravaged by plague. The dislocation of the protagonist from the needs of the body and the requirements of place is made all the more apparent by the constant presence of his female disciples, both of whom appear in tune with their bodily needs. Beatriz’s preoccupation with the carnal leads to her hysterical outburst when her mother suggests that she loves Nazarín ‘como a un hombre’, while Andara’s occupation as a prostitute is reinforced as her sweetheart Ujo proclaims: ‘tú fea, tú pública, pero yo te estimo’. That the women are grounded in the physical is not a comment on their gender, however, as Ujo and Pinto are also shown to be so.\(^{516}\) In contrast, Nazarín’s love for the women is indistinguishable from his general sentiment towards the world, evidenced when he explains that he loves them equally while gazing absently at the snail on his hand, before exiting the frame and leaving the two women to bed down alone. Nazarín thus remains isolated from those around him in a position of constant existential outsideness, a position that becomes more apparent when the film script is taken into consideration. Unlike that of *Los olvidados*, with its frequent references to specific locations such the stable belonging to Meche’s family and Pedro’s house, that of *Nazarín* works to preclude any such affinity between the protagonist and the places – often *lugares cualquiera* – in which he is shown. The ending of the film, however, suggests the protagonist’s will to return to the world through the acknowledgement of his body.

The difference in the way that the respective films depict the characters’ relationship to their immediate surroundings goes beyond questions of *mise-en-scène*. Pedro remains affected by the idiolocal, abject character of the slums even while at the *Escuela Granja*, and Nazarín remains aloof from himself and his contemporaries whilst in his own squalid apartment. It is not, therefore, as straightforward a question as one of setting, of the affectivity of the urban versus that of the rural, as I signalled in the introduction to this chapter. Edwards

\(^{516}\) Buñuel states, ‘hay mucho amor humano en *Nazarín*. El de Beatriz y El Pinto, el del enano por Andara, el de las dos muchachas por Nazarín. Y el de la muchacha moribunda’. De la Colina and Pérez Turrent, p. 109.
understands this, writing that 'Nazarín differs from Los olvidados, for there the same characters reappear throughout the film. Its focus is, therefore, limited, while the effect of Nazarín is much more panoramic'. If the depiction of the character-place matrix is taken to be the unspoken subject of Edwards’ observations here, as I suggested in the introduction to Nazarín, his argument correlates with the one set forth in this chapter. There are ultimately many similarities between the two films. Their narratives explore the connection between self and place through the use of the body, an immediate visual object for the viewer. As such, the story of both films can be read as a quest for belonging, a concept which requires the collusion of self and place when we acknowledge the synonym, to fit in. This search for belonging can be explored more concretely via the various home-places that are represented in Buñuel’s films of this period, and this will form the object of analysis for the following chapter.

Chapter Five

Questions of belonging: the (im)possibility of a home-place

5.0 Introduction: what is a home-place?

The notion of home is a wide-ranging concept in research within the humanities and social sciences across a myriad of disciplines from human geography and anthropology to philosophy and psychology. It is, as Jeanne Moore notes, a singularly ‘loaded’ term, encompassing micro-levels of individual dwelling to macroscopic concepts such as country, nation and questions of global unity. The sheer breadth of writing on the home has given rise to surveys of the literature in an attempt to venture points of correlation and contention between the multifarious perspectives represented across disciplines. In cinema, for example, Johannes von Moltke considers how the representation of Heimat – a term left in the original German – in German films dealing with questions of rootedness and locality (the Heimatfilm genre) can encompass an entire nation and even form the basis of an imagined community for German audiences, while David T. Fortin has examined the representation of home and architecture in science-fiction film, as ‘most SF narratives seemingly center on notions of homelessness, homecomings, threats to and invasions of home, and journeys from it’. Similarly, Tyson Lewis and Daniel Cho carry out a reading of postmodern representations of home in Hollywood cinema, especially in horror and science-fiction genres, to argue in favour of a new formulation of home beyond its bourgeois historical materialist conceptualisation. Excavating her cross-disciplinary review, Shelley Mallett asks: ‘[i]s home (a) place(s), (a) space(s), feeling(s), practices, and/or active state of state of being [sic] in the world?’. This list of possibilities serves as a loose guide for Mallett’s examination of the literature on home as she addresses research from disciplines and approaches from sociology – the

household as a discrete economic unit and site of consumption – to feminist critiques of home as implicitly patriarchal and a potential space of repression, to a phenomenological approach to home and the state of ‘being-at-home’ through aspects of dwelling. In sum, the interpretations of home are numerous.

In this final chapter it is my intention to draw on what are largely phenomenological or phenomenologically-inspired readings and interpretations of home – the final suggestion offered in Mallett’s definitions of home mentioned above – applying these to particular films in Buñuel’s Mexican corpus. In doing so, I continue to take a spatial approach to the director’s Mexican work in a largely philosophical vein, to demonstrate how questions of belonging – often prefigured in the films’ narratives by the negative, as non-belonging – is a trope around which the characters coalesce, sewing an aesthetic and thematic thread through this body of work and, thus, a specific way of interpreting it. I do not claim that this method is the sole method of reading the films of this period, nor do I advance the idea of a completely homogeneous paradigm for doing so; as has been evident throughout this thesis, a spatial reading of the films is often informed by other, better documented themetics within Buñuel’s cinema and can offer new insights into the interpretation of its philosophical implications. As outlined more fully in Chapter One, adopting a spatial lens in viewing the films of this period has afforded me a conceptual tool through which to link the more genre-driven films of the director’s Mexican corpus with those regarded as more independent works. This chapter will continue this linkage, revisiting in turn the island heterotopias of Robinson Crusoe and The Young One, the liminal spaces of the jungle and the desert in La Mort en ce jardin and Simón del desierto and the body-self within the place-worlds of Los olvidados and Nazarín, adding a further companion film to each of these pairs. It will be shown that, in their respective situations (in the figurative and spatial senses of the word), the characters are often rootless in their search for belonging within Buñuel’s ‘frequently faceless and impersonal’ Mexican canvass.523 Thus, the approximate move from typologies of exterior space to the implacement of the body-self within the place-world, and finally to what is supposedly the most intimate nexus of the self-place matrix – the home – will be realised through a consideration of the ways in which Buñuel’s cinema depicts

questions of belonging. Importantly, the addition of other films from the director’s Mexican period not previously discussed in this thesis will allow for a richer, more illustrated discussion whilst forging fresh stylistic, thematic and philosophical links within this body of work and pointing towards possible areas for future research.

5.1 A phenomenological account of home

Writing from a phenomenological perspective, Pallasmaa highlights the nexus of social and psychological dynamics at work in the creation of a home:

[h]ome is not, perhaps, at all a notion of architecture, but of psychology, psychoanalysis, and sociology [...] Dwelling, or the house, is the container, the shell for home. The substance of home is secreted, as it were, upon the framework of the dwelling by the dweller. Home is an expression of the dweller’s personality and his [or her] unique patterns of life.\textsuperscript{524} Pallasmaa’s focus remains largely on the home as the site of experience and his concerns privilege the dweller rather than the dwelling. Thus, home comes into being primarily through the occupant. He takes his cue from Bachelard’s *Poetics of Space*, in which the philosopher explores the oneiric house, an image imprinted in the psyche of all dwellers as he claims, ‘the house image would appear to have become the topography of our intimate being’. Bachelard’s tenet is simple: ‘that all really inhabited space bears the essence of the notion of home’.\textsuperscript{525} To be sure, such statements are predicated on an understanding of intersubjectivity (Bachelard’s rationale is that a phenomenological method ‘can help us to restore the subjectivity of images and measure their fullness, their strength and their transsubjectivity’).\textsuperscript{526} This presumption is potentially questionable in its apparent disregard for cultural and social contexts (indeed, this is one criticism often levelled at phenomenological approaches within the discipline of geography);\textsuperscript{527} however, Pallasmaa indicates that the characteristics of the oneiric house are


\textsuperscript{525} Bachelard, p. xxxvi, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{526} Ibid., p. xix.

culturally conditioned. Bachelard’s oneiric house, problematically, privileges the white, middle-class, heterosexual male dweller. Attempting to move beyond tacit positions of bourgeois, patriarchal Eurocentrism in Bachelard’s writing, Pallasmaa argues that what is vital is the intuitive understanding of home as a ‘complex condition, which integrates memories and images, desires and fears, the past and the present’. This presents the basis for an intersubjective conceptualisation of home, which is then shaped by the individual’s interaction with his or her environment, as home becomes ‘a gradual product of the dweller’s adaptation to the world’.

Although Bachelard’s writing on the role of home retains its importance in experiential accounts of place, it is concerned most overtly with the materiality of dwelling, that is, the concrete structures of habitation and their role in the formation of the dweller’s psyche in infancy and adulthood. This particular conceptualisation of home cannot be applied across Buñuel’s entire Mexican cinema, where the protagonists of films such as Nazarín or Simón del desierto lack a material shelter and, seemingly, a past. Rather, I refer to Heidegger’s view that dwelling is an on-going process, a reciprocity of sorts between the dweller and his or her lived surroundings: ‘[t]he real dwelling plight lies in this, that mortals ever search anew for the nature of dwelling, that they must ever learn to dwell’. As such, the relationship between the material structure of habitation, or the house, and the setting within which dwelling occurs, or the home, is not necessarily co-constitutive, as Heidegger questions, ‘do the houses in themselves hold any guarantee that dwelling occurs in them?’ A built house, in this way, is not envisaged as a mere container which addresses physical human needs; for Heidegger, dwelling is the prerequisite for building, as ‘[w]e do not dwell because

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528 Pallasmaa, ‘Identity, Intimacy and Domicile’, p. 133.
529 Feminist scholars have challenged Bachelard’s implicitly classed and gendered writing, whereby the home is a haven. Joshua M. Price, for example, considers the home as the site of concealment for violence against women, while Beatriz Muñoz González investigates the contradictory emotions experienced by Spanish housewives in their domestic labour. See Joshua M. Price, ‘The Apotheosis of Home and the Maintenance of Spaces of Violence’, Hypatia, 17.4 (2002), 39-70, and Beatriz Muñoz González, ‘Topophilia and Topophobia: The Home as an Evocative Place of Contradictory Emotions’, Space and Culture, 8 (2005), 193-213.
531 Ibid.
533 Ibid., p. 146.
we have built, but we build and have built because we dwell, that is, because we are *dwellers*.\footnote{Ibid., p. 148.}

Attempting to extricate the idea of home from its materialistic underpinnings, Anthony Steinbock highlights that a phenomenological approach to the notion of home can reframe our understanding of the essence of the term. He writes that:

\begin{quote}
[t]he home is not something we “possess,” but a phenomenological structure of co-existence. If we do wish to speak of “possession,” then the home cannot be conceived along the lines of ownership; rather, the home would be that communal sphere *to which we belong*.\footnote{Anthony J. Steinbock, 'Home and the Homeless Movement: A Clue to the Problem of Intersubjectivity', *Human Studies*, 17.2 (1994), 203-23 (pp. 218-19).}
\end{quote}

This communal sphere to which we belong – or from which we are excluded or exclude ourselves – I term a home-place. I see this as a continuation of the place-world, which was the focus of the previous chapter, moving from representations of the geographical body-self as it enacts and is implaced in its surroundings to the more intimate question of belonging. Underscoring Buñuel’s Mexican films discussed thus far, as well as others, there is an exploration of the *process* of dwelling, which, as Heidegger notes, is a process of existence,\footnote{‘To be a human being means to be on the earth as a mortal. It means to dwell’, Heidegger, p. 147. Kirsten Jacobson reflects this idea using the phrase ‘being-at-home’. Kirsten Jacobson, ‘A Developed Nature: A Phenomenological Account of the Experience of Home’, *Continental Philosophy Review*, 42.3 (2009), 355-73.} rendered by Steinbock as a process of belonging.

Unpicking the idea(l) of home, Janet Donohoe asserts, ‘[t]he language of “inside” and “outside” leads to misunderstanding, as does the language of security and refuge when speaking of the home place’.\footnote{Janet Donohoe, ‘The Place of Home’, *Environmental Philosophy*, 8.1 (2011), 25-40 (p. 30, n. 5).} It will by now have become clear that the inside/outside dichotomy is problematised in the films discussed in this thesis. Crusoe’s island, for instance, is a no-place bound inextricably to the home sphere of the dominant culture that pervades it, whilst Simón – the freest man in the world, according to Buñuel – is as trapped by his liberty in the liminal vistas of the desert as he is in the poky nightclub.\footnote{De la Colina and Pérez Turrent, p. 130.} Equally problematic are the protagonists’ houses, where these structures are actually represented. Neither Evvie’s cabin nor Pedro’s shack could be described in terms of security and refuge.
It is, therefore, something of a misnomer to contend that Buñuel’s protagonists are homeless, even though this may frequently be the case, as this term is often perceived in its material sense. As Pérez de Mendiola notes, the director’s Mexican cinema transmits ‘a sense of uprooting’.\textsuperscript{539} I hold the term ‘rootless’ to be a more accurate description of many of Buñuel’s characters of the period, and one that relates to the lack of a home-place rather than the want of a house.

As explained in Chapter One, I will depart from aetiological readings of Buñuel’s films, which have tended to seek in his work a signature of exile in a similar way to those critics who scour his ‘minor’ films for traces of surrealism. Rather, I propose that issues of belonging, though clearly pertinent to questions of exile, can transcend and function independently of an auteur-biographical framework, and film is a medium ideally placed to represent them, as Pallasmaa suggests.\textsuperscript{540} In short, I am guided by a philosophical reading of the Mexican films, responding to Michel’s observation that, in Buñuel’s cinema, ‘[i]f there is a common trait among men, it is not “unchangeable human nature”, but the fact of being \textit{alienated}. Against this, Michel believes that Buñuel’s principle preoccupation is ‘liberty, or, as the philosophers say, the de-alienation of man’.\textsuperscript{541} The polemic lies, then, in just how far this is achieved in his Mexican cinema. My argument is that, in opening up a chasm between what Fuentes terms ‘la manera de ver’ and ‘las cosas vistas’,\textsuperscript{542} echoed in Michel’s view that ‘Buñuel manipulates the light in order to better allow what hides behind reality to come to the surface’, the films can be seen to uncover an underlying reality.\textsuperscript{543} This subtext depicts alienation as an ontological norm, as the characters appear \textit{placed} precisely in ‘a difficult context of circumstances and alienations’, manipulating the Heideggerian axiom that the relationship between man and space ‘is none other

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{539} Pérez de Mendiola, p. 29.
\textsuperscript{540} For Pallasmaa, film and other artistic media that attempt to approximate daily life are in a better position to picture the essence of home and its connection to the dweller. Furthermore, he asserts that filmmakers are natural phenomenologists. Pallasmaa, \textit{The Architecture of Image}, p. 21.
\textsuperscript{541} Michel, p. 24, p. 22. [‘S’il y a un trait commun aux hommes, ce n’est pas l’\textit{immuable nature humaine}, mais le fait d’être \textit{aliénés}, liberté ou, comme disent les philosophes, la désaliénation de l’homme’].
\textsuperscript{542} C. Fuentes, p. 197.
\textsuperscript{543} Michel, p.22 [‘Buñuel manie la lumière pour mieux faire jaillir ce qui se cache derrière la réalité’].
\textsuperscript{544} Ibid., p. 27 [‘Placé dans un contexte dur de circonstances et d’aliénations’].
than dwelling’ so that the relationship between character and space is shown to be largely other than dwelling.545

5.2 The island home-place: Robinson Crusoe and The Young One

Focusing on The Young One and Robinson Crusoe, Chapter Two of this thesis documented the director’s predilection for the use of the island as setting. Martin notes Buñuel’s fascination with island spaces, eliding this in turn with a more general trope of confinement which, he asserts, is especially prevalent in the films of the Mexican period: ‘Buñuel ubica a sus personajes en lugares cerrados, sin salida aparente, los expone a situaciones extremas que sacan a la luz sus contradicciones y miserias, y al final los redime o los condena’. This journey Martin terms ‘[el] camino a la perfección’ and his semantic field suggests the protagonists’ attempts to refine and redeem themselves.546 Rather than framing these pertinent observations with a discourse specifically of Catholicism, I view this as part of the protagonists’ search for a more secular, earthly belonging and, with it, a home-place. Neither the island spaces in these films, nor the unseen mainland, offer any such camino a la perfección.

The depiction of both Crusoe’s desert island and Miller and Evvie’s game-preserve is far from the idyllic setting of an island as both Edenic paradise and site of romantic adventure. Indeed, while the full title of the former film – The Adventures of Robinson Crusoe – suggests an adventure narrative rather than a soliloquy on solitude, the alternative English title for The Young One – Island of Shame – points directly to an anti-utopian impulse. The insularity of both islands actually appears to draw Evvie and Crusoe out of themselves via a series of limit-experiences, enforcing a change in their behaviour and, in Evvie’s case, a fundamental alteration in her interaction in that space. Her limit-experience as a result of her rape extricates her from her own being and the fade-in shot of the island’s coastline following this act serves as a visual motif of her being ‘drawn out’ of herself. This sequence is key to considerations of the home-place. Crucially, this is the only high-angle establishing shot of the island’s coastline in the film, and, though it appears to the viewer purely in the guise of Lefebvre’s spectacular

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545 Heidegger, p. 157.
546 Martín, p. 742.
mode of narrative, its role as the foremost instance of narrative rupture cannot be underestimated. Evvie is, out of all the protagonists of all the films discussed in this thesis, perhaps the most natural, organic and the most close to belonging willingly to her environment until this moment.

Michael Zimmerman, following Heidegger, affirms that ‘[i]f we conceive ourselves and treat ourselves as things, we can hardly expect to be “at home”’. Her limit-experience during her rape by Miller does just this: it prematurely awakens her cognisance of her corporeality and her awareness of herself as a (sexual) object, external to and at odds with her environment. Indeed, the shot of the island’s coastline could be seen in this way as Evvie’s being torn from her environment. The spatial and the temporal mise-en-scène is thus replete with symbolism: more than heralding a new day, it signals the rupture in her natural attachment to her home-place, the new dawn it portrays a portent of Evvie’s premature awakening and loss of security (see appendix YO 3). Her relationship with her home-place is irrevocably altered: she is no longer the incarnation of Artemis, no longer petting the deer in the yard, nor tending to the bees. The effect of her bodily awareness is clear as she is seen wearing a coat over her dress on the morning following the rape despite the continuous heat, where she had previously shown little awareness of her developing body after showering in front of Traver. Also, Miller’s attempts to placate her with mainland commodities are overtly sexual: lipstick and stockings. Via the Buñuelian fetish object – for instance, the close up shot of Evvie’s feet in the high-heeled shoes as she waits on the pier to be taken to town with the Reverend Fleetwood – Evvie is caught between here and there, between the insularity of the island and the space beyond its borders. She expresses no wish to stay on the island, which has been her home for an unspecified amount of time. Fittingly, Rubinstein points out that ‘Buñuel’s fetishes are things [...] in a world whose desperate souls share no community’. Although this statement most clearly recalls the animated postcard and the

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547 Lefebvre, p. 29. See Chapter One, section 1.6 for more on this term.
disparate group of La Mort en ce jardin, it is also clearly applicable to The Young One, whose budding community is tarnished by Miller's racism and lust.

In a similar way to Evvie’s violation, Crusoe’s isolation undermines his ontology. Buñuel communicates the full extent of this during the scene in which Crusoe screeches hysterically for help, running into the roaring waves to try and escape ‘this tomb, this prison’. As outlined in Chapter Two, the protagonist considers himself outside of all places, lamenting his lack of purpose and meaning, removed from the world as the island subsumes his very identity. Unlike Evvie’s potential island home-place, his is, literally, an island landing-place, and the flotsam and jetsam of the ship washed ashore with the hero in the opening sequence and subsequently plundered from the shipwreck by Crusoe are the only traces of his original cultural and territorial home-place of England. In a similar way to the fetish objects in The Young One, those in Robinson Crusoe serve as incursions of the dominant space and culture into the insular space. Rubinstein notes: ‘[f]etishes are failed metaphors, or ruined metaphors, functioning for Buñuel as the natural parody of metaphor’.551 I would argue that, especially in the case of the present two films, the objects are not failed metaphors but metonyms, as Wood signals: ‘Buñuel’s images, the material he places in front of the camera and frames, are usually both literal and metaphorical objects – or, if you like, both metonymies and metaphors’.552

In this way, Crusoe’s cave fortress, furnished with the bourgeois comforts of home, appears incongruous and, in Crusoe’s hallucination sequence, ridiculous. This sequence is important when attempting to consider the hero’s original home-place. The most overtly surrealist part of the film, it begins as Crusoe is in his hammock, ravaged by fever. Gazing off-screen, he begins to talk with an image of his father, who ignores his pleas for water and promptly sets about washing a pig. The conversation begins on a spatial note as Crusoe’s father, now in shot and responding to his son’s amazement at finding him on the island, says ‘yes here. Here, here, here, here, here. Not there, but here. Where else would I be? Are you not here?’. He then admonishes his son for leaving his native country, where he ‘had the best of all possible worlds’. Undoubtedly ironic, this statement is the

551 Ibid.
552 Wood, ‘Buñuel in Mexico’, p. 44.
direct inversion of Buñuel’s often-cited view that we do not live in the best of all possible worlds.553 The artificiality of dwelling, or rather, the unrealisable nature of dwelling even within Crusoe’s home culture is suggested through the ridiculous, metonymic nature of the fetish items in his fortress, many of which are of little use to him, as well as the plush curtain, the upholstered chair, the candelabra and the pig, remnants of his English manor that accompany the image of his father (see appendix RC 3). They are skewed fractals depicting a whole that is constantly absent as England remains unseen in the film. The layering of one cultural milieu onto another via the accumulation of fetish items, suggested by Crusoe’s father’s insistence that he is here (on the island), not there (in England), despite appearing to be clearly placed in the latter, indicates the vacuous nature of existence in either setting, parodying Crusoe’s attempt to recreate in microcosm his home culture on the island before it has fully begun and parodying the home culture itself, from which Crusoe, in his own words, ‘broke loose’.

The relevance of the island spaces as heterotopic sites is not lost when considering questions of belonging and non-belonging. Johnson contends that heterotopias ‘disrupt and test our customary notions of ourselves’ as ‘[t]hese emplacements exist out of step and meddle with our sense of interiority’.554 As spatio-temporal units, heterotopias are ‘ruptures in ordinary life’,555 unsettling Evvie and Crusoe, problematising the idea of their adopted home-places as successful dwellings precisely because they are not depicted, in the spirit of de la Mare’s romanticism and More’s perfected society, as utopic spaces. Heterotopias, writes Johnson, are ‘disturbing places’. Johnson is not using the adjective in a figurative sense, but rather a literal one of displacement: heterotopias ‘display and inaugurate a difference and challenge the space in which we may feel at home’. To consider heterotopias, therefore, means to conceive space ‘outside, or against, any utopian framework or impulse’.556 As the island becomes a crisis heterotopia for Evvie, she appears more conscious of her existence in her home-place and is thus

553 ‘The final sense of my films is this: to repeat [...] that we do not live in the best of all possible worlds’, Buñuel in Gwynne Edwards, A Companion to Luis Buñuel (Woodbridge: Tamesis, 2005), p. 90.
554 Johnson, p. 84.
556 Johnson, p. 84.
disturbed as the artificiality and arbitrariness of her residence there is made clear. The layering of cultural milieus on Crusoe’s island, meanwhile, works on the principle of metonymy, parodying the bourgeois comforts of a longed-for but absent and incomplete home from which the hero ‘broke loose’ and pointing to the ambivalent and incomplete home he has fashioned for himself. Most crucially of all, both protagonists, as well as the racial ‘others’ in the characters of Traver and Friday, leave their islands without a burning desire to stay, and both do so moving towards uncertain futures and, in Evvie’s case, another temporary residence in the children’s home:

[e]ste final abierto [de The Young One] es bastante irónico, pues Miller seguirá siendo el blanco de siempre y Traver correrá más peligro aún en tierra firme [...]. La salida no es optimista o pesimista, es neutra, objetiva. Los tiempos modernos no dan para más y, al igual que en la utopía de Robinson, la conquista de la fraternidad [...] se produce en el espacio aislado de la isla y no tiene futuro en el continente donde nada ha cambiado.557

5.2.1 Ojeda as failed home-place in La Fièvre monte à El Pao

Alongside the director’s two English language productions, it is fitting to consider the island of La Fièvre monte à El Pao as a failed home-place. This 1959 Franco-Mexican co-production forms the third movie of Buñuel’s 1950s Francophone triptych. The filmmaker’s own disparaging comments on this movie place it firmly in the group of so-called películas alimenticias,558 and critics scouring the director’s films of the period for traces of Buñueliana see little of value in a narrative-driven film about totalitarian politics with a complicated plot.559 The film is set on the fictional island of Ojeda, off the coast of an unspecified Latin American country, which functions as a large-scale penitentiary for two thousand political prisoners who oppose the mainland dictatorship of Carlos Barreiro. When the despotic governor of the island, Vargas, is assassinated by a member of Ojeda’s police force, his secretary, Ramón Vázquez, is promoted to director of the island’s penitentiary, serving under a now even more tyrannical governor, Alejandro Gual.

557 Martín, p. 773.
558 Buñuel says: ‘no me interesaba gran cosa el asunto y lo acepté porque [...] no tenía dinero’. De la Colina and Perez Turrent, p. 111.
559 ‘Like Cela s’appelle l’Aurore and La Mort en ce Jardin, La Fièvre monte à El Pao takes up a political theme, treating it explicitly and with few of the undertones and overtones which give Él and Ensayo de un crimen their poetic magic’, Matthews, p. 152.
Political manoeuvring is equalled by the depiction of desire between Vázquez and Inés, the widow of the murdered governor of Ojeda, and Gual’s attempts to possess Inés and to falsely incriminate Vázquez as an accomplice to Vargas’s murder. Vázquez in turn allows a rebellion to break out among the prisoners while Gual is absent, leading to the execution of the latter and Vázquez’s promotion to governor. A brief consideration of the spatial characteristics of Ojeda will be important in illuminating the way in which the protagonists, specifically Inés and Vázquez, are portrayed in their island-residence, while considering the island as a heterotopia will be useful in elaborating how its potential as a home-place is precluded.

The pseudo-documentary opening of the film functions as an anti-travelogue, presenting a contemporary society every bit as miserable as that of Las Hurdes. Ojeda, the voiceover instructs, is located somewhere off the American continent, although its precise position is of little concern to those outside Barreiro’s regime, as no tourist has stepped foot on the island in years. A series of shots of the native islanders’ dilapidated shacks and the prisoners’ labour camp, part of the island’s penal infrastructure, follow. This opening montage reveals a sense of autocratic space construction by means of autochthonous place destruction: it could be Crusoe’s rudimentary colony taken to sinister extremes. In the same way as Herrera posits Tierra sin pan as an anti-viaje, the pseudo-documentary presents the viewer with an image before cutting to another image that negates the previous one. The sweeping aerial panorama of Ojeda’s verdant coastline gives way to a travelling shot of rows of dilapidated shacks in the mid-distance where the exploited natives reside; the image of the grand colonial

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561 Javier Herrera Navarro uses the term anti-viaje to describe Buñuel’s movement in Las Hurdes, contrasting Buñuel’s journey in the region to that of Alfonso XIII in 1922. Herrera claims that the King’s visit was an exercise in propaganda, intended to counter the claims of backwardness and neglect associated with the region. See Javier Herrera Navarro, Estudios sobre ‘Las Hurdes’ de Buñuel: evidencia fílmica, estética y recepción, Colección Iluminaciones, 22 (Seville: Renacimiento, 2006), pp. 145–57.

buildings, remnants of Spanish occupation, are countered by images of prisoners labouring in the fruit fields; finally, the graveyard containing ex-prisoners becomes the luxurious mansion of Ojeda’s governor.

This sprawling residence is the home of Inés, Governor Vargas’s wife, and becomes the home of her lover, Vázquez, when he supersedes him. Unlike in both Robinson Crusoe and The Young One, the mansion house here offers the comforts and trappings befitting the political elite. It appears to provide Vázquez and Inés some respite from ‘sequence after brutal sequence, [...] against the bitter, cruel and often stifling background that is Mexico’.\(^{563}\) One scene in particular appears to establish the house as a ‘felicitous space’ which ‘protects the dreamer, [...] allows one to dream in peace’.\(^{564}\) Bachelard’s quixotic view of the house is depicted filmically as Inés and Vázquez stroll leisurely in the mansion’s gardens following her husband’s assassination, framed in long shot by the trees as they stop to reminisce about their pasts. Inés admits that it has taken her years to discover freedom, having escaped from her controlling parents and violent husband, before expressing her joy that a new life lies ahead of the pair. This cocoon-like ideal of the home is undone throughout the film, contrasted with a much later scene, following the outbreak and suppression of the prisoners’ revolt, where the pair is shown in the lounge, arguing over the implications of signing a falsified statement implicating them in the death of Inés’s husband. Here, the establishing shot is of the lovers from behind a translucent curtain, communicating a sense of their luxurious imprisonment. Importantly, Inés implores Vázquez to escape with her: ‘it doesn’t matter to where. [...] Spread your ideals elsewhere – the world is very big’. When contrasted with her earlier admission that it has taken her years to find her freedom, the viewer may wonder whether Ojeda has provided merely a semblance of freedom. According to Bachelard,

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\text{a house that was final, one that stood in symmetrical relation to the house we were born in, would lead to thoughts – serious, sad thoughts – and not to dreams. It is better to live in a state of impermanence than finality.}\(^{565}\)
\]

As has become clear, Inés’s controlling husband and her privileged yet conspicuous position within Barreiro’s regime suggest that the house, and by
extension the whole island, is in a state of totalitarian finality. Cast adrift from the mainland, Ojeda is an exiled isle and an isle of exile, appearing now to confirm Gual’s significant remark in an earlier encounter with Inés: ‘beautiful Inés, exiled to Ojeda’. This statement mirrors John MacGregor Wise’s view that ‘[t]he space called home is not an expression of the subject. Indeed, the subject is an expression of the territory, or rather of the process of territorialization’.566 As a character *subjected* to her milieu, Inés evidences the disavowal of Bachelard’s conception of the topophilic, dream-filled home.

In reality, the mansion is simply an extension of the island’s penal institutions. Fuentes considers that the narrative develops between what he terms as two chronotopes: the penal colony and the mansion and government buildings.567 The mechanisms of power and corruption are omnipresent, reinforcing Fuentes’s observation that there is no distinction between inside and outside power structures. Furthermore, Fuentes identifies the constant of surveillance as one of the film’s principal motifs, likening the island to a panoptic watchtower: ‘la torre de vigilancia también está fuera de la prisión [...] donde se puede vigilar sin ser visto’.568 The motif of the colour white serves to link the two chronotopes: the car in which Vázquez first arrives at the mansion to inform Inés that her presence is required at the annual celebrations to honour Barreiro is white, as is Inés’s dress and the uniform of Colonel Olivares, whom Vázquez witnesses kissing Inés in this scene. The starched white uniform of Ojeda’s military society is echoed in the ubiquitous white venetian blinds, a vital aspect of the film’s *mise-en-scène*. The blinds in the governor’s office remain closed as the post changes hands from Vargas to Gual to Vázquez, and are a visual metaphor for the social ordering of the island, based on surveillance. In the scene in which newly-appointed governor Gual gives Vázquez responsibility for the island’s penitentiary, he makes a point of closing the blinds, stating that he detests the sun. Likewise, the end of the film sees Vázquez peering out from behind the blinds at Inés who is fleeing Ojeda following Vázquez’s refusal to leave and their separation. The blinds symbolise the panoptic power of Ojeda’s institutions and,

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568 Ibid.
paradoxically, the curtailing of liberty of those whom they simultaneously shield and imprison, and, crucially, they are seen not only in governmental buildings but also in the mansion’s bedroom. Furthermore, in the scene where political prisoner Cárdenas is telling Vázquez about the prisoners’ plan to revolt, a crude map of Ojeda can be seen on the wall onto which the light filtering through the blinds is projected, running across the island and across Cárdenas and Vázquez in a bar-like effect: the island as a whole is behind the bars of surveillance from the mainland (see appendix LF 1). This pervasion of authority in both the institutional and domestic realms simultaneously locates the characters within the totalitarian space of the island and places them opposite it. The island as home-place is always already mediated by its relationship to Barreiro’s mainland dictatorship.

Finally, whereas Crusoe’s island is presented as an ou-topic no-place and the game-preserve of The Young One is a subverted eu-topia, Ojeda comes to represent a conflation of the two. In fact, the three islands are all failed utopias. In a variety of ways, the influence of the respective dominant cultures makes its presence felt, mediating the relationship between the characters and their supposed home-places in ways rendered subtly or explicitly by the films’ respective mise-en-scène. Whether or not they escape their islands, the protagonists are all rootless. As Evvie and Crusoe move towards uncertain futures, Inés remains ‘so isolated, so rootless’ and Vázquez ‘totalmente desorientado’. It is therefore their (dis)location between states of rootlessness, or ou-topia, and imprisonment within the hierarchical political order, or subverted eu-topia, that prevents their adaptation to the world, which Pallasmaa considers so integral to successful dwelling.

5.3 A home-place on the limen?: La Mort en ce jardin and Simón del desierto
Writing about the ending of La Fièvre monte à El Pao, Fuentes believes: ‘se trata de la mayor antífrasis de todo el cine de Buñuel y el final en que el director más se separa de su protagonista’. Buñuel’s distancing from his protagonists is likewise evident, and arguably to a greater extent, in La Mort en ce jardin and Simón del desierto, two films which can be fruitfully interpreted through the framework of

569 Durgnat, p. 114; V. Fuentes, Los mundos de Buñuel, p. 133.
570 V. Fuentes, Los mundos de Buñuel, p. 133.
the spatial liminal. The conclusions of the respective films are largely inconclusive. Chark and Maria in the jungle and Simón in the desert-disco are equally or more disoriented than Fuentes would have Vázquez, and in a manner rendered more explicit than that of the former film through the *mise-en-scène* of the films’ endings; the nightclub and the jungle, below their surface function as arenas of narrative development, are examples of Deleuze’s originary worlds. These originary worlds are ‘formless [...] pure background, or rather a without-background, composed of unformed matter’.571 The protagonists are caught within ‘a cycle of repeated descents’,572 as the former suffer entropic degradation and corporeal disintegration in the jungle and the latter is removed from his literal desert only to be forever imprisoned in a further, figurative one. Their journeys defy Kim Hopper and Jim Baumohl’s assertion that ‘liminal passages are usually undertaken in well-mapped territory from which the voyager is expected to return’.573 Here there is no return, nor the chance to make a home in the interstices. In short, the creation and representation of a home-place is problematic on the limen.

To further explore the home-place in *La Mort en ce jardin* and *Simón del desierto*, recourse to the Husserlian concept of the homeworld/alienworld, specifically as developed by Steinbock, will be key. This dyadic construct forms the framework for experience of the familiar and the foreign in an ‘irreducible intersubjective structure’.574 Integral to the homeworld/alienworld dyad is the relationship of reciprocity shared by the two: the former is constructed and reconstructed in connection with the latter. As Steinbock notes, ‘a home is formed through appropriation and disappropriation’.575 In this way:

the *homeworld* is the taken-for-granted, tacit sphere of experiences and situations marking out the world into which each of us is born and matures as children and then adults. The homeworld is always in some mode of lived mutuality with the alienworld, which is the world of difference and

571 Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, p. 121.
572 Bogue, p. 83.
574 Steinbock, p. 208.
otherness but is only provided awareness because of the always already givenness of the homeworld.\textsuperscript{576}

Steinbock is clear that the homeworld \textit{qua} familiar is not to be privileged over the alienworld \textit{qua} unknown: ‘neither homeworld nor alienworld can be regarded as the “original sphere” since they are in a continual historical becoming as delimited from one another’.\textsuperscript{577} This concept is particularly revealing in terms of \textit{La Mort en ce jardin} and \textit{Simón del desierto} where the co-generative ethic of this duality of experience is frequently thwarted: the delineation of the homeworld by contact with the alienworld is not possible, either because the protagonists remain estranged from both, as is Simón, high on his pillar, or because they are thrust into a claustrophobic, unfurling alienworld with no access to the co-constitutive home, as is the group in \textit{La Mort en ce jardin}. Finally, it is also important to acknowledge the mutable character of the homeworld, given that it is ‘a sphere that is made our own and that is consistently in the making through appropriation’.\textsuperscript{578} It is due to this generative bleeding of the home into the alien and \textit{vice versa} that Steinbock posits the two as liminal experiences in that their borders, while porous, are fundamental.\textsuperscript{579} Indeed, ‘making ourselves at home as our world to which we belong entails more than a “sub-liminal” belonging, but an active responsibility for setting limits, for repeating, for renewing the homeworld’.\textsuperscript{580}

Here, then, is where liminality finds its resonance with the home. It is this limit-setting process in which the protagonists of \textit{La Mort en ce jardin} and \textit{Simón del desierto} are unsuccessful: Castin and the group are forced out of their village in the jungle and into the boundless wilderness, while Simón’s horizontal existence in the nondescript scrubland and vertical existence is inherently limitless. The punctuation of establishing panoramic shots of the vast rainforest and desert in the two films – three of the former during the final third of the film alone – betrays not only the importance and magnitude of the setting, but also a deeper connection between the exterior space and the psychology of the characters. As opposed to the community of the Francophone villagers in \textit{La Mort en ce jardin}, Simón is an isolated figure against a backdrop about which Wood writes

\textsuperscript{576} Seamon, ‘Phenomenology and Uncanny Homecomings’, p. 160.
\textsuperscript{577} Steinbock, ‘Homelessness and the Homeless Movement’, p. 208.
\textsuperscript{578} Steinbock, \textit{Home and Beyond}, p. 222.
\textsuperscript{579} Steinbock, ‘Homelessness and the Homeless Movement’, p. 208.
\textsuperscript{580} Steinbock, \textit{Home and Beyond}, p. 227.
‘[Figueroa’s] images are as much about the desert as about Simon, and we can almost see the thinness of the air’.\textsuperscript{581} Steinbock contends that the homeworld is made by acts of appropriation ‘such as repeating, ritual, communication, narrative, renewal’,\textsuperscript{582} activities that are intrinsically communal and thus often shared by homecomrades, or ‘subjects qualified constitutively and intersubjectively in terms of a home; they are “transcendental comrades,” “co-bearers of our world”’.\textsuperscript{583} This is the very irony at play in this film: as the spatial liminal of the boundless desert and firmament becomes the ontological liminal, Simón shows himself to be incapable of such appropriation and interaction.

The scene in which a fellow monk attempts to instruct the preacher in the concept of personal property evidences Simón’s estrangement. Clutching the sack used by the protagonist to winch his meagre sustenance up the column, the monk makes as if to steal the bag, intending to provoke a conflict. However, Simón cannot appropriate the sack any more than he can reciprocate the discourse of the monk, stating: ‘no te entiendo. Hablamos lenguaje distinto’. Fuentes ventures that this interpersonal disjuncture is ‘quizá la más dramática escenificación buñueliana del tema de la falta de comunicación y de diálogo entre los hombres’.\textsuperscript{584} The camera closes in on the two monks during this sequence, framing them against the formless backdrop of sky (see appendix SD 3). Behind Simón, the rope at the edge of his pillar is visible, its arbitrary nature revealed as the few metres square area at the pinnacle of the column is not separate from the surrounding smooth space and can never demarcate a successful dwelling. This is because the unfurling smooth-liminal-originary world of the desert, like that of the discotheque after it, is neither home nor alien for the protagonist, ‘the first astronaut, alone on a Space Platform’.\textsuperscript{585} To this end, Simón’s final words to the Devil are revealing: preparing to leave the disco, he tells her, ‘Que te diviertas. Yo me voy a casa’. However, he cannot go home, as his pillar is now neither-home-nor-alien to another tenant. As the Devil struts onto the dancefloor, the camera cuts to a mid-close up shot of Simón’s pensive expression, suggestive of his realisation that he is, and likely

\textsuperscript{581} Wood, ‘Damned if you do…’.
\textsuperscript{582} Steinbock, \textit{Home and Beyond}, p. 180.
\textsuperscript{583} Ibid., p. 223.
\textsuperscript{584} V. Fuentes, \textit{Buñuel en México}, p. 156.
\textsuperscript{585} Durgnat, p. 138.
always has been, homeless both in a material and a spiritual sense. His use of the
word *casa*, whether meant in a purely physical sense, or used to denote spiritually
or secularly what Steinbock describes as ‘that communal sphere to which we
belong’.\textsuperscript{586} therefore rings hollow.

In contrast to Simón’s isolation, the group of Francophone diamond miners
in *La Mort en ce jardin* are ostensible homecomrades, ‘related by a typically
familiar home space and time’.\textsuperscript{587} On the one hand, unlike Simón, the band of
outlaws ‘have [a] home-world as their original basis and point of departure for [...] making
the acquaintance of alien worlds’, but on the other, they are the
embodiment of ‘an entire community [which stands], with respect to this home-
world, in the relationship of one who has lost something’.\textsuperscript{588} The question of
whether they have lost their home-place or whether they have collectively
renounced it is pertinent here. Despite his dream of returning to France, in one of
the film’s most surrealist sequences Castin tears up a photograph of the Arc de
Triomphe after burning another. As Wise says,

\[\text{[a]n encountered photograph glows with memories [...] of experience, of}
\]
\[\text{history, of family, friends. What creates the glow is the articulation of}
\]
\[\text{subject (homemaker) to object (home-marker), caught up in a mutual}
\]
\[\text{becoming-home. But that becoming opens up onto other milieus, other}
\]
\[\text{markers, other spaces.}\textsuperscript{589}\]

Coming after the scene depicting the snake carcass being devoured by ants, this
act is crucial to a consideration of the home-place within the film. As the camera
fades to black on the reanimated serpent, the Champs Elysées appears in the
frame. The roar of motor engines and car horns is jarring and incongruous
following the jungle soundscape. Presently the scene is revealed for what it really
is: not an allusion to the home-place, but an illusion thereof. The reverse angle
shot of Castin placing the memento in the fire and the camera’s lingering gaze as it
crumple into oblivion place the viewer firmly among the drifters, complicit to
some degree in the destruction of the illusory home (see appendix *LM 3*). The
liminal jungle is an impenetrable space and this remnant of home cannot open up
into the group’s present originary milieu. Indeed, in an echo of Malaguti’s

\textsuperscript{586} Steinbock, ‘Homelessness and the Homeless Movement’, p. 218.
\textsuperscript{587} Steinbock, *Home and Beyond*, p. 223.
\textsuperscript{588} Ludwig Landgrebe, ‘The World as a Phenomenological Problem’, *Philosophy and
Phenomenological Research*, 1.1 (1940), 38-58 (p. 48).
\textsuperscript{589} Wise, p. 298.
comments on the element of repetition inherent in Buñuel’s cinema, Giorgio Tinazzi argues: ‘Buñuel’s films, in demonstrating a substantial closure of the world they represent, very often have a circular structure, [...] that world does not have any exits’. Even when the characters encounter the wreck of the aircraft and are reunited with consumerist fetish objects – here also metonyms of an absent place and culture, as in Robinson Crusoe – they are equally meaningless. The jewels coveted by Djin and Maria appear ridiculous in this context and the group’s immersion in the alien means that

the elements on which the [film’s] scenario is based are given as totally abstract, money for example, without any link to a possible practical use governs the events and the behaviour of the characters in places that are equally abstract. With the abstraction of material objects comes the characters’ isolation from one another. Steinbock contends that ‘the identity of the individual [...] is revealed as a homecomrade in communal and historical interaction. Who we are is how we are home’. Through that which Malaguti terms a ‘setting at zero’ [azzeramento] in Buñuel’s cinema, as outlined in Chapter Three, section 3.10, the generative ontology described by Steinbock is precluded in this film. The characters, although well-rounded, are liminal beings in their instable position in time as well as space, as almost the entire film appears in medias res, as, indeed, does Simón del desierto. The prolonged contact with the ubiquitous alien within a volatile situation produces a rupture in everyday experience, which transposes the anthropological basis of liminality onto a phenomenological level, and this is especially relevant to this film. Steinbock writes that events such as the death of a child or a parent (here, Castin), the dismissal of our co-workers and, thus, our communal goals (here, the dissolution of communitas), or a war (here, the civil unrest in the mining village), ‘are just some examples of the disruption of a homeworld experience that give rise to an explicit “limit-situation”


591 Rebolledo, p. 98. ['Les éléments de base du scénario sont donnés comme totalement abstraits, l’argent par exemple, sans aucun rapport avec une utilisation pratique possible régit les événements et le comportement des personnages dans des lieux tout aussi abstraits'].

592 Steinbock, Home and Beyond, p. 223.
that calls into question [the] power to appropriate'. In short, as a point of contrast to Simón’s location neither here (in the home) nor there (in the alien), in this film the group is forced into the alien, a state that demands ‘a rupture or discontinuity of experience’, evidenced filmically by the tearing and burning of the photographs of home and the abstraction of material items.

5.3.1 ‘No me dejes en este abismo’: the abyss as home in Abismos de pasión
Alongside La Mort en ce jardin and Simón del desierto, Buñuel’s 1954 film adaptation of Emily Brontë’s Wuthering Heights gives rise to considerations of a home-place on the limen in both its spatial and philosophical dimensions. Abismos de pasión represents the completion of a project Buñuel began in the 1930s when he drafted a screenplay of the novel with Pierre Unik, the cameraman on Tierra sin pan. The sublime force of amour fou between Catherine and Heathcliffe – here Hispanicised as Catalina and Alejandro – attracted Buñuel, who claimed that, unlike Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe, ‘siempre he admirado esa novela, que entusiasmaba a los surrealistas’. Indeed, the surrealist ‘spirit’ of the novel, evident in parts of Buñuel’s adaptation, has earned this Mexican melodrama more scholarly attention than it might otherwise have received. Wolfram Schütte even ventures that ‘[o]nly one film [after Tierra sin pan] returns to the beginnings, lights the surrealistic fire once again with an immense gust of passionate, time- and place-uprooting force: Abismos de Pasion’. In conversation with Evans, Buñuel himself went as far as to say ‘Wuthering Heights might have been my best film, but the actors weren’t right’. The film’s narrative, as that of the novel, takes place between two dwellings. Between the ramshackle abode known as la granja, [Grenzsituation]...
inhabited by Catalina’s alcoholic brother Ricardo and which Alejandro appropriates after his ten-year-long absence from the area, and Catalina’s ordered residence with husband Eduardo and sister-in-law Isabel, is the arid landscape of the state of Guerrero, to replace the Yorkshire moors. Here once again, the landscape plays the dual role which it often does in Buñuel’s work, not least in La Mort en ce jardin and Simón del desierto, transcending its utilitarian function as setting to become another ‘paisaje-personaje’ in which a struggle between dwelling and non-dwelling is played out.600

The exterior shots depict a charred, barren landscape from the opening of the film as the credits roll over the image of a lifeless tree. Establishing shots of the two dwellings punctuate the narrative, suggesting the passage of time and functioning as rudimentary spatial referents demarcating the precipice of the abyss of the film’s title. María Serjo Richart observes that the characters are frequently shown as ‘little elements in a desolate landscape’, emphasising their isolation through the mise-en-scène.601 The vast distance between Eduardo and Catalina’s estate and the miserable farm on which Alejandro resides is presented as ‘an irreparably closed space between the hills that seem to stretch on to infinity’.602 Apart from Alejandro, this is a space where nothing comes and nothing goes, as Rodríguez and Sinardet point out.603 Like those of La Mort en ce jardin and Simón del desierto, they see this as another Deleuzian originary world, ‘a space undomesticated by man’.604 The use of the term ‘undomesticated’ is important, because the tension between the domesticated and the undomesticated, here rendered as the home and the alien through Eduardo and Alejandro respectively, comes to the fore in this film.

In the vein of liminality, it is pertinent to consider Alejandro as a Trickster figure, much like the fugitives in La Mort en ce jardin. Tricksters are ‘[a]lways marginal characters: outsiders, as they cannot trust or be trusted, cannot give or

600 Martialay, p. 8.
602 Rodríguez and Sinardet, p. 440. ['Un espace irrémédiablement clos entre des collines qui semblent s’étendre à l’infini'].
603 Ibid., p. 441.
604 Ibid. ['Non domestiqué par l’homme']. My emphasis.
share, they are incapable of living in a community’.\textsuperscript{605} Alejandro’s lack of (hi)story, his liminal *azzерamento* following his ten year absence, renders him rootless: he is a Buñuelian orphan. Furthermore, he is clearly allied with the exterior, scorched hills, illustrated by one scene in particular. As Alejandro, Catalina and Isabel are out walking, Catalina mocks Isabel’s feelings for Alejandro. Ashamed, Isabel flees between the sand dunes; Alejandro is shown racing along the top of the dune, sliding down it to trap her before frantically kissing and biting her neck in a paroxysm of sadomasochistic desire. Home and the interior are for him exclusively utilitarian, as he is shown numerous times entering and exiting *la granja* at dawn and dusk and is seen to eat and drink there. Horvath and Thomassen write:

*not having a home*, deeply felt human relations and existential commitments, the Trickster is not interested in solving the liminal crisis either. Quite on the contrary, being really at home in liminality, *or in homelessness*, his real interest lies in its opposite, in perpetuating such conditions of confusion.\textsuperscript{606}

For his part, Alejandro ‘introduces disorder into the civilised world of the manor and breaks the fragile harmony that exists among its residents’.\textsuperscript{607} He is the antithesis of the ordered and detached Eduardo; shortly before Alejandro returns to the manor, breaking and entering through a window, Eduardo is shown inserting a butterfly into his entomological display cabinet while on another occasion he is seen ordering books in his study. For Eduardo, Alejandro is a remnant of the alien that has returned to disrupt the hermetic homeworld of the manor. Significantly, Eduardo is the only character never shown outside the manor or its courtyard; the return of Alejandro disrupts his staid order and reveals the arbitrary nature of his bourgeois existential security. Anchored solely in the familiar, Eduardo is the antithesis of both Simón, who has neither home- nor alienworld, and the characters in *La Mort en ce jardin*, who negotiate the alien. Crucially, Steinbock suggests that ‘an idea of home as an homogenous sphere, impervious to the alien, [...] may just be an insidious way of covering over a deeper sense of homelessness that intrudes in all our lives’,\textsuperscript{608} an observation

\textsuperscript{605} Szakolczai, ‘Liminality and Experience’, p. 155.
\textsuperscript{606} Horvath and Thomassen, pp. 13-14. My emphasis.
\textsuperscript{607} Rodríguez and Sinardet, p. 444. [*Introduit le désordre dans l’univers policé du manoir et rompt la fragile harmonie régnant entre ses habitants*].
\textsuperscript{608} Steinbock, *Home and Beyond*, p. 233.
which points to the superficiality of Eduardo’s domesticity and the aforementioned ‘place-uprooting force’ that Schütte discerns in this film.

The much-remarked ending of the film sees Alejandro fatally shot by Ricardo as he stands over Catalina’s corpse after breaking into her tomb. This is patently the most surrealist sequence in the film. Alejandro, an early incarnation of Don Jaime, the pseudo-necrophile of Viridiana, kisses his dead lover before his sublime hallucination of Catalina’s return, her arms outstretched to welcome him to the abysmal afterlife. In reality, the hallucination is Ricardo, aiming a shotgun at Alejandro. Seijo Richart disavows any potential ambiguity that the film’s conclusion might contain, reading the ending as Ricardo seals the lovers in their tomb as ‘the saddest conclusion: there is nothing after death’.609 Certainly, unlike William Wyler’s 1939 Hollywood adaptation in which the ghosts of Cathy and Heathcliffe are reunited in the afterlife, Buñuel’s is a more linear, logical conclusion. However, in eschewing Wyler’s romantic metaphysics, Buñuel’s heroes are locked in the abyss of death, a paradoxical state of infinite finitude. To this end, Philip Strick is right to suggest that the entire narrative is concerned with margins and thresholds torn open;610 none more so than that of death (see appendix AP 1). Despite having a clearly defined narrative, this film arguably evidences a more radical surrealism than either La Mort en ce jardin and Simón del desierto through its treatment of amour fou. This paroxysmic force is the vehicle through which Catalina and Alejandro embrace their liminal immortality through repeated references to passion and death: Catalina proclaims ‘quiero a Alejandro más que la salvación de mi alma’; Alejandro implores Catalina’s spirit, ‘persiégueme, no me dejes en este abismo’. Alien to Eduardo’s stale, hermetic love, the trope is not portrayed negatively, and herein lies its relevance to questions of dwelling.

Through the foregrounding of amour fou and the extra-existential position of the Trickster figure the position of death as other is reversed, allowing the protagonists to embrace their liminality in a way that Simón and the Francophone fugitives cannot, as they embrace their sense of homelessness, being at home in their rootlessness and ultimate death. This is the film’s paradox – Alejandro and

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609 Serjo Richart, p. 32.
610 Philip Strick, ‘National Film Theatre Programme Notes: Abismos de pasión’ [digitised press cuttings in BFI Library collection].
Catalina can be said to be ‘capable of death as death’, that is, to appear conscious of and open to their own mortality. Their romanticised deaths within the film’s Gothic aesthetic contrast with the detached, etymological impetus that leads Eduardo to capture his collection of insects in his makeshift laboratory in order to ‘conservarlos intactos’. For Catalina, death as a destructive product of amour fou brings with it a freedom (in her own words the vultures she shoots ‘pasan sin sentir a la libertad de la muerte’, in contrast to Eduardo’s insects) that is lacking in Eduardo’s smothering attentiveness. Tellingly, on the evening of Alejandro’s return, Catalina tells her husband, ‘tu amor y el mío acabará con la muerte. El que tengo por Alejandro no es de este mundo’. Paul Harrison writes: ‘[t]o evoke the concept of dwelling is always to attempt to re-call, to restate or rephrase, an ur-concept; it is to describe an originary spacing’. By this, Harrison intends that ‘the knowing subject will always constitute its distances, perspective, gaze, or narrative from the intimacy of dwelling’. Death, for the rootless Tricksters Alejandro and Catalina, is this originary spacing in reverse, in the sense that while the scorched abyss between the manor and la granja is an obstacle to dwelling together, in the tomb the lovers have achieved their infinite finitude. As Peter Evans and Robin Fiddian put it: ‘Alejandro’s «quiero morir contigo» [...] is [...] a complicated revelation of an individual’s desire for liberation from the prison of mortality’. Dwelling as belonging is only possible – paradoxically – for the pair in death.

5.4 The body and the home: Los olvidados and Nazarín

In contrast to the typologies of exterior space evident in the discussion of the above films, my analysis of Los olvidados and Nazarín in Chapter Four centred around the representation of the body-self in the place-worlds of the respective films. Casey’s concept of the place-world, or the ‘inhabitation of places in a circumambient landscape’, resonates with the idea(l) of a home-place. According to Wise, the ‘life-world is flooded by the variant radiance of the milieus.

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611 Heidegger, p. 151.
613 Robin W. Fiddian and Peter William Evans, Challenges to Authority: Fiction and Film in Contemporary Spain (London: Tamesis, 1988), p. 66.
Each milieu opens up onto others [...] What creates the territory is an accretion of milieu effects’. Following this, a home-place can be seen as the kernel of a more extensive territorial place-world and just as the body is instrumental in the negotiation of the place-world, so it is paramount in the construction of a home; indeed, Steinbock even ventures that, when taking home as a site which structures one’s experiences and behaviour, ‘it might not be too strained to speak of the lived-body precisely as a “home-body”’. When reconsidering the narratives of Los olvidados and Nazarín as giving rise to the protagonists’ search for a place of belonging within their respective territories, issues of bodily representation are therefore vital.

To explore the absence of a home-place in Los olvidados it is fitting to return to Pedro’s dream sequence, which takes place in his family’s dwelling. Low-key lighting along with discordant music signal that this is an alternate reality, one which gives representation to Pedro’s trauma, based on lack. The lack here is of a nurturing parent (more specifically, a mother) and of a home. Fredrik Svenaeus asks:

[w]hat if the repressed which recurs in uncanny anxiety is something that was once the most familiar and which has now through the process of repression become the most estranged? What if it has to do with the most basic loss there is – the loss of the first object, the mother.

Svenaeus’s recourse to Freudian psychoanalysis and the unheimlich lends itself well to this film, as shown by Evans. In Chapter Four, I contended that Marta was also an embodiment of the abject and a cipher for the place-world on an increasing scale from neighbourhood to city to nation. Her most immediate and intimate link, however, is arguably with the home. According to Jacobsen,

[i]t is [...] essential to our normal daily experience of both the body and home that they are for the most part neither thematically noticeable to us nor are they for the most part actively manipulated or called upon by us.

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615 Wise, p. 298.
616 Steinbock, Home and Beyond, p. 233.
617 For more on the absent father figure in this film, see Julia Tuñón, ‘El sombrero de copa y la ausencia del padre’, in Luis Buñuel: dos miradas, ed. by Cavielles García and Poppenberg, pp. 81-102. An oedipal reading of the film has Jaibo as the abusive surrogate father. See Polizzotti, pp. 62-3.
618 Fredrik Svenaeus, ‘Das Unheimliche – Towards a Phenomenology of Illness’, Medicine, Health Care and Philosophy, 3 (2000), 3-16 (p. 6).
619 Evans, The Films of Luis Buñuel, pp. 81-89.
Instead, the body and home recede from our attention while we engage with our daily projects.\textsuperscript{620} The deliberate use of slow motion during this sequence is striking not only visually, but also for what it communicates in terms of this argument. Buñuel says ‘[s]iempre me ha gustado el ralentí, porque da una dimensión inesperada hasta al gesto más trivial, nos hace ver detalles que a la velocidad normal no percibimos’.\textsuperscript{621} Here the use of slow motion, so rare in Buñuel’s cinema, jolts the viewer, who fixates on every bodily movement. The audience is conscious of the bodies in the frame and their position within the domestic setting: home and the body are not given as natural here; as portents of the Gothic mode they do not recede from our attention. As Marta advances with the gristly chunk of flesh, Freud’s return of the repressed is recast as a phenomenological awakening, for Pedro and the watching audience, of the abundant lack of a home-place and corporeal warmth. As the embodiment of the unheimlich, Marta’s body is a reminder that Pedro will forever be, as Svenaeus asserts in general terms, ‘sensitive to this a priori homelessness of existence which will announce itself in the uncanny’.\textsuperscript{622} As a symbol of the formless abject, Marta denies her son’s longed-for jouissance and assimilation with her, and condemns him to a position as ‘an exile who asks himself where’, searching for a home in the uniformly bleak arrabal.\textsuperscript{623}

Tuñón suggests that the protagonists of Los olvidados are in search of something (‘que siempre buscan’) within a ‘ciudad perdida’.\textsuperscript{624} The slums contain no hope of a home-place. Yet one opportunity presents itself from outside: the Escuela Granja. The alternative ending that Buñuel filmed for Los olvidados is crucial here.\textsuperscript{625} Discovered in 1996 in the archives of the Filmoteca de la UNAM, Mexico, it shows Pedro fighting with Jaibo in Meche’s stable. Their destinies are reversed: here it is Jaibo who falls and is killed. Pedro then returns to the farm school having reclaimed the director’s fifty pesos stolen by Jaibo earlier in the film.

\textsuperscript{620} Jacobson, p. 370.
\textsuperscript{621} De la Colina and Pérez Turrent, p. 51.
\textsuperscript{622} Svenaeus, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{623} Kristeva, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{624} Tuñón, ‘Cuerpo humano, cuerpo urbano’, p. 87, p. 81.
\textsuperscript{625} For a more detailed analysis of the alternative ending than can be elaborated here, and an interview with Francisco Gaytán, the sub-director of the Filmoteca of the UNAM, see Dey, pp. 255-90.
After reclaiming the money, Pedro briefly meets Ojitos, who lends him his poncho as they sleep under a makeshift shelter. The final shot, the briefest but the most important, has Pedro marching triumphantly away from a static camera through the open gates of the Escuela Granja, accompanied by extra-diegetic fanfare (see appendix LO 3). It seems that this is a potential place of belonging. To give Tuñón’s quotation more context, she asserts that ‘[la] ciudad rota, maltrecha’ is ‘[un] escenario preciso para sus personajes que siempre buscan, escenario paralelo a los cuerpos torturados y desmembrados’. While the original ending, notably with the camera placed at the bottom of a garbage heap as it tracks the rolling motion of Pedro’s tortured corpse down the hill, implicates the viewer in the action of Meche and her grandfather, this alternative ending encourages a distancing of the viewer from the uncomfortable social realities of the film through its static camera, the idea of karmic retribution for Jaibo and a salvation narrative for Pedro. The farm school is the end of this search, a place where bodies are ‘rehabilitated within the collective’, a collective that is uniform and in uniform. Dey reads this ending as a disavowal of the poetics of cruelty within the rest of the film and believes that Pedro’s assimilation into the homogenous group is anti-ethical in its negation of individual responsibility. I agree that this saccharine ending is an inflection at odds with the rest of the film: the title implies that these ‘forgotten ones’ will be constantly searching. Here, Pedro has found and has been remembered. To view this ending as merely an exercise in censorship manipulation would be to reduce its relationship to the original to mere prescriptive functionality. Rather, it functions in dialogue with Pedro’s earlier dream sequence, representing a realised belonging – the inversion of the unheimlich home and abject place-world. The ultimate cruelty, however, is that this ending is more incredible within Buñuel’s narrative than the original.

Whereas Pedro is trapped in a thickly constituted place-world with no centre, Nazarín remains aloof from a thinly constituted place-world with no centre. With recourse to Relph’s paradigm of insider/outsider modes of interaction with regards to place, in Chapter Four I argued that Nazarín can be considered an existential outsider, perhaps the most concrete example of the

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626 Tuñón, ‘Cuerpo humano, cuerpo urbano’, p. 87.
627 Dey, p. 275.
alienated man across Buñuel's cinema. Nazarín’s disavowal of his corporeality is the primary stumbling block to his connection to his surroundings, a dislocation which is obviously meant to be communicated filmically as, according to the shooting script, the protagonist wanders through ‘camino cualquiera’ after ‘paisaje cualquiera’. Yet, as opposed to the liminal Simón, Nazarín is constantly confronted by place, moving through an ever-changing arc of landscape, and by the body, ravaged by disease.

The default body type in Nazarín is the decaying, diseased or defunct body, with which the hero readily aligns himself in his attempt to sublimate flesh into spirit. The ill body is a constant reminder of Nazarín’s lack of a home-place. Jacobsen suggests,

[i]n these cases of temporary disjunction with our home or body [fatigue, illness], the possibilities for acting that are usually open to us through our body or home are somehow hindered, and attention is thereby drawn to our body or home.\(^{628}\)

This echoes her earlier point regarding the subconscious role of the body and the home in grounding everyday experience, upset cinematographically in Los olvidados in Pedro’s dream sequence. In Nazarín, besides the plague episode, the earlier sequence in which the priest prays for Beatriz’s sick niece is relevant here. Nazarín is surrounded by women – Beatriz, her sister, Ándara and several others – and begins to pray for the girl. However, the women suddenly descend into a state of hysteria: one flings herself on the floor while Ándara beats her chest reciting an incantation. Beatriz’s sister touches Nazarín with the flower of a sugar cane, transferring this to her daughter in what María-Dolores Boixadós terms a synthesis of Christian-pagan ritual,\(^{629}\) and another woman grasps desperately at Nazarín’s body (see appendix N 3). The scene ends not in religious communion but in a collective carnal paroxysm. Nazarín appears downcast as he is reminded of his physicality. Pain and slander are easily sublimated via religious faith, but the hero’s cognisance of his body brings with it a realisation of a lack of place for this body. Fittingly, the following scene shows Nazarín once again in distance shot on the village’s periphery, ready to continue his camino.

\(^{628}\) Jacobson, p. 371.

\(^{629}\) María-Dolores Boixadós, ‘Nazarín el anarquista: literatura y cine, Galdós y Buñuel’, La Torre: Revista de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 3.9 (1989), 91-103 (pp. 98-99).
A more literal nomad than Simón, Nazarín’s peripatetic existence and changing surroundings mean that his construction of a home-place through habitation – a holding of place – is the protagonist’s main challenge. Wise writes, ‘the nomad is the continual struggle between spatial forces and identity, the struggle to make a home, to create a space that opens up onto other spaces’. The reversal of the hero from giver to receiver in the film’s final sequence, together with a greater focus on the body via a series of close-ups on the prisoners’ feet as they march and a reinterpretation of Nazarín’s head bandage as a marker of the flesh rather than a crown of thorns stigmata, is the priest’s ‘descubrimiento de la realidad del hombre’ through a spatial lens: his preliminary engagement with place. There is irony here, however. Dey bemoans the humanist rebirth/theological epiphany readings of the ending, dismissing especially the ‘surface’ reading of Louis Seguin, who believes ‘[t]here is nothing more to see in Nazarín than what is shown’. Dey’s desire is that the viewer see beyond the images on screen and acknowledge the ambiguity in the ending. In light of the focus on the home-place, this element of ambiguity in the film’s final frames inflects ironically the conclusions of Chapter Four: certainly, Nazarín has moved towards a preliminary habitation, but when he is finally present-in-place and present-in-body – a form of liberation – we find that his body is following the road to physical confinement in prison. After he has accepted the pineapple, the final frames of the film show an anguished Nazarín, described in the script as dominated by ‘un gran dolor’, tracking the hero in mid close-up as he moves along the road. Ultimately, the camera halts, leaving Nazarín to walk out of the frame, inviting the viewer to contemplate his fate. Just when his nomadic existence opens up to other spaces, his trajectory will be an arrested one, in a literal and metaphorical sense, and Nazarín’s imprisonment will be an enforced, artificial home-place, whereby ‘home can […] become a concretization of human misery: loneliness, rejection, exploitation, and violence’.

630 Wise, p. 305.
631 Paz, p. 43.
632 Dey, p. 163.
634 AB 541, p. 104.
5.4.1 Housed nowhere and everywhere shut in: *El ángel exterminador*

Perhaps the film of Buñuel’s Mexican period that most explicitly negates the idea of the home as a place of comfort is *El ángel exterminador*. Shot in 1962, it is a seminal contribution to Buñuel’s *oeuvre* as a whole, in terms of both form and content. Following an evening at the opera, a group of guests return to the mansion of their hosts Edmundo and Lucía Nóbile to dine. After dinner they find themselves inexplicably trapped in the salon, an opulent room adjacent to the larger parlour, although nothing blocks their exit. Again, a focus on the body in place in this film evinces philosophical questions of belonging and alienation brought out by my spatial readings of all the films in this thesis, whether they have borne the epigraph of ‘masterpiece’ or ‘dull comment’. The absent home-place is arguably never more conspicuous in Buñuel’s cinema than in *El ángel exterminador*, as the *náufragos* remain stranded in the salon the home figuratively and physically crumbles around them. They are, to invert Bachelard’s truism, *housed nowhere and everywhere shut in*.

Critical analyses of *El ángel exterminador* often highlight the role of space within the film. Quite obviously, as Rebolledo signals, space is important as a ‘container’, used not only to frame the action but also to contain the characters. Pietsie Feenstra grounds what she sees as the film’s project to demythologise the upper classes in the film’s spatial dynamics, specifically as mapped onto an inside/outside matrix, whereby the guests are the insiders and the gathering crowd and institutional presence of the police and army outside the mansion are

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636 The abject misery of the guests imprisoned in the mansion has been said to reprise the denigration of the middle classes in *L’Âge d’or*, establishing an intertextual dialogue between the two films. See, for example, Poyato, pp. 152-55, and Durgnat, pp. 125-29.

637 Both of these judgements are taken from Higginbotham’s study of Buñuel’s Mexican work. While films such as *Nazarín* and *El ángel exterminador* appear in chapters prefaced with the former accolade (p. 107 and p. 149 respectively), ‘dull comment’ refers specifically to the triptych of French co-productions made during the 1950s (p. 104). Higginbotham, *Luis Buñuel*.

638 The working title for the film was *Los náufragos de la calle Providencia*, providing a link to *Robinson Crusoe* and the effacement of bourgeois culture. For more on this, see Dey, pp. 86-129. Buñuel attributes the film to the germ of his earlier screenplay about characters adrift on a raft, inspired by Théodore Géricault’s painting *Le Radeau de la Méduse*. De la Colina and Pérez Turrent, p. 132.

639 The original reads ‘[h]oused everywhere but nowhere shut in’, Bachelard, p. 62. His contention is that the dweller should remain open to other possible dwellings through dreams as ‘[i]t is better to live in a state of impermanence than one of finality’, ibid, p. 61. Applied to *El ángel exterminador*, this idealism falters: the possibility of an elsewhere is precluded.

640 Rebolledo, pp. 142-47.
Although she provides a conjectural aetiological interpretation of the film – ‘[p]erhaps it can be seen as Buñuel’s attempt to end his exile’ – Feenstra does not consider the possibility that the guests may, in fact, be outsiders, yanked from the reassuring but artificial comforts of their collective place-world through a process of exteriority. Here is where the filmic depiction of the body in place comes to the fore as the twenty-one characters are subjected to corporeal disintegration.

The guests’ prolonged imprisonment has obvious bodily implications. Aside from the scatological allusions in the recurring shots of the Chinese urns in the closet that the guests use to alleviate themselves, there are numerous scenes in which the characters perform perfunctory bodily tasks: Alicia is shown cutting her toenails; Silvia is chastised by Juana and her brother Francisco for combing her hair absent-mindedly; various male characters are seen shaving their legs. However, Buñuel goes beyond the merely somatic to show the psychosomatic effect of the guests’ imprisonment, as noted in the film script: ‘[e]l Director irá mostrando con discreción los distintos “tics” que han ido adquiriendo algunos invitados: arrancarse pelos de las cejas, guño de ojos, sacarse capinillas [sic] de la nariz’. Blanca is shown to pull out clumps of hair, and Francisco’s face repeatedly contorts with rage. Furthermore, when the fiancés Beatriz and Eduardo commit suicide in the closet in an act of amour fou, their blood seeps underneath the closed door. These psychosomatic discharges and bodily fluids betray an increasing exteriority of what they hope to keep hidden, rendered in criticism of the film as the bestial instincts of man.

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642 Feenstra, p. 126.


644 Michel Estève believes that bourgeois man becomes a wolf-man in this film. Michel Estève, ‘The Exterminating Angel: No Escape from the Human Condition’, trans. by Sallie Iannotti, in The World of Luis Buñuel, ed. by Mellen, pp. 244-54 (p. 248). This recalls the lycanthropic legends surrounding the Las Hurdes region, which are the focus of José María Domínguez Moreno’s article ‘La licanthroplía en Extremadura’, Revista de Folklore, 113 (1990), 170-74. Available at [http://www.funjdiaz.net/folklore/07ficha.php?id=841](http://www.funjdiaz.net/folklore/07ficha.php?id=841) [accessed 5 June 2014].
the decomposition of the salon, this degradation has crucial implications for the home-place.

The claustrophobic room which acts as the prison of the náufragos is, like their bodies, pockmarked by their attempts to burst the water pipe and fuel a fire to roast the three sheep that wander into the salon. The state of their bodies mirrors that of the room, exposing what is hidden beneath a superficial semblance of respectability and security, as Pérez Soler observes: ‘the interior becomes the site where all those dreaded miseries from which it [the bourgeoisie] has sought to escape actually emerge’.645 The use of the verb ‘emerge’ is interesting: more concretely, what surfaces via the disintegration of the mansion and the body is anxiety (see appendix EA 1). According to Heidegger,

[in anxiety one feels ‘uncanny’. Here the peculiar indefiniteness of that which Dasein finds itself alongside in anxiety, comes proximally to expression: the “nothing and nowhere”. But here “uncanniness” also means “not-being-at-home” [...]. In our first indication of the phenomenal character of Dasein’s basic state and in our clarification of the existential meaning of “Being-in” as distinguished from the categorical signification of ‘insideness’, Being-in was defined as “residing alongside...”, “Being familiar with...”.646

Anxiety’s symptom is therefore an uncanny affliction. The uncanny as explicated by Heidegger above is a lack (a nothing and a nowhere) and a not-being-at-home: a lack of home. That the house is the space in which this anxiety is brought to the surface exposes the characters’ forced domesticity as a pretence, as ‘[a]nxiety and alienation, hardly hidden by surface rationalization, are often the emotional contents of today’s everyday settings’.647 Furthermore, Heidegger claims that anxiety is not directed towards a particular material object, but rather towards an indefiniteness, rendering it fundamentally existential. It should be noted that for Heidegger this mode of Being is not inherently negative; indeed, it is necessary to disclose ‘the world as world’, in the sense that it individualises a person’s being-in-the-world, preventing this from getting lost in the general, impersonal ‘they’ and from acquiring a ‘tranquillized self-assurance’.648 However, even though they eventually escape the salon, the diners do not manage to reside alongside, to refer

645 Pérez Soler, p. 409.
to the above quotation, as the final sequence of the film in the church suggests. A lateral tracking shot of the characters, clad respectably once again, shows their apathy as the service comes to an end. Attempting to leave the church, they, and the other faithful, find they are again imprisoned, this time on a larger scale. Thus, anxiety as represented in this film does not appear to give rise to a level of attunement of being-in-the-world, or 'why we are open to the world as a possibility for ourselves', as Svenaeus puts it, due to the simple fact that this anxiety is repeated and expatiated.\textsuperscript{649} The only certainty, it seems, is one of confinement without resolution. Thus, this ending visualises more sardonically the essence of Nazarín's fate and forms a thematic intertext with the ending of \textit{Simón del desierto}. It is the Buñuelian repetitious cycle \textit{par excellence}, as proposed by Deleuze, and the more the characters are confined within, the more they are externalised. Thus imprisonment is mapped onto micro and macro territories, from home to church to world: housed nowhere and everywhere shut in.

The Marxist inside/outside interpretation of the film's spatial dynamics is too inflexible a distinction, then. Miles asserts that '[t]he concern with border crossing and identification with insiders or outsiders is central to, indeed is the entire pretext for the development of the narrative'. Ultimately, Miles affirms the validity of a philosophical reading of this film. He writes that the film 'is structured by the perpetually unstable dynamics of belonging as it performs them',\textsuperscript{650} though I suggest that it performs not the dynamics of belonging, but its negation, underscoring in various ways all of the films examined in this thesis. The increasing externalisation of the characters' bodies and psyches through the emergence of carnal fluids and compulsions hollows out the meaning of the home as it shifts from Bachelard's apotheosised image to an \textit{unheimlich} receptor for the accumulating toll of decay and death. Moreover, the unsettling events on screen are transposed also onto the viewer. Gutiérrez-Albilla claims that the director's existential anxieties in this film 'express the idea that human beings have become aware of the absurdity of the world'.\textsuperscript{651} As the mask of tranquilised self-assurance slips, to cite Heidegger, anxiety on screen induces discomfort off screen, for 'what surfaces in anxiety is human existence as such: every “thing” in the world – every

\textsuperscript{649} Svenaeus, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{650} Miles, p. 180.
\textsuperscript{651} Gutiérrez-Albilla, p. 93.
project – reveals itself as empty against the backdrop of a basic meaningless – a homelessness of life’.\textsuperscript{652} To posit a rigid inside/outside binary here is to dull the film’s impact as the viewer is forced to adopt a faux working-class-hero position and identify automatically with the home help rather than the bourgeoisie. The disturbing potential – emotional and spatial – of the film is brought out by a more flexible reading which acknowledges film’s potential to comment on the façade of rational human existence. Ultimately, this interpretation is more faithful to Buñuel’s directive to the viewer settling down to watch the film: ‘[i]f the film that you are about to see seems to you enigmatic or incongruous, that is how life is also. […]’ Perhaps the best explanation for \textit{The Exterminating Angel} is that, rationally, there is none’.\textsuperscript{653} Buñuel’s non-explanation of this film intimates that celluloid reality has the potential to expose the celluloid, or artificial, aspect of our reality; a case of reel life exposing real life, as Aitken and Zonn put it.\textsuperscript{654} To this end, Pallasmaa summarises the affective potential of art in general: ‘[c]inema and architecture, as all art, function as alluring projection screens for our emotions’.\textsuperscript{655}

\textbf{5.5 Conclusions: an impossible home?}

In all of the films examined in this thesis, the characters’ interaction with and action in their environments is frequently founded on a principle of negation and doubt. When taken as philosophical texts, the films appear to espouse Novalis’s thought that ‘[p]hilosophy is really homesickness, an urge to be at home everywhere’.\textsuperscript{656} It is this impulse to dwell, this ‘basic character of being and […] wish to belong to the environment, to be at home’ that appears precluded in Buñuel’s Mexican cinema.\textsuperscript{657} As the images of home, or a possible home, are undermined filmically, the various conceptions of home are systematically undone in the films analysed here, creating mutual points of convergence.

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{652} Svenaeus, p. 8
\textsuperscript{653} Miles, p. 179, n. 15.
\textsuperscript{654} Aitken and Zonn, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{655} Pallasmaa, \textit{The Architecture of Image}, p. 32.
\textsuperscript{657} Donohoe, p. 28.
\end{footnotesize}
‘[O]ur house is our corner of the world’, writes Bachelard. ‘As has often been said, it is our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the word’.658 The home as primordial location from which we set out into the world is negated in Simón del desierto, as Simón remains stranded in the desert, just as it is in La Mort en ce jardin, because the diamond miners of the anonymous Latin American republic are cut off from their origins. The focus on liminal space in Chapter Three highlights the protagonists’ positions between spatial referents. Bringing this into dialogue with considerations of home and belonging, it becomes apparent that the characters’ respective surroundings – the desert and the jungle – are unequivocally closed milieus, surroundings which do not open onto other, different spatial markers, thus undermining Wise’s assertion that ‘[h]ome […] is a collection of milieus, and as such is the organization of markers (objects) and the formation of space’.659 The protagonists’ liminal azzeramento – temporally without past or future and spatially without a here or there – renders them unable to delineate a homeworld from an alienworld. Furthermore, the ill-fated lovers in Abismos de pasión are the embodiment of the Trickster, an extra-existential figure at home in a liminal homelessness, rendered as the abyss of the film’s title. The parched landscape of this film does unfold onto another milieu: the infinite finitude of death. Ironically, only in death can the lovers be said to have achieved a belonging, inverting the depiction of the home-place as origin.

Similarly, home as something to be constructed is not possible in the above films. Wise writes that ‘home is a becoming within an always already territorialized space (the home, the house, the domestic)’.660 The implication here is obviously that the result of such action, the process of becoming, is intrinsically salutary. However, for the dinner guests in El ángel exterminador, the mansion becomes little more than a container, de-territorialised and fragmented to its inhabitants, while the guests themselves become primitive figures.661 Indeed, Pérez Soler points out that ‘the domestic interior becomes the bourgeois’ tomb. In this way, Buñuel takes the idea of dwelling as casing to a macabre – but cogent –

658 Bachelard, p. 4.
659 Wise, p. 299.
660 Ibid., p. 301.
661 Fuentes argues that the characters ‘hacen un largo viaje al fondo de nuestros orígenes primigenios’. V. Fuentes, Buñuel en México, p. 148.
ending'.\textsuperscript{662} For all his efforts, Crusoe’s island is also a casing of sorts, making his escape impossible. However, unlike the closed and interstitial desert and jungle, it is penetrated by other milieus that themselves remain incomplete, fragments of another life as the world beyond its shores is emptied of all meaning. This lack of meaning undermines his prospective home-place. Relph suggests ‘[t]o build a new house or settle in a new territory is a fundamental project, equivalent perhaps to a repetition of the founding of the world’.\textsuperscript{663} This is a romantic assertion, given that in today’s world there is a constant stream of refugees and asylum seekers in temporary holding camps. A refugee of sorts, Crusoe’s attempt to recreate his previous ‘middle station’ of life – admired now in retrospect – is only partially successful and is readily abandoned in favour of a return to the previous world from which Crusoe felt the need to escape. For his part, Nazarín’s realisation of himself as an autonomous being implies the construction of a mode of being with a commitment to embodiment and to place. According to Trigg, ‘[h]ome is thought of as a thing to be salvaged from the wreckage of memory, there to be reinserted into the living self, as though it had accidentally fallen by the wayside but now demanded recollection’.\textsuperscript{664} Trigg frames his description of the forgotten home within a context of homesickness, and while I do not contend that Nazarín is afflicted with homesickness – he, much like Simón, lacks any foundational experience of home – Trigg’s citation is apt. As Nazarín exits the frame in the final shot, returned to the world, he is ironically moving towards nothing more than ‘la esterilidad de un nuevo y definitivo aislamiento’.\textsuperscript{665}

The connotation of home most difficult to disavow – the home as a cocoon-like shelter – is systematically subverted in Los olvidados. Bachelard’s initial metaphor for the house is a cradle, where ‘life begins well, [...] enclosed, protected, all warm in the house’.\textsuperscript{666} Pedro’s shack is pervaded by the cruelty of the surrounding place-world while the idios of this place-world is expressed through his mother’s body in the dream sequence. The structure provides little protection or maternal warmth, and, given the elision of the caring, wholesome mother with

\textsuperscript{662} Pérez Soler, p. 411.
\textsuperscript{663} Relph, Place and Placelessness, p. 83.
\textsuperscript{664} Trigg, p. 195.
\textsuperscript{665} C. Fuentes, p. 141.
\textsuperscript{666} Bachelard, p. 7.
the home and the homeland, the vitriolic public reaction to the images of maternal neglect could easily be interpreted as an outcry against the representation of a failed home as much as a perverted motherhood, recalling Rivera-Cordero’s elision of the two as she posits ‘a new vision of Mexico as a mother who fails her children’. For Evvie, the game-preserve is a site of coercion, leading to her premature sexual initiation. Buñuel counters the association of the island with an idyllic retreat from the opening sequence of The Young One, as Traver is faced with the hostile sign to would-be trespassers. Miller’s abortive utopia, like Crusoe’s, is caught in the skein of cultural influence and the intrusion of the mainland society, against which the island comes to be constituted as a heterotopic space of crisis (for Evvie) and deviation (for Miller), is omnipresent. Furthermore, for Evvie at least, this crisis heterotopia will merely be replaced by another: the children’s home – for children with no home. In this way, Evvie echoes Nazarín: as both characters become corporeally cognisant, both move on to uncertain, and presumably institutionalised, futures. Finally, the opulent mansion and plush bureaucratic interiors of Ojeda inhabited by Inés and Vázquez in La Fièvre monte à El Pao are not impervious to the ubiquitous gaze of totalitarian power. As a satellite state, Ojeda is in a condition of authoritarian finality. Heidegger’s often-cited definition of dwelling is that it is a ‘staying with things’, that is, ‘cultivating a relationship to the broader environment, allowing the indeterminacy of place to grow within us as we adapt to a world of new horizons’. The mise-en-scène of this film suggests that the protagonists are staying under things, oppressed by the heat, the starched white uniforms and the constant surveillance behind closed doors and blinds. Vázquez’s political idealism leads not to change, but indirectly causes Inés’s death and his own certain death: Ojeda offers no indeterminacy, imposing only a state of finality.

667 Rivera-Cordero, p. 315.
669 Trigg, p. 195.
Conclusion

Los personajes de Buñuel están en una búsqueda constante para conseguir algo que les es imposible lograr.670

Ávila Dueñas is writing here specifically about Buñuel's Mexican period. His observation forms the impetus behind my reading of the films discussed in this thesis. This judgement is palpable in Buñuel's cinema and often forms the subtext of different analytical frameworks: the surrealist impulse towards libertarianism in L’Âge d’or, for example, or thwarted sexual desire in any number of the filmmaker's movies, none more so than Cet obscur objet du désir. Considered in the light of the argument of this thesis, however, Ávila Dueñas’s observation enters into dialogue with Carlos Fuentes’s metaphorical ‘búsqueda del ser auténtico’ of Buñuel's characters, Michel’s ideal of de-alienation and Chaspoul’s belief that Buñuel's characters never come to successfully inhabit the places in which they find themselves, as outlined in Chapter One. Paradoxically, then, the originality of my reading of the Mexican films works to a large extent from within traditionally inscribed parameters of Buñuel scholarship, expanding both the potential meaning and relevance of critical literature on Buñuel and possible readings of the film texts themselves. In fact, Ávila Dueñas’s statement exemplifies the ambiguous nature of Buñuel's cinema, in which a number of readings can be elaborated; the spatial analysis carried out in this thesis engages extensively with the critical literature on the films themselves, inflecting the various readings to argue that a concern with space is at the heart of these films. In doing so, the thesis confirms Conley’s view that the spatial dynamics of Buñuel's cinema are ever more pertinent.671

As I have explained, the spatial concerns of the films have been frequently intimated by researchers and critics, yet ultimately left largely undeveloped. A radical, interdisciplinary critical approach to this body of work, as employed throughout this thesis, brings an alternative reading of these films to the fore, simultaneously freeing up the commercial strand of the Mexican cinema from genre-based analysis and elaborating an alternative interpretation of the more auteurist films beyond tried-and-tested paradigms in Buñuel studies. The

670 Ávila Dueñas, p. 289.
671 Conley, p. 45.
approach I have taken has enabled a complementary reading of films traditionally considered more auteurist and those labelled as ‘películas alimenticias’, independently of frameworks previously used to situate the two together, such as those informed by psychoanalysis and sexual theory. With regards to research on the director, it is the hope that this thesis should serve as a springboard for further scholarship. The number of extended studies of Buñuel’s Mexican cinema remains relatively low, even if writing on the period has advanced over the course of the past few decades, thanks largely to the publication of numerous edited volumes and conference proceedings. This thesis represents a further extended study of the Mexican cinema.

It also has implications for approaches in film studies. As ‘an authentic “Author”’, Buñuel has traditionally been approached from an auteur perspective, in turn nourished by established theoretical paradigms in cinematic analysis. Indeed, Linda Williams identifies four main branches of Buñuel criticism: the surrealist Buñuel, the realist Buñuel, the auteurist Buñuel and the formalist Buñuel, and the critics that accompany each branch. In terms of spatial analysis, an auteur-biographical approach has coloured analyses of transnationalism and exile in Buñuel’s cinema, often seeking to place his films in claiming them for Mexican, Spanish or French national cinemas. Ironically, in foregrounding the importance of a spatial reading informed by philosophical themes of freedom and alienation already fundamental to various branches of Buñuel criticism, the underlying placelessness of these largely realist films is highlighted, for the most part independently of questions of aetiological auteurism. Although Williams ultimately foregrounds Buñuel’s films in the surrealist tradition, she acknowledges that the director’s movies constantly ‘wiggle out of this tenuous grasp [to categorise them] and force us, once again, to question our critical methods’. It is hoped that the methodology used in this thesis constitutes a wiggling out of and a questioning of tried-and-tested analytical frameworks with regards to Buñuel, and shows how previous scholarship on the filmmaker can inform new scholarship.

674 Ibid., p. 205.
and open up fresh avenues for exploration, not only in Buñuel studies but more broadly within film studies.

In its spatial reading, the thesis takes inspiration from the spatial turn in analysis in the humanities and social sciences. Warf and Arias make clear: ‘[f]ilm captures and reproduces space, bringing it to the eye and into consciousness in a manner no other technique can quite approximate’. As an inherently visual medium, cinema can utilise space and setting to add another layer of meaning to the narrative. Melbye terms this ‘cinematic allegory’, or an assembled narrative mode, wherein the principal characters move beyond their normal protagonist/antagonist functions and into a symbolic dimension of meaning. Cinematic allegories usually have a narrower range of characters, each connoting a specific meaning or idea. Such narratives invite a second interpretation beyond the immediately visible world that is otherwise sufficient in more conventional films to entertain an audience.

Melbye maintains a distinction between popular and independent forms of cinema and concentrates mostly on the latter in his study. My analysis approximates Melbye’s definition of cinematic allegory applied to both strands of Buñuel’s Mexican cinema, using these as a springboard for a philosophical consideration of the representation of belonging through cinema. As such, aside from its thematic focus on space, this thesis roughly fits in to the growing appraisal of film as a possible philosophical text, a promising sub-discipline that Daniel Shaw argues is in its infancy. I do not claim that this is the sole method of interpreting the texts, nor do I propose any intentional fallacy. However, it is fitting to recall that Buñuel read philosophy during his time at the Residencia de Estudiantes and avoided dictating monolithic meaning in his films: ‘[e]n una obra de imaginación [...] hay un elemento de misterio, de duda, de ambigüedad. Soy ambiguo siempre. La ambigüedad me es consustancial porque rompe las ideas hechas, inmutables’. In glimpsing another possible reading beyond the level of narrative, one that questions the concept of a stable dwelling place, this thesis adheres to Buñuel’s commitment to breaking fixed idea(l)s.

The question remains, then, in what way the argument put forward in this thesis inflects Buñuel’s cinema. Are the films to be taken in a wholly pessimistic

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675 Warf and Arias, p. 9.
676 Melbye, p. 3.
678 De la Colina and Pérez Turrent, p. 140.
spirit? Such a judgement would surely be contrary to Buñuel’s adherence to ambiguity. The question is a complex one with no easy answer. However, we can revisit Wood’s essay on Buñuel’s Mexican films in this respect:

Luis Buñuel said more than once that his films were designed to show us that we do not live in the best of worlds. They certainly do that, but the formulation scarcely seems strong enough, or flexible enough. It suggests that those who know that they do not live in the best of worlds have nothing to learn from Buñuel, which I hope is not true. It also implies that those who think they do live in such a world can be persuaded to think otherwise by a movie, which is pretty unlikely. Buñuel’s films display a world which must be changed, which is intolerable. But they offer no indication of how this world can be changed; indeed, they usually intimate that it cannot.679

Wood intimates that Buñuel’s cinema provides no exit from the disturbing and upsetting (used here in a spatial, as well as literal, sense) worlds that it portrays. The narrative linearity of his commercial and auteurist Mexican movies, as opposed to the formal complexity of the later French films, veils a marked exploration of the human need to find a place in a world that continually prevents this. It would seem that Wood is quite right that this underlying reading has, perhaps, gone largely unnoticed by viewers and enthusiasts of the director’s Mexican films. Indeed, we are reminded here of Brosseder’s assertion that Buñuel’s cinema ‘[lets] people see the realities they usually avoid’ in the same way that Matthews points to Buñuel’s assertion that his cinema regularly slips ‘in between two images’.680 As such, the questioning of what it means to be securely in place, depicted in the films analysed in this thesis, is not necessarily as pessimistic as Wood’s essay suggests. Read philosophically, these films can inflect Wood’s hypothesis that we do not live in the best of worlds, to suggest that such a utopian vision does not exist and is itself deceptive. Indeed, it could be argued that the pursuit of a utopian ideal – be it Miller’s perverted counter social structure, Nazarín and Simón’s relentless sublimation or the misplaced belief in the stability of the bourgeois position in El ángel exterminador – is the cause of many of the characters’ states of dissatisfaction, instability and uncertainty.

Hugo Santander proposes that Buñuel is ultimately an existential director. Santander’s summation of what he considers Buñuel’s ethic is important here:

680 Brosseder, p. 52 [‘Buñuel wollte Menschen Realitäten sehen lassen, denen sie gewöhnlich ausweichen’]; Buñuel in Matthews, p. 140.
Buñuel discute vía negativa su ética a lo largo de sus cintas, pues las torturas de los condenados lo acuciaban – como a Dante. Su cinema invita a los espectadores a que reconozcan su animalidad; a que oigan a sus instintos, antes que a su lógica, para reconciliar vida y muerte, cielo y tierra, universo y partícula, hombre y sociedad. Sólo a partir de esa liberación la humanidad encuentra su destino.\textsuperscript{681}

Although Santander's argument contains a spiritual resonance, it also points to Matthews's observation, given above, that Buñuel aims to slip in between two images. Just as François Truffaut argues that Buñuel’s cinema is based upon a principle of negation, the films discussed in this thesis define their characters by what they are not and what they do not have – contentment and belonging – exploring \textit{via negativa} human interaction with the world.\textsuperscript{682} The binary pairs Santander lists, typical of Buñuel's cinema, are palpable in the films discussed in this thesis, and the play between the two is rendered spatially: Alejandro and Catalina's struggle to achieve death over life in a barren landscape; Nazarín's ambivalence towards his self and society as an existential outsider; Simón's liminal positioning between heaven and earth, and the desert and nightclub that extend this position horizontally. Santander suggests that the key to liberation for Buñuel's protagonists, and the spectators, lies in their recognition of their earthly, imperfect nature. Wood, however, questions the viability of this liberation. He believes Buñuel's cinema suggests that

\begin{quote}
[p]erhaps we do see things as they are; their nudity is what is intolerable, and we hasten to cover it with words and explanations, theories, nationalities, contexts. There is no way out of this procedure, it seems; we cannot bear much reality.\textsuperscript{683}
\end{quote}

If we take the nudity to which Wood refers to be the realisation of our precarious position – as much in a literal, spatial sense as in a figurative, contextual one – in the world, the negation of pessimism, and therefore the films' humanity, lies precisely in their suggestion of our nudity. This is the value of Buñuel's cinema as art, as Paz elaborates:

\begin{quote}
el estilo de Buñuel, por doble elección estética y filosófica, es el de la exposición. Exponer es exponerse, arriesgarse. También es poner fuera,
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{683} Wood, 'Buñuel in Mexico', p. 51.
mostrar y demostrar: revelar. Los relatos de Buñuel son una exposición: revelan las realidades humanas al someterlas, como si fuesen placas fotográficas, a la luz de la crítica.  

Space, then, as cinematic allegory, is the ideal canvass on which to expose, aesthetically and philosophically, our pursuit of liberty as a phantom at the same time as it depicts a profound humanity, and even sometimes a biting comedy, in our relentless search. As Michel puts it: ‘Buñuel strives to destroy the skewed structures of our skewed wisdom. His sole obsession remains liberty, or, as the philosophers say, the de-alienation of man’.  

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684 Paz, p. 45.  
685 Michel, p. 22. ['Buñuel s'acharne à détruire les fausses structures de notre fausse sagesse. Sa seule obsession demeure la liberté, ou, comme dissent les philosophes, la désaliénation de l’homme']. 
Appendix of images

Please note the appendix of images has been removed from the digital version of this thesis due to copyright. Please consult the hard copy of the thesis to see these images.

RC 1. Fanning the flames: the anti-Prometheus running from the illusion.

RC 2. Superimposed space-time.
RC 3. The comforts and trappings of home.

YO 1. Cabin fever.

YO 3. Evvie’s premature awakening.
LM 1. The unfurling jungle.

LM 2. Djin as a Transandino Trickster.

SD 1. ‘Allí, allá, aquí, acá’. Neither here nor there.
SD 2. El último baile, para siempre.

SD 3: What's mine is yours: Simón’s failure to appropriate.
**LO 1.** Feeding the violent habits.

**LO 2.** A bestial reproduction of life in the slums.
LO 3: Welcome home.

N 1. Disorientating, disembodying illness.
N 2. Nazarín accepts his body and its place in the world.

N 3. Nazarín is reminded of his body.

AP 1. Into the abyss.
EA 1. It came from inside the closet: the emergence of anxiety.
Filmography

*The Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, dir. by Luis Buñuel (Orbit Media, 2007) [on DVD]

*El ángel exterminador*, dir. by Luis Buñuel (Criterion, 2008) [on DVD]

*Death in the Garden* [La Mort en ce jardin], dir. by Luis Buñuel (Translux Films, 2009) [on DVD]

*Das Fieber steigt in El Pao* [La Fièvre monte à El Pao], dir. by Luis Buñuel (Kinowelt, 2010) [on DVD]

*Les Hauts de hurlevent* [Abismos de pasión], dir. by Luis Buñuel (Films sans Frontières, 2006) [on DVD]

*Nazarín*, dir. by Luis Buñuel (Yume Pictures, 2006) [on DVD]

*Los olvidados*, dir. by Luis Buñuel (Films sans Frontières, 2001) [on DVD]

*Simon of the Desert* [Simón del desierto], dir. by Luis Buñuel (Criterion, 2008) [on DVD]

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