

Carlos Fuentes dissects Buñuel in an unprecedented way and praises his teaching in 1968 and the *boom*

—Fundación Banco Santander publishes “Luis Buñuel o la mirada de la Medusa (un ensayo inconcluso)” in the Cuadernos de Obra Fundamental: an epilogue essay with letters that contextualize the relationship between the two artists —

In this never-before published essay, with the precision of a surgeon, Carlos Fuentes dissects Buñuel's letters, form and background, which Javier Herrera has recovered from the hidden archives of Princeton University. The surrealists and realism, Sade and freedom, Spain and Mexico, the myths of Don Quixote, Don Juan and La Celestina, desire, racism, and a succession of personal reflections on his cinema reflect, along with a series of unpublished letters, the teaching of the genius of Calanda in the Latin American boom, and his crucial influence on the collective imagination of the revolution of 68 right on its 50th anniversary.

Trailer of the book on the Fundación Banco Santander YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tXxH8pb4AgQ&feature=youtu.be>

Fundación Banco Santander faces the beginning of the year with the launch of the [Cuadernos de Obra Fundamental](#) Collection, by “*Luis Buñuel o la mirada de la Medusa (un ensayo inconcluso)*”, unpublished book by Carlos Fuentes (Panamá 1928-Mexico City. 2012) on the life and work of Luis Buñuel (Calanda, 1900- Mexico City, 1983), which intertwines the reflections of the great filmmaker with the encyclopedic humanism of the Mexican writer, in an exciting journey through the symbolic imagery that these two characters of 20th century Spanish-language culture recreate for us, line by line.

Carlos Fuentes, an admirer of Buñuel's work since the premiere of *Los Olvidados* and a critic of his works- from the pages of the UNAM under a pseudonym - despite not knowing him until 1958, did not cease to admire Buñuel until his death, in addition to being a fundamental part of the jury that awarded him the Palme d'Or at the Venice Film Festival in 1967 for *Belle de Jour*. We know that if he did not publish this unfinished essay it was because of various projects, including an adaptation of *Bajo el volcán*, by writer Malcolm Lowry, which meant that the manuscript remained hidden at the University of

Princeton, uncovered thanks to **Javier Herrera** -writer, researcher and specialist in Buñuel-, who has introduced and ordered the manuscript leaving it just as Fuentes would have wanted it to reach the readers.

The volume is also seasoned with an **appendix of fifteen unpublished letters** - ten by Fuentes and five by Buñuel - **exchanged** between 1966 and 1972, which illustrate the process and context of the work and give us evidence of their relationships and personality, between humor and absolute friendship, in the background the devotion of the Mexican writer and the whole Latin American boom - Cortázar, Paz, García Márquez, Donoso, etc. - by the *Aragonés* writer, which is unequivocally demonstrated in this book.

Javier Herrera highlights "Buñuel's visionary ability to anticipate events of 68", his journey between reality and dream, Sade and surrealism, his filmography, the deep reflection on good and evil, which makes this book "perhaps the most accurate, sharp and complete approach to the most hidden ins and outs of Buñuel's work and personality". And this is so. Herrera continues, because Carlos Fuentes "knew how to calibrate not only Buñuel's personal and artistic talents but also his historical significance as between traditional Spain and Spanish-American culture, and between the European avant-garde and the new trends of aesthetic renewal".

Román Gubern, critic and writer, tells us in his prologue that "this text illuminates in a fascinating way both the imaginary of the filmmaker and the writer", and for **Francisco Javier Expósito**, responsible for the Obra Fundamental Collection, "Buñuel delves into a side of us that many do not want to see, and that is why in these times his figure is much more current", which makes this book "even more alive and more fascinating and suggestive than ever in the social reality that concerns us, where the concepts of freedom and creation are so debated".

Carlos Fuentes' friendship and access to the figure of Buñuel allows for a fluid and vast dialogue on the filmography and the intimacy of the filmmaker, against the **backdrop of the May 1968 revolution**, the fiftieth anniversary of which is being commemorated in the year 2018, a social and cultural process in which events such as the brutal repression in the Plaza de las Tres Culturas in Mexico, or the invasion of Czechoslovakia, and which Carlos Fuentes sees anticipated by the genius of Buñuel in films such as *The Golden Age*.

The intimacy between the writer and the filmmaker did not prevent a certain distance from the character in the interests of an objectivity that was intended to be established as an ethical

condition for creative practice. Fuentes or Buñuel relate these circumstances, for we sometimes do not know who is who. During the war, Luis came to work in Nelson Rockefeller's Office of Pan American Affairs, with commissions as suggestive as reediting Leni Riefenstahl's films about the Nazi parades to turn them into anti-Nazi publicity, even though they were so good that even Roosevelt said that "they would end up provoking the enthusiasm and applause of the audience."

This volume reveals a man who sees in **Buñuel's** principles the **creative model to be followed by all the young writers who would later form what would be known as the Latin American "boom"**, especially Cortázar, Donoso, García Márquez, Vargas Llosa and Octavio Paz, with all of whom Carlos Fuentes developed a direct relationship of friendship and fellowship and even shared projects, as is shown throughout the volume, and also through the lens of photographer Antonio Gálvez, who captured images of all the members of the group, thereby establishing a link with him.

The essay

La mirada de la Medusa is a title that Fuentes thus describes for Buñuel: "the world is a Medusa who paralyzes us at the sight of her prohibitions", where it petrifies the beholder, and so "Buñuel petrifies the viewer with his gaze", between bull and picador, Fuentes will say of his appearance, as he reviews his readings and observations, from the picaresque to the heterodox, the Spanish mysticism and the path, the myth of the Hispanic trinity with a "deep and brilliant reflection" says Herrera about Don Quixote, Don Juan and La Celestina in confluence with *Nazarin* and *Viridiana*. Sade, the Surrealists, Brönte, Camus, Malraux, and the poetry of William Blake with which Fuentes finds analogies, or his passion for weapons and violence.

No doubt it was with the release of *The Golden Age* at the French Cinémathèque that he discovered the visionary Buñuel of the **1968 Revolution**, "have time - 37 years - and history - the society of consumers - overcome that vision of fire that Buñuel and the surrealists had? I am surrounded tonight by an audience that says the opposite," Fuentes will say, two years before '68: "the young people who in May '68 erected the barricades of Paris had seen the films of Luis Buñuel.

Buñuel: On culture: *"has become inseparable from political and economic power... Spain's weakness has prevented its wonderful literature from being known in the world"...* "art, advertising, information, shows, fashion, religion, everything conspires to prevent us from seeing reality, to blind us" ... from *The Golden Age*: *"I quoted Dalí in the hotel lobby to slap him around. But seeing him enter won me the memory of our youth. I just told him he was a miserable fellow.."*; according to Octavio Paz: *"he has outstanding generosity. When Los Olvidados was presented at Cannes, he wrote a short essay, printed it himself and distributed it at the entrance of the cinema"*; in the words of Sade: *"a shocking revelation, in him I discovered something like the critical mirror of the world in which I grew up", "Sade and Nietzsche represent the opposite of Nazism...their imaginative evil ends up melting into a vast affirmation of brotherhood and truth"; of sin and sex: "Sex without religion is like an egg without salt. The idea of sin multiplies the possibilities of desire"; racism, "in the first degree of social relations there is an injustice: whites are oppressors and blacks are oppressed. But in the second degree there is a tragedy: the Black, stripped of humanity by the white, denies the white all humanity. And this is the triumph of the oppressor;*

Fuentes: *"Buñuel's art consists of encouraging that paradoxical encounter in which the separation culminates in an embrace but the embrace is the recognition of another separation", "Very soon, Buñuel saw what we all see clearly today: that the meaning of today's economy is not to conserve wealth, but to consume it quickly"; on Mexico, "Mexico City lives in hiding. It's not easy for thieves. It is fear of being seen. In Mexico, a glance can kill"; Don Quixote, Don Juan and the Celestina, "Don Quixote and Don Juan abolished the old norms with the disorder of their experience", "behind every solid monastery there is a windmill"; desire, "desire is the center of Buñuel's work"; good and evil, "Buñuel encompasses good and evil in a lucid liberation that contains and surpasses them"; on the revolution of '68 "Today, art has taken on all the burdens and risks of freedom."*

The letters

An exceptional and unprecedented appendix that begins in 1966 when Fuentes, in connection with his seeing the *Golden Age*, tells Buñuel that he is going to write a long essay about him because *"his films are today finding their true audience, that of these young people for whom the great intuition of surrealism has become the living answer of our days to the failures of life and art"*, and confesses **their importance for the boom generation of Latin America**, *"I recalled it very much with Octavio Paz when he was in Rome, and now, in Paris, with Vargas Llosa, Cortázar, Rodríguez Monegal, Gironella, we are always talking about you, about your work which, it is increasingly clear, is the major point of reference, of elaboration, of the writers and painters with Spanish roots"*.

Buñuel replies to him following the censorship of *Belle de Jour* that *"eroticism without religion, especially Christianity, is like a delicacy without salt"*, and they continue their epistolary relationship full of humour and surrealism when Fuentes is on the jury of the Venice Film Festival that would give him the Golden Lion for *Belle de Jour*, and Buñuel tells him that he can't go to see him *"for fear of being called a sucker-upper and someone will accuse me of being a bribe"*, Fuentes replies after winning the award, that he has already won the Golden Lion and that *"Rita is demanding the diamond bracelet she promised"*, and Luis' wife swears that *"if I go back to the cinema, it must be with a big bang": or a goodbye or final silence"*.

After the events of the 1968 revolution, in June, Fuentes wrote to Buñuel that *"his films have become more up-to-date than ever in the light of the events."* Buñuel replies that he wants to be frivolous, and when Fuentes wants to send him the manuscript to take a look at it, the filmmaker shows humility and tells him that he doesn't need to see anything and that he trusts him, and that in any case he will almost certainly be able to learn about himself with what he writes, although for Fuentes *"sometime I would like to accompany you to finish my eternally postponed book on you"*. In short, fifteen letters from 1966 to 1972, which develop an admiring epistolary full of humor, slyness, simplicity, depth and comradeship.

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With this objective, we develop initiatives grouped into three lines of action: the promotion of culture as a tool for understanding the world around us, social action to facilitate the progress of vulnerable groups and care of the environment to protect natural heritage.

In all our programmes we strive to create networks of collaboration with the third sector in order to face the main global challenges together.