

Buñuel, Luis, “‘Young and Damned’ Bunuel Has Joined the ‘Sensible’”¹

When I was a boy, my teacher used to remark, at certain peculiarities of my character: “This boy will go mad.” At the age of 28, I was a member of the surrealist group of Paris. To Society at large in those days, we were all either evil or mad. With my first picture, “Un Chien Andalou,” I was given my degree in madness, and with the second, “L’Age D’Or,” convinced everybody of my evil. One day in Zurich, the analyst Jung saw “Un Chien Andalou” and promptly diagnosed it “A case of Dementia Praecox.” Nevertheless, this did not prevent Salvador Dali, who collaborated with me on the screenplay, from becoming a person of wealth and fame.

My surrealist mates and myself never expected my first film to have such a success among the critics and the elite. My companions were so alarmed, they decided to put me on trial. “How could society admire ‘Un Chien Andalou’ when it was all against them?” Surrealism was considered subversive—a concept of poetry completely contrary to their thoughts and habits.

I promised my associates that my next film would banish every misunderstanding and leave no doubt about our moral positions.

In this way I conceived “L’Age D’Or,” whose thesis is triumphant love; its anti-thesis: love for country, family and religion. Followers of Daudet and Maurras stormed the theater at the opening in Paris. They plundered the place and threw tear gas bombs in the audience. Finally they got the Police to prohibit its exhibition.

My third film, “Land Without Bread,” was a picture of a human community living in a miserable section of Spain. Ethnographers considered it uninhabitable for human beings. “Un Chien Andalou” was a film of man’s conscience, but “Land Without Bread” was a film of reality. Its scenes were more terrifying than those I had imagined in my first film. For several years it was prohibited by the Republic of Spain because my native land considered it damaging to the national reputation. Finally it was exhibited in Paris where it ran for an entire year.

To demonstrate that I was turning sensible, I made several commercial films in which I treacherously substituted the idea of “romance” for “love.”² Thanks to the success of these films I was able to go back to my old bad habits. My friend Oscar Dancigers, who produced John Steinbeck’s “The Pearl,” asked me to make a picture for him. It was to be on adolescents and their lives in Mexico. For months we visited the poorest sections of Mexico City—we went in the huts and the homes. Assisted by my collaborator, Luis Alcorize, I studied hundreds of case histories from the files of the Juvenile Courts.

In this way, “The Young And The Damned” “Los Olvidados” was born. I believe it is a film that makes no concessions to popular taste or society. Its situations and characters are real, all created by life itself. I was afraid that some would consider it a document in which cruelty and sadism were exaggerated. However I have seen with great satisfaction that most international critics regard it as tender and human.

Andre Bazin in the French magazine “Esprit” wrote, “‘Los Olivdados’ is a love film asking for love. There is nothing more opposite to pessimism than Buñuel’s cruelty. Its basic sentiment is that of man’s unflinching dignity.”

As far as I am concerned, I know that the “lost ones” in this film are noble and innocent and the facts are that society alone is responsible for their corruption....

¹ I found this article in the Lincoln Center Performing Arts Library, and there was no indication of when it was published or by whom, hence the incomplete information.

² *Abismos de Pasion* is not one of these “treacherous” films; it presents his view of love, not romance. Like *Los Olvidados*, *Abismos di Pasion* makes no concessions to popular taste or society.