

CPRS cycle de conférence
Psychanalyse et rêve où en sommes-nous aujourd'hui?
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Luis Buñuel

Luis Buñuel was born in Spain in 1900 and received a strict Jesuit education, reflected in the later obsession with religion and subversive behavior as depicted in many of his films. He studied at Madrid University where he made friendships with the artist Salvador Dalí and the poet Federico García Lorca.

He then moved to Paris where, assisted by Dalí, he directed the 17-minute *Un Chien Andalou* (1929). With its shocking imagery, it made Buñuel famous overnight as the father of cinematic Surrealism. His first feature, also in Surrealist mode, was *L'âge d'or* (1930) which mercilessly attacked the church and the middle classes.

After the Spanish Civil War, Buñuel emigrated to the United States where he worked for the Museum of Modern Art in New York and as a film dubber for Warner Bros in Hollywood, before moving to Mexico in the late 1940. Here, alongside many much-maligned melodramas, Buñuel directed a masterful study of Mexican street urchins, *Los olvidados* (1950), that won him the Best Director award at the Cannes Film Festival.

In 1961 he came back to Spain to direct *Viridiana* (1961), which won the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival but was banned in Spain on the grounds of blasphemy. His late masterpieces - including *The Exterminating Angel* (1962), *Le journal d'une femme de chambre* (1964), *Belle de Jour* (1967), *Tristana* (1970), *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* (1972) and *That Obscure Object of Desire* (1977) - confirmed Buñuel's popularity and his *status* as a leading European filmmaker. He died in Mexico City in 1983.

He shot his films in a few weeks, never deviating from the script and shooting in sequence as much as possible to minimize editing time.

By 1967, when *Belle de Jour* was released to much critical acclaim and hypocritical sense of scandalised disbelief, Luis Buñuel had already directed some twenty-six movies. However, well-known as he was among film *aficionados*, it was not until *Belle de Jour* that the dubious tide of international mass popularity turned in his favour. Bernardo Bertolucci

told me how he saw Buñuel become so anxious when this movie was presented at the Venice Festival (where it won the Golden Lion), that he had to leave the cinema half-way through. But, partly because of the explicit (for those days, at least) nature of its subject - a shy and beautiful woman's perverse sexual activities hidden under her bourgeois elegance and discreet respectability - and because of the censorial interferences that the film had to endure - not unlike, and for analogous reasons, Bertolucci's own *Last Tango in Paris* five years later - *Belle de Jour* turned its nearly septuagenarian *auteur* into a household name.

Belle de Jour

(1967, France, 101 min)

Direction Luis Buñuel

Screenplay Luis Buñuel and Jean Claude Carrière from Joseph Kessel's novel

Photography Sacha Vierny

Cast Catherine Deneuve (Séverine), Michel Piccoli (Monsieur Husson), Geneviève Page (Madame Anaïs), Pierre Clementi (Marcel)

Synopsis

Fantasy and reality merge in this surrealistic voyage into the mind of Séverine (Catherine Deneuve) - a young, beautiful and elegant Parisian lady unhappily married to Pierre (Jean Sorel), a medical doctor. Informed by their friend Monsieur Husson (Michel Piccoli) of the existence of a high class brothel, she decides, after some hesitation, to work there as a prostitute during her free afternoon hours. Her job, under the pseudonym of 'Belle de Jour', in the *maison* efficiently run by Madame Anaïs (Geneviève Page) leads to her tentative experimentations with various perverse sexual practices (from necrophilia to voyeurism, from sado-masochism to fetishism), to meet the expectations of her often demanding clients, including a young criminal named Marcel (Pierre Clementi) with whom she makes the mistake of falling in love.

