

# Keeping Apuleius In The Picture

## *A dialogue between Buñuel's Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie and The Metamorphoses of Apuleius*

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### Summary

This article explores common motifs and narrative strategies which appear in the work of the second century CE Latin author, Apuleius, and the twentieth century Spanish film director Luis Buñuel. The use of narration to delay nutrition is a vital starting point for the comparative analysis. The focus of both these 'texts' makes them appropriate (though in some senses arbitrary) anchors in what could eventually and fruitfully develop into a wide-ranging discussion: i.e. the extent and significance of culinary metaphors in literary and cinematic narratives within a broad cultural spectrum. Uses and abuses of food and food consumption in both Apuleius and Buñuel intensify the bizarre atmospheres of the stories. By means of diversionary and supernatural tales my chosen storytellers encourage their audiences to embrace credulity and to question the reality of appearances and consequently they subvert faith in the real world. In their hands magic and the surreal is an experimental strategy for producing a deeper insight into custom and society, not so much a message as an experience for the reader and the viewer, and one which shakes complacency about the solidity of social structures and physical forms.

### Introduction (trailer)

*Nihil impossibile arbitror sed utcumque fata decreverint, ita cuncta mortalibus provenire. nam et mihi et tibi et cunctis hominibus multa usu venire mira et paene infecta, quae tamen ignaro relata fidem perdant.*  
(Apuleius' hero, Lucius, Met.1.20)

‘ “Well,” I said, “I consider nothing to be impossible. However the fates decide, that is the way everything turns out for mortal men. I and you and all human beings actually experience many strange and almost unparalleled events which are disbelieved when reported to someone who is ignorant of them.” ’<sup>1</sup>

‘All this compulsion to “understand” everything fills me with horror. I love the unexpected more and more the older I get, even though little by little I’ve retired from the world.’<sup>2</sup>

The composition and content of Buñuel’s acclaimed 1972 film, *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* (henceforward, *DCB*), will be compared with major themes in the Latin novel of Apuleius, popularly known as *The Golden Ass* (henceforward *Metamorphoses*). Apuleius’ work, our one complete extant Roman novel, continues to be discussed and reinterpreted for its philosophy, its narratology, and its treatment of magic and religion within the mainframe story and within the secondary episodes which underpin its construction.

In Apuleius’ novel a young man with all the advantages arrives on business in Thessaly, a region renowned for witchcraft and the supernatural. He already has an appetite for novelty and encouraged by the stories he hears and the things he sees, he soon becomes embroiled in dangerous magical phenomena. Lucius gains access to his hostess’s magical ‘laboratory’ and through a dreadful mistake he is turned into an ass. It is from this viewpoint, the man concealed in the form of beast, that the rest of the story is told. It continues to be a multiple narrative and a number of intriguing episodes are reported by the ass at first and second hand. Eventually, the goddess Isis rescues Lucius from his suffering and the last book of the novel deals with his conversion, both physical and spiritual.

Buñuel’s film is less easy to summarise in terms of narrative line. It has a highly episodic structure and seems to celebrate diversion in both senses of the word. The six characters in search of a dinner are wealthy, educated and unlikely on the face of it to suffer deprivation. Yet they are constantly frustrated in their attempts to eat together and strange occurrences and bizarre

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<sup>1</sup> Translations of Apuleius are taken from A.J. Hanson’s Loeb edition of 1989.

<sup>2</sup> L. Buñuel, *Mi Último Suspiro (memorias)* Paris 1982, translated by Abigail Israel, Vintage Books, New York 1985, 175–176.

narratives force them to postpone the polite bourgeois ritual of the dinner party.

During the course of the film various sinister undercurrents occur which highlight the hypocrisy of the bourgeoisie and the superficiality of their social niceties is put into sharp relief.

The six main players form a corrupt and smug circle and manage to stay on the sidelines of the stories they hear. When they suffer, it is invariably in the context of dreams, as if their punishment can only take place in a parallel universe. It rapidly becomes problematic for the viewer to distinguish between nightmares and actuality. An added nuance is the fact that in their apparently waking state, the characters find full consummation eludes them. The inability to perform an everyday function, such as eating, is a feature of dreamtime, where the dreamer suffers physical paralyses; actions have no realisation nor any effectiveness.

#### Up close and personal

A comparative study of two texts so far apart chronologically and culturally and which are expressed through entirely distinct media is at first sight eccentric. The impulse to do this (which may or may not serve as a justification) was as follows. I first saw *DCB* not at the cinema at the time of its release but on television in the late 1980s. It is true that watching film on television does violence to its physical ratios and distorts many of the techniques designed for effect on the big screen. On the other hand, an element of intimacy can be imported into the small scale medium so that a television viewer does perhaps 'read' a film of this type, rather than 'experience' it.<sup>3</sup>

As the film progressed I was struck by certain similarities with the Apuleian novel on which I was working at the time, principally the way in which

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<sup>3</sup> 'Movies have a hypnotic power, too. Just watch people leaving a movie theatre; they're usually silent, their heads droop, they have that absentminded look on their faces, unlike audiences at plays, bullfights or sports events, where they show much more energy and animation. This kind of cinematographic hypnosis is no doubt due to the darkness of the theatre and to the rapidly changing scenes, lights and camera movements, which weaken the spectator's critical intelligence and exercise over him a kind of fascination. Sometimes, watching a movie is a bit like being raped.' *My Last Sigh*, 69. It should be said that auditorium lighting is much more intrusive since Buñuel made this comment and that the cinema experience tends to be less communal, psychologically speaking, since the resurgence of the medium.

the Buñuelian characters were forced to substitute consumption of stories for the enjoyment of a proper meal. Heath's article (1983) on narration and nutrition in Apuleius seemed a particularly apposite one, for, in his exposition, Heath demonstrates the importance of the motif for the narrative structure of the Latin novel.<sup>4</sup> It was but a small step to consider exploring the possibility of the transference of other motifs in Apuleius and Buñuel. Once on this road, the issue of tools of analysis particular to the two media had to be considered and whether the transference of techniques of criticism was possible or indeed desirable.<sup>5</sup>

Buñuel's Catholic education undoubtedly exposed him to the Classics and a number of Classical motifs. There is no evidence that Buñuel was directly influenced by Apuleius' novel but the director was certainly steeped in Spanish narrative traditions which borrowed heavily from Classical predecessors. His trilogy of films *The Milky Way*, *The Phantom of Liberty* and *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*, 'feature an experimental episodic structure based on the picaresque novel.' (Kinder 1999, 22). Vidal (1999, 61) demonstrates that the digressive structure of this genre intrigued Buñuel and that he found this approach liberating when working with cinematic conventions. 'I know I am digressing; but, as with all Spanish picaresques, digression seems to be my natural way of telling a story.' (*My Last Sigh*, 166) Buñuel's unorthodox approach to cinematic narrative is a *leitmotif* of the most recent collection of essays focusing on the last of the trilogy but with constant reference to the director's general output.<sup>6</sup>

The rest of this article is so peppered with critical perspectives on both Apuleius and Buñuel which could apply to the strategies of either that I shall partly rest my case by dint of these examples. However, a few general obser-

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<sup>4</sup> J.R. Heath, 'Narration and Nutrition in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*,' *Ramus* 11 (1982), 55-77.

<sup>5</sup> I hope Buñuel would not have objected to being portrayed albeit circuitously, as classically derivative. He was fond of quoting Eugenio d'Ors, a philosopher friend from Catalonia, and apostle of the Baroque, who used to say: 'What does not grow out of tradition, is plagiarism.'

<sup>6</sup> *Luis Buñuel's The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*, M. Kinder ed, Cambridge University Press: Film Handbook Series 1999. I have drawn upon the contributions of Vidal, Fuentes, Catlett, Wu and D'Lugo. I am also indebted to Catherine Dey whose Ph.D, then in progress, alerted me to Buñuel's Levinasian philosophy of the cinema and how this informed the director's constant desire to shock the audience in all his films, to force viewers to question personal notions of permanency. I look forward to seeing Catherine Dey's research published.

vations about narrative fluidity will be valuable to set the scene. Both Buñuel and Apuleius can be viewed from a postmodernist perspective, especially where they employ the blurring of the real and the surreal, (and the banal and the extraordinary), incongruous juxtapositions of distinct generic characteristics, random motivations of episodes, and narrative loose ends. Fuentes (1999, 94) places *D.C.B.* within the Barthesian vortex where the death of the author is a *sine qua non* of the narrative strategy:

‘indeed we find a film that corresponds to the Barthesian definition of a text as a multidimensional space in which a variety of texts blend and clash, a tissue of quotations drawn, not from a single all-powerful auteur, but from innumerable centers of culture.’<sup>7</sup>

How far do Buñuel and Apuleius have the entertainment of their audience uppermost in their minds when producing their products for consumption? In the prologue to the *Metamorphoses*, Apuleius promises his reader enjoyment, but only if s/he keeps on critical alert. *Lector intende: laetaberis*. ‘Pay attention, reader, and you will find delight.’ (*Met.*1.1) With both our cultural ‘case studies’, the viewer/reader enjoyment seems to come with strings attached. Many arrows are shot into our complacencies about narratives (Rosenbaum, 1972, 3) but this does not mean the experience is unfathomable. In fact the new structure is deceptively coherent because we the audience help to make it so.

The commercial and also the artistic effectiveness of Hitchcock as far as the director was concerned was his adherence to the principle of making films for audiences. A key phrase of Buñuel’s devotees is *avec plaisir*, to characterize the master at work, but the enjoyment is intensified if the satiric nuances are recognised and appreciation takes place on more than one level. In interviews Buñuel suggests that he does as he pleases, resiting the *avec plaisir* motif in the pose of the selfish creator who possesses a studied indifference to the judgement of his audience (or expects them to shift for themselves in the

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<sup>7</sup> Death of the director, so to speak, is, like the death of the author, a critical illusion. Buñuel is renowned for his noticeably tight control and careful composition of sequences, however much the manipulation is disguised. Apuleius is equally skilled at scene-setting and visualisation for the reader, and even writes an ostensibly autobiographical prologue. His intervention in the text as *auctor* does not resolve the identity of that *auctor*! For the challenges and complexities of the Apuleian opening see A. Kahane, A. Laird, edd. *A Companion to the Prologue of Apuleius*. Oxford 2001.

matter of meaning.) Buñuel believed that ‘the cinema seems to have been invented to express the life of the subconscious, the roots of which penetrate so deeply. Yet it is almost never used to do this.’<sup>8</sup> The reality is, or so his critics believe, that he demands a great deal from his viewers but simultaneously rewards them if they make an effort. On the other hand, we shall see how mischievously he cuts the ground from under our feet by insisting his films are without symbolism.

### Doing what comes supernaturally

Buñuel’s primary artistic aim was always to free the viewer from the prosaic imperatives of reality, to move away from the same hackneyed drama to the liberating world of poetry. Such pronouncements were the keynote of his address to the Mexican University in 1953 and preserved for the record in Mellen, 1978. He is renowned for his ability to surprise with the supernatural, to send his cinema audience on ‘the nocturnal journey into the unconscious’ Like Apuleius he invites his audience to accept the juxtaposition of the real and supernatural world, demonstrating their interchangeability and evoking André Breton’s programmatic statement that ‘the most admirable thing about the fantastic is that the fantastic does not exist – everything is real.’ (Mellen 1978, 109)

Reviewers of Buñuel’s *DCB*, a product of his last years of film-making, were in general agreement that it marked the culmination of his cinematic art of the surreal. In it ‘he welds together an assortment of his favourite themes, images and parlour tricks into a discourse which is essentially new’.<sup>9</sup> For a minority of critics it is less successful; it comes across to Simon and Samuels<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Buñuel in his address to the university of Mexico, 1953, quoted in J. Mellen, ed. *The World of Buñuel*, New York & Oxford 1978, 107.

<sup>9</sup> J. Rosenbaum, ‘Interruption as Style: *Le Charme Discret de la Bourgeoisie*’ *Sight & Sound* Winter 1972–1973, 1–4, (p. 3). For an interesting treatment of Apuleius’ comparable ‘irritation’ as stimulation principle, see K. Sallmann, ‘Irritation als produktionsästhetisches Prinzip in den *Metamorphosen* des Apuleius’, in: H. Hofmann, ed., *Groningen Colloquia on the Novel* Vol 1, Groningen (1988), 81–102.

<sup>10</sup> C.T. Samuels, ‘Tampering with Reality’, in *The World of Buñuel*, ed by J. Mellen, (Oxford & New York 1978), 368–373. For an uncompromising condemnation of the film, see J. Simon, ‘Why is the *Coeatus* always *Interruptus*?’, 363–368, in the same collection. Even for an aficionado of the film it has ‘no more than a fleeting semblance of customary storytelling’ but is ‘arbitrarily composed of segments.’ G. Gow, ‘The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie’ in *Films And Filming* (March 1973), 45.

as an incoherent rehash of worn out refrains where Buñuel self-indulgently parodies his own preoccupations with the structures and rituals of bourgeois life in a series of unconnected vignettes.

Clearly Samuels is not sympathetic to such cinematic excesses. Buñuel and the surrealists were fond of 'juxtaposing objects on canvas in such a way that the viewer experienced feelings of absurdity, horror, wonder, pleasure, laughter or rage. B's film doesn't deserve to be called surrealistic because its dislocation of reality isn't dictated by theme but by narrative opportunism. (Samuels 1978, 373.) Similarly, Apuleius is highly adept at creating moods of disturbance by altering the expected direction of a narrative and by introducing secondary stories which do not at first sight cohere into any recognisable pattern.

There are both literary and film critics who have problems with narrative swerves, whatever the artistic medium in question. The observation that 'la vie moderne est faite de ruptures' seems to have been translated to the screen by Buñuel to serve as a recurring ideological statement about the fallibility and fragility of bourgeois norms and institutions. It has been called 'interruption as style'. (Rosenbaum 1972) This also seems an appropriate characterisation of Apuleius' novel which diverts the reader into other stories, told by a variety of narrators at regular intervals.

Whatever kind of manipulation is going on between artist and 'public', Buñuel and Apuleius are both narrative teases. It is frequently the case that commentators on the two artistic creations under scrutiny come up with analyses that are usefully interchangeable, in Rosenbaum's words (*ibid*): 'a structuralist analysis of an author's schematic cannot remain content with single antinomies but must cope with the existence of mosaics, many themes intertwining yet constantly transforming themselves by lending aspects to one another'. This summary of Buñuel is equally applicable to the technique of Apuleius. A closer study of both Buñuel's and Apuleius' narrative approach does reveal a sequentiality that is based on Rosenbaum's 'constantly changing permutations of the same basic elements or particles'.<sup>11</sup>

Buñuel and Apuleius could both be judged as self-indulgent artists who simply cannot resist a good scene and will halt the narrative for the sake of an elegant fable, frequently one with a satirical edge. However careful 'readers' of these two artists find a unity of themes, or a mosaic of motifs which link the

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<sup>11</sup> Quoted and exemplified by R. Durgnat in *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*, *The World of Luis Buñuel* (1977), 373–396, (p.383).

stories to the main agenda. Most of the work produced on Apuleius in recent years accepts that the interpolated narratives illuminate the major preoccupations of the novel by shifting the reader's perspective; 'welding together an assortment of his favourite themes ... in a discourse which is essentially new' could also describe Apuleius' technique.

Intimately connected with this question of narrative and programmatic unity is the function of repetition. In an interview on *The South Bank Show* in 1993, Jean-Claude Carrière, the collaborator on the screenplay of several Buñuel films, including *DCB*, suggested that for Buñuel repetition was an end in itself; it was the purpose of the film. Nevertheless, as with Apuleius, critics tend to seek and find underlying connections of a philosophical nature so that the works take on a coherence in content not merely in form.

#### Feasting and Fasting – Dictates of appetite in Apuleius

From the outset of the Apuleian novel, the hero Lucius finds himself dining on anecdotes rather than food. Although he suggests that both he and his horse have been refreshed and sustained by Aristomenes' absorbing story of witchcraft on the way to Hypata, the dictates of his stomach cannot be denied forever. He is disappointed and frustrated in his attempts to eat at Milo's house and goes to bed on the first night *non cibo gravatus, cenatus solis fabulis*, 'not overloaded with food but having dined on stories alone.' (*Met.* 1.26).

Lucius' first night as an ass is also a hungry one; he is doomed to failure in his search for roses, the food which will reverse his metamorphosis, and only with divine intervention finally swallows this antidote at the festival of Isis. He is received into the priesthood of the goddess after a ritual fasting. The focus on food and appetite in the broader sense, reinforced by the vocabulary of hunger and thirst in the novel, frequently involves the distortion of eating patterns and the perversion of the proper rituals associated with eating. The nightmare world he encounters in Hypata has been counterposed to the ritually correct, restorative and spiritually sustaining haven of Isis.

The novel opens with strange stories of choking on cheese bread, magic tricks involving the gullet and a dead man dining on cheese (in the Aristomenes story). In Book 2, there are witches who bite off the nose and ears of the unfortunate Thelyphron, mistaking him for the corpse he is guarding. Lucius' ongoing relationship with Fotis exploits a long literary tradition that comically cross-references feeding, fasting and fornication. Both the tragedy of Charite,



a fellow prisoner of the ass, Lucius, and the Cupid and Psyche story, a major and lengthy interpolated narrative told to the young girl, Charite and which the ass overhears in the robbers' cave, contain significant episodes in which appetite operates on a number of levels.

In Book 8 of the *Metamorphoses*, a voracious serpent masquerading as an old man in distress feeds off the flesh of a young man. (19–21). Psyche's sisters had portrayed Cupid as just such a monster in disguise waiting for her full gestation before he devoured her.<sup>12</sup> In the same sequence of episodes the ass recounts a story of a bailiff who was unable to control his sexual appetite and was punished by a lingering death. Ants left only his white bones after they had feasted off his honey smeared limbs. (There is a similarly sadistic punishment, the torture of a student rigged to an electrically charged piano which emits a swarm of cockroaches, in *DCB*.)

Lucius the ass's next owners are bogus priests who mutilate (take bites out of) their own flesh in a frenzy of feigned religious fervour. At *Met* 8.29, they abduct a lusty young country lad for nefarious purposes. Although they appear to be satisfying a sexual appetite, Dowden suggests an intriguing hidden agenda of cannibalism in this scene.<sup>13</sup> What promises to be a slap up meal with a member of the local aristocracy who has been hospitably treated by Lucius the ass's current master turns out to be an obscenely polluted banquet when the host commits an ostentatious and bloody suicide with the cheese knife.(9.38) This follows a tragic messenger tale of the slaughter of his three sons, a story, it has been noted, significant for culinary metaphors and one which functions as a further substitution of words for food. Lucius and his master are denied their meal by the traumatic turn of events. (Heath 1982, 71–72)

Allusive and elusive games with the audience cannot, on their own, constitute any meaningful comparison between Buñuel and Apuleius. The nightmare and displacement to which *DCB* and the *Metamorphoses* give primary focus are two major linking themes but these general leitmotifs would work on a level of meaningless dialectic if it were not for the preoccupation with 'narra-

<sup>12</sup> The robbers' plan for punishing Charite (6.31) has been interpreted as a baroque moment which serves as *mise en abyme* for the structure of the novel, a satura stuffed with strange but tasty titbits. See E Gowers, *The Loaded Table*, Oxford 1993, 112, also 32–49 for a discussion on the complexity of literary food metaphors.

<sup>13</sup> K. Dowden, 'The Unity of Apuleius' Eighth Book & the Danger of Beasts', in: H. Hofmann, ed., *Groningen Colloquia on the Novel* Vol. 5, Groningen (1993), 91–110, (p.106).

tion and nutrition' which forms such an important momentum for both these texts.

Both Buñuel and Apuleius introduce tales of the unexpected, as literally unexpected tales, in the most unlikely of circumstances. The joke played on the group of friends in the Buñuel film is the interruption of the dinner party and the constant substitution of stories for meals, a distortion of the function of the entertaining tale to accompany or punctuate the feast. The interrelation between narration and nutrition has been expounded as a major thematic unifier in Apuleius.<sup>14</sup>

### Imperatives of hunger in Buñuel

Buñuel's preoccupation with twentieth century rituals of eating is manifest in a number of his films.<sup>15</sup> *Viridiana* is famous for a feast scene of down and outs in the grand house. They arrange themselves for the camera (posing simultaneously for the director and the snapshot within the film) in a parody of Da Vinci's *Last Supper*. In Buñuel's *Phantom of Liberty* a portmanteau scene involves members of the polite society sitting round the table on individual toilets for social defecation. Eating is done in private cubicles marked occupé on the doors. Ironically Apuleius' hero finds as an ass that ostentatious, sometimes spectacularly public, defecation saves him from beatings and destruction on more than one occasion. (*Met.*4.3, 7.28). However, his eating in bestial form of human delicacies is for him an inappropriate, secret and shameful activity. (*Met.*4.22–23, 10.13–14)<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> More than one commentator has found the fish episode in *Met.* Book 1 sinister as well as silly. It leaves the reader bewildered and disturbed. Heath (1983, 57–58) points out that the scene is more than the 'half silly, half spectral distortion of ordinary, average occurrences in human life', as Auerbach would have it (and which, by the way, would make it an ideal sequence for Buñuel.) Rather, it is part of the pattern, eating and abstinence, the primary emblems of Lucius' journey and quest.'

<sup>15</sup> The eating trope is not merely a displacement of erotic desire, but the quotidian bodily function arbitrarily selected for social sanction, a carnal pleasure (in contrast to sex or excretion) than can be communally satisfied in polite company. Its compulsive repetition in *The Discreet Charm* makes us look both backward and forward within Buñuel's body of work to realize the full resonance of the trope and its subversive connotations.' Kinder, 17

<sup>16</sup> Visser describes the cultural norms of eating in some Nigerian tribes where 'eating requires that kind of euphemism which in our society is reserved for sex or excretion. The

The film *Exterminating Angel* traps the high society guests within the drawing room at the end of the meal. The inability of the party to cross a threshold suggests the supernatural prolongation of a genteel convention but this liminal taboo seems to be a purely psychological one. Since all but one of the serving staff have sensed danger instinctively and left the house some time earlier, the confinement of the bourgeoisie functions as a siege in which the rich are held hostage: 'a society trapped within itself, paralysed, inert and decomposing, elegant clothes and manners falling away, and the fragrance of perfumed bodies transformed into the sickly stench of the rotting corpse.'<sup>17</sup> Once again, defecation is drawn attention to; the unfortunate guests resort to using the closets behind elegant and decorated panels for their private functions and at the same time hallucinating about spectacular and living landscapes within these walls.

It is part of Buñuel's scrutiny of the human condition and his parody upon social pretensions to subject his characters to a 'what if' school of dislocation. This experimentation with biological functions which conventionally demonstrate the civilised side of an organised and hierarchical society was described by Carrière as an 'anthropological approach to self' but Buñuel prefers the term 'entomological'. The 'absurd insect dance' which takes place in *DCB* as the bourgeoisie pursue their meal is part of his continual parody of eating rituals, the potlach of polite society.<sup>18</sup>

The six main players of *DCB* have lost their 'biological integrity', subordinating themselves to social ritual and unable to break out of patterns of convention. By placing them in a world of distortion and disorientation with carnivalesque reversals of norms Buñuel highlights what is 'tragically derisory' and incongruous in their limited bourgeois response which seeks to preserve everyday norms, to redirect the strange interruptions into something resem-

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male eats in private within his hut.' M. Visser, *The Rituals of Dinner: The Origins, Evolution, Eccentricities and Meaning of Table Manners*, Toronto 1992, 276.

<sup>17</sup> G. Edwards, *The Discreet Art of Luis Buñuel* London - Boston 1982, 272-273. Apuleius' novel contains episodes which seem to subvert civilised norms of worship and sacrificial festival. Isis either sets all this right or suffers from the satiric prefiguring her properly conducted rituals have undergone. See J.J. Winkler, *Auctor & Actor: a narratological reading of Apuleius's Golden Ass*. Berkeley - Los Angeles 1985, and T.D. McCreight, 'Sacrificial Ritual in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*', in: H. Hofmann, ed., *Groningen Colloquia on the Novel* Vol. 5, Groningen (1993), 31-62.

<sup>18</sup> For dinner parties as residual rituals of social solidarity and identity, see Durgnat 1977, 374. This article is indebted to his reading of the Buñuel film in general.

bling the appearance of bourgeois reality.<sup>19</sup> Buñuel produces the bizarre and visualises the impulses of the unconscious to shatter the optimism of the bourgeois world and to encourage his audience to question the permanency of the prevailing order. He acknowledges his debt to Engels who saw the revolutionary novelist's task as ultimately destabilising belief in the status quo.

The eternal quest of Buñuel's bourgeoisie is punctuated by occasional shots of these characters walking along a deserted country road; almost suggestive of a pointless immortality, a kind of 'outward bound' between life and death existence. This has been called an illogically repeated motif, but has also inspired profounder interpretations, that it 'creates a sense of the characters' suspension in space and time, of their universality and also of their bewilderment and isolation.'<sup>20</sup> For Jonathan Rosenbaum it is 'an image suggesting the continuation both of their class and of the picaresque tradition that propels them ever forward.' (Rosenbaum 1972, 2) This could be Buñuel having fun with a Bergmanesque progress across the landscape but as a visual refrain it is intriguing and the endless journey completes the film as a very ambiguous last word.

Apuleius has also been suspected of making subversive statements about the stability of appearances and using the activities of Blind Fortuna to highlight the shifting sands of reality and power. Even with the advent of Isis as personal saviour, there are more ways than one of reading the comforting finale of the *Metamorphoses*. Isis seems to have made sense of a random universe. There is, however, at least one interpretation of this apparently spiritually satisfying resolution which concludes that Lucius has been left suspended in time. Leaving the hero walking boldly and baldly round the streets of Rome is an imperfect ending in more ways than one.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> See Gow 1973, 45: 'Like a metaphysical reproach, each meal is destined to be forestalled, sometimes not to begin, sometimes to be interrupted while in progress, by disconcerting incidents which the bourgeoisie will always do their best to meet with a show of polite good manners.'

<sup>20</sup> Edwards 1982, 263. The suggestion that it is shallow cinematic intertextuality, an auto-hommage comes from Simon 1978, 366.

<sup>21</sup> Winkler's wry joke about the use of the imperfect tense probably subjects the Latin to a rather modern wordplay but he is not alone in finding Lucius's celebration of conspicuousness rather ironic: *non obumbrato vel obtecto calvitio, sed quoquo versus obvio, gaudens obibam*. 'I did not disguise or cover up my bald head but joyfully displayed it wherever I was going.' (11.30). But Winkler has not had the last word! Danielle van Mal-Maeder has reconstructed an *Onos* style finale for the Apuleius' novel which resolves more than the issue of Lucius' incompleted action in the past. See her *Lector in-*

## Buñuel's 'Interrupting Angel'

The opening scene of the film has the ambassador of Miranda (the name of the Hispanic American country should immediately arouse suspicions), the Thévénots and Florence arriving for dinner at the Sénéchals. It is worth reprising this episode in detail as it sets the pattern for the whole film, encompassing the range of material and moods the director is to draw upon throughout. This first misunderstanding is based upon an embarrassment related to Buñuel and Carrière by the producer Serge Silberman who had actually forgotten issuing a dinner invitation and was out when the guests arrived. This 'petit mal entendu', Thévénot's expression, expands to fill the film so that the powerful ritual of eating as a symbol of normality, a showpiece of civilised bonding for the bourgeois friends, never materialises.

Later, it emerges that the men of the party are in fact united in the criminal activity of drug dealing; the association is exposed as corrupt and venal. From that point of view the prevention of a ritual which would reinforce the air of respectability looks like divine justice. The irony of *DCB* lies in the internal dynamic of the group; they are bonded together in drug dealing, corruption and the support of tyranny operating beneath a masquerade of good taste.<sup>22</sup>

Ever resourceful the five friends head for a restaurant recommended by Thévénot but the place is under new management and in some disarray. As the party attempt to order with all the correct niceties of the proper procedure distraught women go to and fro. This meal is sabotaged by the presence of a corpse, the manager laid out in the next room. The men are keen to carry on regardless but the women are put off by the inappropriateness of such circumstances for eating. Coping with death at a feast has a further classical provenance, of course, and the Trimalchio of Petronius' *Satyricon* could be conjured up as a comic and Satyr-like presence at this scene.

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*tende:laetaberis*' in: H. Hofmann & M. Zimmerman, eds., *Groningen Colloquia on the Novel* Vol. 8, Groningen (1997), 7–118.

<sup>22</sup> The enforced fast which bonds the bourgeoisie together suggests that a punitive Lent lurks beneath the surface of the film. The characters make moral pronouncements while indulging in all kinds of corruption, so their carnival appetites are exposed in spite of their Lenten poses. Apuleius' hero, Lucius, is also quick to pass judgements but he, too, is not happy with abstinence from food or sex, at least not until the end of the novel when he willingly becomes a Lenten figure. For a relevant discussion of the culinary concerns in the battle between Carnival and Lent, see M. Bristol, *Carnival and Theatre: Plebeian Culture and the Structure of Authority in Renaissance England*, New York 1985, 197–213.

On reflection or second viewing this scene reveals a number of clues which lead us to the surprise end. The candles are funereally large for a dinner table and the restaurant has the general aura of the undertaker's parlour. There is a subtext, too, of cannibalism with the body of the manager laid out on the slab as if he is the joint of meat for the customers' approval. The ill-omened feast has its own varied classical tradition. This sets the tone for the film since comicality and incongruity are intertwined with the presence of death, an inevitability which the six main characters seek to camouflage with elegance and charm.

The characters try hard to preserve everyday norms in the face of sudden interruptions, even to reshape the bizarre events and redirect them into something resembling convention but this is a persistently carnivalesque world where the grotesque and unexpected have free play and in which the spontaneous and socially unacceptable can unpredictably affect the discreet charm of the bourgeoisie itself. There are points in the film where the abnormal is initiated by the players.

Their very next attempt to eat together is a case in point. The lunch is sabotaged by the unrestrained erotic appetite which seizes the Sénéchals at an inconvenient moment and causes the postponement of the second prearranged meal. The five guests have arrived for lunch the following day, once again at the Sénéchals. This scene is a repetition in composition of the night-visit. The host and hostess, overcome with passion as they dressed for the meal, are by now climbing out the window to find consummation in the bushes, (the husband, ever conscious of propriety, was worried that the guests would overhear Mme Sénéchal's ecstatic cries from the bedroom above, but this is a strange stratagem for avoiding exposure!)

The guests eventually become nervous at the inexplicable disappearance of their hosts perhaps wondering if their drug-dealing has been found out and arrest is imminent. (An arrest does take place later in the film but there is an unexpected release and certainly no retribution.) In the meantime the Ambassador and the Thévénot family discuss the correct procedure for drinks and attempt to humiliate the plebeian chauffeur by offering him a martini. This he downs in one with no savouring and finesse. However, the joke is on the bourgeoisie since the Sénéchals have abandoned the proper rituals in pursuit of passion, also gratifying appetite without any lingering foreplay.

This underscores the observation that 'Buñuel endows the set-pieces of bourgeois life, from the ordering of meals to the choosing of wines, with all

the pomp and ceremonious cliché of religious rites'. (Edwards 1982, 254). The comedy is heightened when these rituals are undercut by the indecorous behaviour of any one of the group. Florence, Mme Thévénot's younger sister throws up in the bushes as they depart. A bishop arrives and wishes to take the position of gardener with the Sénéchals, just to complete the Saturnalian and carnivalesque ambience of the whole episode, although allowing himself to be mistaken for a gardener in the first place has its own Christian resonances of recognition scenes after the resurrection.

There follows a third invitation to dine. Thévénot delivers this to the ambassador and interrupts his own wife's illicit visit to his house. Thévénot does not suspect that his wife and the ambassador are about to have sex and that the dinner invitation he delivers to them has frustrated their sexual appetites. The ambassador ludicrously and against the odds tries to finish what has been started and satisfy desire by inviting Mme Thévénot into his chamber to view his 'sursiks' (as transliterated in English subtitles but written by reviewers as 'sourciques'). The blinkered husband has no more idea what a sursik is than the ambassador himself but he obligingly goes to wait outside

Although Buñuel's inspiration for this joke probably came from its history in Spanish picaresque, this recalls the episode in Apuleius where the foolish cuckold assists in the adultery of his wife. In Apuleius Book 9, 5–7 there is a comical interlude concerning infidelity and the deception of an impoverished workman. He scrubs out a tub for a bogus buyer while his wife, draped over the lid, is 'polished off' by her lover. To add to the farce in the film, Fernando Rey's ambassador does not pull the quick coupling off. Here he reprises his roles from *Viridiana* and *That Obscure Object of Desire* where he is continually sexually side-tracked.<sup>23</sup> Mme Thévénot refuses to go beyond coquette and he does not satisfy his sexual appetite.

#### The Function of *Lepidae Fabulae* (elegant stories) in Apuleius and Buñuel

After two abortive attempts to have a meal together, the women of Buñuel's charming company meet for tea in a stylish restaurant. There is no chance of refreshment (the establishment has mysteriously run out of every beverage)

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<sup>23</sup> Dawson points out that the actors are, in part, playing comic versions of roles from other films throughout. (Jan Dawson's review in *Monthly Film Bulletin*, February 1973, 24–25.)

but they are politely forced to digest a strange story of murder and the supernatural (with a distinctly Oedipal flavour) related by a young soldier, who comes over unsolicited to their table.

This is not the only arbitrarily introduced narration and narrator. When all six friends attempt an evening meal at the Sénéchals again, a company of soldiers arrive (Sénéchal has agreed to billet them but dates seem to be in dispute once more). No sooner has the food been stretched around the expanded number of guests than the soldiers are called away to manoeuvres. Are we surprised when they pause to listen to the young sergeant tell his dream? This echoes the restaurant story with ghostly mother and a street beyond the grave; the presence of death is persistent at the meals of the polite and hungry bourgeoisie.

Buñuel introduces such interludes in a way which evokes the strangely signposted *lepidae fabulae* within the narrative structure of the Apuleius novel. In the *Metamorphoses* there is no shortage of entertaining stories for the ass and his reader to graze upon even if meals are interrupted or substituted by sudden narratives, a feature given focussed and thorough treatment by Heath. The introduction of *lepidae fabulae* in Buñuel's films have the added dimension of his continuing satiric dialogue with the Catholic Church. Stories, generally autobiographical which his characters quite freely share with strangers mimic the cathartic therapy of the confessional; crimes and passions are graphically revealed to while away a journey and entertain one's fellow travellers. (This occurs in *That Obscure Object of Desire*.)

In regard to *DCB* Wu 1999, 119 perceptively comments: 'For a film "without a story" *The Discreet Charm* in many ways is actually an *excess* of story – everyone, from a lonely lieutenant in a tea room to the commissioner of the police department, has a narrative to tell.' Part of the playing against/within the narrative in the *Discreet Charm* is the suturing of the spectator into these stories, but then deferring any conclusion.' Unlike Lucius in the novel of Apuleius, the main characters of the film do not seem insatiably hungry for the stories, let alone their resolution nor are they, apparently, thirsty for novelty. Part of their discreet charm consists in their barely articulated irritation at constant interruptions and abortive attempts to ritualise their association. They always listen politely and at certain points in the film it looks as though their patience is about to be rewarded. As the soldiers leave, the colonel of the company offers his hosts and their friends an invitation to dinner to compensate for the disruption. The camera rapidly cuts to them in the street of



the colonel's house, as if to 'seize the time' before the next meal can escape them.

This dinner party proves to be a humiliation comparable to the terrible mock trial Lucius undergoes in honour of Risus. This is the episode in Book 3 of Apuleius when the hero, who believes he has foiled an attempt at robbery on the house of his host, is tricked into giving an elaborate and colourful defence of his actions. (He is charged with the murder of three innocent and well-born young men.) The corpses turn out to be wine skins and Lucius is mortified to find himself the centre of a carnival performance. In *DCB*, the group of friends are subjected to a piece of theatre and transformed into actors on a stage. Perhaps this is partly another ploy to remind the cinema audience that the six players are actually six players, performers who, *in the real world*, would, as professionals, rise to such a challenge.

However, in the fiction of the film they are all nonplussed and do not read the signs of the setup. When they enter the colonel's house they encounter a number of theatrical props. The elaborately laid but darkly lit table with coca cola masquerading as whisky and a rubber chicken suggests that nothing is for real. As soon as the already disconcerted guests are seated around the table there is an opening of the curtains and they are on stage. They flee from the prompter and the irate audience for once unable to rise to the occasion, unable to utter their lines.<sup>24</sup> It perhaps deliberately highlights the stylised and stilted conversation that characterises their actual gatherings in the rest of the film, where a good deal of play-acting conceals the true nature of their various interconnections.<sup>25</sup>

However, if Buñuel's players are to be disorientated, his audience is never far behind. Sénéchal wakes up from the dream in some consternation and he and his wife make their way to the dinner which turns out to be a well-attended cocktail party. This too is theatrical in conception; the prop of the Napoleonic hat is in evidence here and there is a stage-managed provocation of the Ambassador of Miranda. He turns on the host and shoots him but it is Thévénot who now awakes and explains to Madame Thévénot that he

<sup>24</sup> Vidal 1999, 65–66 believes that the provenance of the prompt line is crucial to an understanding of the film's motivation. *Don Juan Tenorio*, the 19th century play by Spanish Romantic, José Zorilla, was a favourite of Buñuel's and the fact that it was traditionally performed on the Day of the Dead adds a further dimension to the parallel already drawn with Risus and the festival context.

<sup>25</sup> See Durnat's perceptive exposition of this scene, 1977, 388–390, also Edwards 1982, 261–263.

dreamed that Sénéchal dreamed they were on stage and then he dreamed in his own right that the colonel had been killed. The confusion between *actor* and *auctor*, performer and author, at this point puts a question mark over the identity of Thévénot, portrayed and played as the most understated of the group; it also exploits the visual medium to suggest multiple levels of narration.

For the bourgeoisie subsequent attempts to eat fare no better. The sudden arrest of all the friends (bar the bishop) at the fourth dinner party at the Sénéchals involves another grim and ghostly story which turns out to be the policeman's dream; inexplicably the group are released but their last supper has them machine-gunned down by a group of masked men. The Ambassador has slid under the table and is seen surreptitiously sneaking a slice of lamb from the plate. As the machine-gun goes off in his face, he wakes up from what turns out to be yet another dream. Speedily recovered, he performs a kind of reflex action in going straight to the fridge for a plate of lamb. The final shot in the film shows the familiar group walking quite purposefully and jauntily now along the deserted road. It would seem they are indestructable. Alternatively we are witnessing their festive uncrowning, which is perhaps closest to Buñuel's original conception. However, he staged it in such a way as 'to conserve the image as it is, in its innocence, in order not to elicit a symbolic interpretation, so that it could not be said: this is the end of the bourgeoisie, this is a society which does not know where it's going.'<sup>26</sup>

### Loose Ends

Every dinner of the bourgeoisie seems to have turned into a feast of fools and the last communal meal ends in slaughter, even if this is the projection of the Mirandan ambassador's paranoia to create the final nightmare. The strange revelations which appear throughout the film are designed to expose the kind of violent realities upon which the insulated bourgeois world is predicated.

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<sup>26</sup> As quoted in Kinder 1999, 184, where Kovacs concludes it is a surrealist image because of its specific meaninglessness and general impact. Given the deliberate allusions throughout *DCB* to parts played by the main actors in other films (noted in this article), in other words the 'intertextual' jokiness and the subsequent shattering of theatrical illusions for the knowing spectator (the 'movie buff'), I am surprised that no-one has interpreted the walking scenes as a reinforcement of this defictionalisation. The six actors are not necessarily meant to be 'in character' in these shots but openly 'themselves', the strolling players of the cinema world and the true heirs of *commedia del arte*.

Earlier in the film, the ambassador blithely shoots at the apparently innocent young street seller, announcing she is a terrorist and he is her target. The fact that he keeps his loaded pistol in a tureen must say something ominous about any feast of which he is to be a part.

There are other brief and baffling sequences in the film; the promise of an interpolated tale from an old peasant woman which is never told, the old woman being played by the actress Muni 'who became a kind of mascot or mouthpiece for Buñuel' (Vidal 1999,71). This perhaps proves that Buñuel was able to pass over a story about the hatred of Jesus Christ, for so it is sign-posted, thereby demonstrating that he had more than one level of unpredictability up his sleeve. In the scene with the billeted soldiers, there is no time to tell another dream about a train because the interruption is itself interrupted.

The bishop brings his own dimension of the bizarre to the proceedings. Later in the film he is summoned by the peasant woman to minister the last rites to a gardener. The bishop recognises the dying man as his parents' employee. The man confesses to poisoning these same employers many years before. The gardener bishop absolves the man of his crime, and then blasts him with a shotgun. For Rosenbaum (1972, 4) this suggests that Catholicism far from being the natural opponent of surrealism is the ultimate expression of it. This observation evokes a further correspondence with Apuleius. His presentation of Isis as the definitive symbol of the supernatural, in spite of all the negative images of witchcraft the book brings forward, could also be described as the ultimate expression of the 'paranormal'.<sup>27</sup>

### The Loaded Symbol

The focus on food and drink throughout Apuleius and Buñuel demonstrates the infinitely varied menu of motifs fasting and feasting can provide for an artist of the surreal. Florence forms the centre of a cosmic tableau in the scene with the martinis. (Durgnat 1977, 393–394). At the final supper she reads the star signs of the ambassador introducing the kind of astronomic/gastronomic

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<sup>27</sup> Isis is revealed as Seeing Fortuna at the end of the novel and is thus counterposed to a Blind Fortune which has victimised Lucius throughout. Blindness is also a symbol which recurs in Buñuel, initially because of the cinema experience when the lights go down: 'Surrealism must approach the world, as Breton put it, with "eyes closed"'. I Walker, 'Buñuel's Half Century', *Sight & Sound*, (Winter, 1977–78), 3–5.

moment found at the loaded table of Trimalchio<sup>28</sup> (the narrative ‘party piece’ of Petronius’ *Satyricon*) and elsewhere in ancient literature, a reminder of the universal fates concealed in the vital and edible organs of the animal *hostia*. It is at this final dinner party that the total miscalculation of the maid’s age by her employers occurs, giving a final satiric twist to the time sequence of the film and perhaps alerting us to the unreality of the whole exchange. For Durgnat 1977, 393 this suggests that the maid functions as a temporal jolt. Just how long has the bourgeoisie been waiting for their meal?

This episode will prove to be a dream but not before our perceptions of the passing of time have been manipulated once again. Obviously the disturbance of conventional continuity is underpinned by the device of the journey suspended in time and could be a homage to the Jean Luc Godard pronouncement that every film has a beginning, middle and end but not necessarily in that order. Merging illusion and reality is also a way of playing with audience perceptions and forcing them to wonder where they are in relation to the narrative progress of the story.

The recurrence of themes in all their infinite variety is easy enough to identify. Buñuel’s film can be linked to Apuleius’ novel by its perceptions of piety and vengeance, sexuality and bestiality, distorted rituals and journeys beyond the grave. As far as message and meaning are concerned both Apuleius and Buñuel achieve a level of mystification critics continue to discuss. Few would accuse Buñuel, a characteristically economical director with firm control of his composition and players, of shoddy workmanship;<sup>29</sup> Apuleius, on the other hand, has been charged with a narrative which shows the joins. It is interesting to speculate on the success of *Metamorphoses* on screen, should such a challenge ever find a taker.<sup>30</sup> The conversion of narrative refrains to

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<sup>28</sup> See again Gowers 1993, where the metaphor of eating is explored in relation to artistic production, amongst other rich registers.

<sup>29</sup> ‘It was long hard work, particularly because it was crucial to maintain a sufficient degree of realism in the midst of the delirium. The script went through five different versions while we tried to combine realism – the situation had to be familiar and develop logically – and the accumulation of strange, but not fantastical, obstacles. Once again, dreams helped, particularly the notion of a dream within a dream.’ Buñuel, *My Last Sigh*, 247.

<sup>30</sup> Helen Elsom has discussed this in ‘Apuleius at the Movies’, in: H. Hofmann, ed., *Groningen Colloquia on the Novel* Vol. 2, Groningen (1989), 141–150. She favoured Pasolini as a director for Apuleius; the author of this article can only lament the passing of Powell and Pressburger whose films had such imaginative power. The picaresque nature of the novel would no doubt have appealed to Orson Welles. For a present day combination of the off beat and the brooding, perhaps Martin Scorsese, also a devotee of Powell and

visual ones might make the thematic unity of the novel more accessible and absolve the author of censure on the grounds of ‘shoddy composition, leaving his reader slogging through a spate of entertaining tales into dead ends, false expectations and jarring inconsistencies.’ (Heath 1982, 69).

In contrast, then, it seems that the very nature of the cinema medium can guarantee the success of comic disorientation as a structural tool. The surreal on screen can receive a grudging and sometimes bewildered accolade: ‘The nature and extent of Buñuel’s interruptions guarantee the virtual absence of continuous plot. But we remain transfixed as though we were watching one: the sustained charm and glamour of the six characters fool us, much as they fool themselves. Their myths, behaviour and appearance – a seductive and illusory surface – carry us (and them) through the film with a sense of unbroken continuity and logic, a consistency that the rest of the universe and nature itself seems to rail against helplessly.’ (Rosenbaum 1972, 3).

Buñuel uses both the surreal and absurd to illustrate his approach to the totality of real life and to reinstate the supernatural as a sphere of equal value amongst multiple realities. Behind the camera and able to exercise ‘the muscle of imagination’, he resembles the Apuleian god of Laughter, a ‘Puck mocking the brief usurpers of Olympus’.<sup>31</sup> Buñuel has found profounder philosophical analyses of his films and their symbols amusing. His inspiration for *Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* was the mix-up, related by Serge Silberman, but, in relation to the film’s overall concept, he was perfectly capable of sustaining the tone and deliberately undercutting his own artistic integrity. To illustrate, he mischievously declared that he was delighted that the film had allowed him to advertise his favourite recipe for martinis.<sup>32</sup>

One is almost mesmerically drawn back to the enigmatic prologue of Apuleius’ novel in which all kinds of expectations are perhaps flippantly inculcated in the reader. Apuleius also inspires profounder interpretations than the

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Pressburger. Peter Greenaway has been proposed but a filmization of the Apuleian novel would need some cinematic movement as well as artistic composition.

<sup>31</sup> J. Robertson’s interesting interpretation of Risus in ‘A Greek Carnival’, *JHS* 39 (1919), 110–115.

<sup>32</sup> *My Last Sigh*, 247. Kinder 1999, 5, relates the story that Buñuel and Dali distributed a leaflet at the premiere in Paris of *Un Chien Andalou*. This proclaimed: ‘NOTHING in this film SYMBOLIZES ANYTHING. The only method of investigation of the symbols would be, perhaps, psychoanalysis.’ Pauline Kael in her ‘Saintliness’ (Mellen 1978, 270) also observes that ‘Buñuel shoots a story simply and directly, to make the points he wants to make, though if he fails to make them, or doesn’t make them clearly, he doesn’t seem to give a damn.’

author's agenda actually spells out. Critics tend to locate the themes and motifs of his work within a consistent philosophical framework, and one which is in harmony with what we know of his life and preoccupations. Apuleius' construct and expectation of a *lector scrupulosus*, a careful reader, is judged as one who enters fully into the spirit of the intellectual game and rejoices into the learned allusions the novel provides, and who participates in an intertextuality which ranges over literary sensibility, religious life and the history of thought in the ancient world.

However, this is hard work and Heath deftly observes that the *Metamorphoses*, both in particular details and in the larger problems of interpretation, frequently leaves the reader bemused. We come away on a number of occasions, 'as Lucius and other characters do, with no sustenance.' Fed on free floating narratives we face the main menu with frustrated appetites. Buñuel and Apuleius tempt us to return to the artistic 'feast for a second helping – but it is with a different strategy for filling our plate.' (Heath, 1982, 71). Both the film and the novel demand second, third, multiple viewings. It would seem that audiences of such works only lose by limiting themselves to a one-off passive consumption.<sup>33</sup>

Heath's metaphor neatly connects the reader and viewer with Buñuel's fictions on screen and Apuleius' primary narrator, Lucius. Buñuel's characters never give up on their forage for food. The hunger which can be a momentum for the single picaro on his journey through society, also propels the bourgeois collective along their endless and timeless road.<sup>34</sup> Lucius finds sustenance with the goddess of Isis but learns when to fast and feast appropriately. We contemplate the hero at the very end elected to the college of Pastophori, literally 'bread carriers', and we might assume that Apuleius' hero will never go hungry again. However, if Mal-Maeder (1997) were to be proved right Lucius,

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<sup>33</sup> For a complex and intriguing discussion of the presence of food in the novel as genre see Margaret Anne Doody, *The True Story of the Novel*, Toronto 1997, 427–431. Doody expands upon Barthes' essay of the 1950s, 'Cuisine Ornamentale' and points out, 428, that 'the Novel is always suspicious, if comically suspicious, of food that is too visually wrought up.' One wonders how much of the banquet Trimalchio's guests actually consume as opposed to admire as art objects. Doody suggests that once food is translated into an art object or dream-image and is denied as food to the fictional characters, they become less substantial and less individuated. Just how do our six bourgeois survive the fictional duration of the film without eating?

<sup>34</sup> This association, hunger and the picaro in Buñuel, is drawn out by C. Rebolledo, 'Buñuel and the Picaresque Novel' in *The World of Buñuel* (139–148). 'Throughout all picaresque works we find hunger as the motivating force.' (148)

like his cinematic soul mates, would be destined for another journey towards further frustrations.

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