

Buñuel's Liebestod**– Wagner's *Tristan* in Luis Buñuel's early films: *Un Chien Andalou* and *L'Âge d'Or***

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Abstract

The research of the first two films of Luis Buñuel (which he made in collaboration with Salvador Dalí) suffers from a neglect of the importance of his insistent use of the music from Richard Wagner's opera *Tristan and Isolde*. This analysis shows how a closer look at the Wagnerian themes and their specific use in *Un Chien Andalou* and *L'Âge d'Or* are crucial to an understanding of the themes of love and death.

When Buñuel employed the music of *Tristan* to the otherwise silent movie *Un Chien Andalou* interchanging with a light Argentinean tango, the intricate play of contrast and dialogue between solemnity and mockery, between empathy and cynicism, is emphasized. At the same time, the theme of love/death can be seen as a thread which unifies the otherwise very confusing filmic collage.

In *L'Âge d'Or* ('The Golden Age') the music of *Tristan* is a clear leitmotif surrounding the mad love of the protagonists. When this music is played live in the garden, it ignites not only their desire but also a sequence of inner and outer events and conflicts, resulting in a tragic, enraged breakup. Before this concert, Wagner's music occurs in brief passages, emphasizing the unity of the lovers, transcending spatial separation.

In both films Buñuel employs Wagner in an ambivalent gesture where the themes of desire and death are emphasized while at the same time the more solemn metaphysical implications in Wagner are deflated, moving from romanticism towards surrealism while at the same time creating a link between the two.

1. Introduction

Perhaps a truly passionate love, a sublime love that's reached a certain peak of intensity, is simply incompatible with life itself. Perhaps it's too great, too powerful. Perhaps it can exist only in death.

(Luis Buñuel *My Last Sigh* p. 146)

When Luis Buñuel's and Salvador Dalí's first film, *Un Chien Andalou*, premiered in Paris in April 1929, Buñuel performed what might be considered the first DJ mix in history, although very simple.¹ He stood behind the screen with a record player, alternating two records at precise moments in the film, later to be reconstructed in the sound version. One of the records contained collected Argentinean tangos, the other an instrumental version of Richard Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*, more specifically the piece popularly known as 'Liebestod', "love-death" (Buñuel *My Last Sigh* p. 106).

The remarkable fact that Buñuel boldly juxtaposed fragments of Wagner with fragments of tangos have almost been ignored by scholars and biographers alike. After all, this was a silent film and focus has therefore been on the visual elements - thematized in the film by the famous prologue where the eyeball of the female protagonist is sliced with a razorblade by Buñuel himself. There is little doubt, however, that the painstaking effort of providing a musical collage consisting of the two sources in question was no trifle, and that he would have made a musical soundtrack at the time if he had the means: More than 30 years later Buñuel undertook the project of arranging a meticulous studio reconstruction of the Tristan-tango-collage for official copies of the film.²

With interpretations of Buñuel's and Dalí's second film, *L'Âge d'Or* (1930) the ocularcentric perspective ought to have been modified. As one of the first sound/talk films produced in France, the musical soundtrack is strikingly sophisticated.³ Wagner's

¹ It is of course not a mix in the sense of what a modern DJ does, but rather an interchange between two sources.

² Soundtracks by Wolfgang Rihm and Martin Malaton have been used in other video versions. There is a significant difference in the experience of the film depending on the soundtrack. The present analysis refers to Buñuel's own soundtrack version from 1960, which is now the official version. The credits of the 1960 version state that "La sonorisation de la version intégrale de ce film a été réalisée en 1960 sur les indications de Luis Buñuel, conformément à la sonorisations par disques qu'il effectua lors de la première présentation." (The soundtrack of this version of the film was made in 1960 from Luis Buñuel's instructions in accordance with the grammophonic soundtrack of the premiere screening).

³ Dalí apparently had nothing to do with the soundtrack. Indeed he only played a significant role in the creation of the first draft of the manuscript, primarily adding disconnected ideas and images. For a

Tristan is not only the dominating part of the non-diegetic soundtrack; it is also diegetically inserted with the extensive concert in the garden. Furthermore, the female protagonist is explicitly concerned with potential sound problems in the arrangement of the concert:

Those musicians will be enough because six of them playing close to the microphone make more noise than sixty placed far away. I know a lot of sound gets lost out of doors but we can seat the guests nearer the orchestra.
(24:00-24:22. Buñuel *The Scripts* p. 36)

This concern with sound is one of the very few spoken lines in a film where the talking is reduced to a minimum and music dominates the sound. Hence, one could expect scholars to revel in analyses of sound and music in *L'Âge d'Or* just as was the case with vision and voyeurism in relation to *Un Chien Andalou*, but surprisingly one finds mainly occasional remarks in primarily visual and narrative analyses, noting the use of Wagner, especially in relation to the concert.⁴

This article is an attempt to compensate for the lack of attention that Buñuel's repeated integration of Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* has been given. I will argue that there are significant meanings which reveal themselves more clearly when seen through the Wagnerian lens, or rather, when we *listen* to the early films of Buñuel. Aspects of love, sex, death, affect, longing, premonition, and transgressive musical power will thus be stressed and considered in a different perspective, analyzed scene by scene. The aim is not to minimize the other aspects of the films, but to supplement and contribute to the general interpretation of Buñuel. He is no straightforward Wagnerian and his films are not versions of *Tristan*, but the music adds significantly to the meaning and expression of the two films, both as correspondence, as ironic counterpoint and as accentuation of certain aspects of the film.⁵

thorough account of the respective contributions of Dali and Buñuel based on primary sources see Short pp. 147-57.

⁴ A few scholars comment on the use of music: Claude Murcia (Murcia) includes the sound montage in the general analyses of both films. As for *Un Chien Andalou* Phillip Drummond (Drummond pp. xxii-xxiii) comments on the soundtrack in a separate passage, and Jenaro Talens (Talens p. 63) notes a thematic link in the use of *Tristan*. As for *L'Âge d'Or*, Priscilla Barlow comments on the whole soundtrack (Barlow). She provides interesting facts and observations, focused on the distinction between classical and popular music. Many scholars comment on the garden concert and mentions Wagner in connection with this scene, which is thus an exception to the rule. There has been no detailed analysis of Buñuel's use of *Tristan* in these films.

⁵ The term "counterpoint" is of course derived from the famous 1928 "Statement" of filmmakers Sergej Eisenstein, Vsevolod Pudovkin and Grigori Alexandrov. They roughly define the possibility (and

I will show how Buñuel is able to meet Wagner with burlesque gags and surreal fantasy without destroying the essence of Wagner's music – its expressive qualities as well as intertextual meanings. There is an ambivalence towards the import of *Tristan* in these films, which appear skeptical towards the metaphysical aspects as well as the bourgeois reception of the opera, yet on the other hand cherish its transgressive aspects of forbidden, ecstatic desire and mad love. The possible transcendence in Buñuel is temporary and phantasmatic rather than a rescue in the realm of death. Such an analysis will, of course, also accentuate certain aspects of Wagner's *Tristan* in light of surrealism and thus contribute to an understanding of the remarkable fate of this opera.⁶

That Buñuel was intimately familiar with Wagner; that *Tristan* was his favorite piece of music and that he was very conscious of the connotations of this music is biographically documented (e.g. Buñuel *My Last Sigh* p. 219; Aranda pp. 38-9). Before developing my analysis of the films, I must first briefly comment on the opera.

N.B: The important overviews Figure 1 and Figure 2 are located at pp. 37-38.

2. Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* – Mad Love-Death

I will focus briefly on some of the dominant themes and aspects in this extensive opera that are relevant to *Un Chien Andalou* and *L'Âge d'Or*.

Wagner loosely based his opera on one of the medieval versions of the romance, namely that of Gottfried von Strassburg, yet instead of Gottfried's focus on courtly status and intrigues, Wagner turns *Tristan* into a metaphysical drama. Wagner's story is mainly a concentration of Gottfried's long and digressive story into a few defining moments of love, death and longing. These moments are then expanded to comprise the whole four-hour opera where the outer action is reduced to a minimum, and where the focus is on the 'inner action' (e.g. Dahlhaus pp. 49-51), meaning not only the mental life of the protagonists, but furthermore the dialectic unfolding of the metaphysics of

demand) of a "contrapuntal" use of sound in film, where the sound is not a perfection of cinematic illusion, but is rather in discord with the images, creating another montage layer (Eisenstein p. 114). They take the term from classical music, where however the counterpoint is not discordant, but rather involves independent melodies, which are nevertheless in harmony. I use the term in the derived cinematic sense as opposed to a correspondence between image and sound/music. The counterpoint thus creates a tension between image and music, which often has a powerful effect of ambivalence.

⁶ For a general account of the fate of *Tristan* I recommend Elliott Zuckerman's study of *Tristan* receptions and adaptations in music, philosophy and especially literature (Zuckerman).

love and death. The primary narrator of this unfolding is the music, which often speaks beyond the conscious individuals on stage. Inspired by Arthur Schopenhauer, Wagner absorbs the idea of individuality as a semblance veiling the metaphysical will, an absurd force of desire for endless reproduction and striving, governing our meaningless lives. But unlike Schopenhauer, for whom love is just a matter of the absurd procreation instinct (Schopenhauer Chapter XLIV), Wagner sees a potential in sexual love as a transgressive force.⁷

From the beginning of the opera, forbidden love is infused with death. And the longing for love becomes increasingly a longing for death, where Tristan and Isolde can be united, without inhibitions, beyond the lies of earthly life.

The musical development is one of constant longing and frustration. With a bold harmonic step further away from traditional tonality, the unresolved tension is part of the very musical structure with its long chains of harmonic suspensions without release – until the final B major chord, where the motif which opened the opera is finally harmonically resolved as Isolde with her last sigh sinks heroically and is transfigured upon Tristan's already dead body. This resolving and modulation from A flat to B is adumbrated a few times, but not executed before this last chord.⁸

Tristan and Isolde is an extreme opera in more than one way. The musical language is radical in its complexity and its transgression of romantic harmony from within (Dahlhaus p. 64). The lack of outer action is also remarkable, in that Wagner has reduced Gottfried's plot so that each act focuses on a central moment: I. The love pact; II. The lovers' tryst and decision; and III. their death.

The content is, perhaps, the most controversial element. This is not only an opera about transgressing custom and fixed marriage to follow the all-engulfing desire; *Tristan* is furthermore about choosing death in a world that has no room for untamed

⁷ Wagner wrote (but never sent) a letter to Schopenhauer in December 1858 with a critique of Schopenhauer's disdain of sexual love, instead promoting it as a way to self-knowledge and knowledge of the will beyond individuality (Wagner p. 208). It has been a matter of general dispute whether the relation between Tristan and Isolde is sexually consummated or whether it should be regarded as Platonic. Contemporary stage versions as well as analyses are usually in favor of the sexual interpretation, regarding sexual love as a path to the metaphysical, in line with Wagner's own letter (e.g. Scruton; Chafe).

⁸ The harmonic of the opera is famous for this and has been analyzed numerous times, including the famous 'Tristan chord', probably the only chord with a nickname. Wagner's use of the tritone is crucial in the harmonic effect. See Chafe pp. 85-99 for a recent analysis of the basic principles. Below, I will focus on the excerpts that Bunuel employs.

love. The philosophical content is explicated in Act II, where daytime, life and the visible world are denounced as pompous delusion, torture and anxiety. Opposed to this spurious life is the peaceful union beyond any distinctions in night and in death. This dualistic tribute to death is even more radical than Schopenhauer, and is probably inspired by Novalis' *Hymns of the Night* (1800).

2.1 Prelude and 'Transfiguration'

Buñuel specifically uses the Prelude and the orchestral version of the ending in his films. Whereas the ending is often mistakenly referred to as 'Liebestod' ('love-death'), this name was actually given to a part of Act II and later for the Prelude. The ending is actually called 'Verklärung', or 'Transfiguration' (Bailey pp. 41-43), and in the service of precision I have chosen this term. For Buñuel, however, as for most people, the name and content associated with the 'Transfiguration' theme is the less religious sounding 'Liebestod', the combination of love and death in one word.

The *Prelude* can be described as a series of musical-dynamic waves intensifying towards a climax and then receding. It is dominated by a few motifs, which are repeated and varied.⁹



Tristan 1 – Prelude (first motif)



Tristan 2 – Prelude (second motif)

The most important one in this context is the second motif, which occurs significantly in *L'Âge d'Or*, section B (see Figure 2). The musical motif at stake here occurs for the first time in bars 16-17. It is a continuation or a temporary 'answer' to the fragile longing of the first motif, and often bridges towards the flowing desire of the third motif. The opera begins with three muted, hesitant variations of the first motif. The second motif then comes as a climax, as a full unfolding of the expression of longing that the first

⁹ I will not go into the alleged fixed meanings of these motifs as *leitmotifs*. Wagner did not intend such easy fixations; the motifs are very flexible in this opera. There are many different names for and interpretations of the motifs, which could be a proof of their more open, plural meanings.

motif restrained. It can be seen as expressing the moment of contact between Tristan and Isolde, as the moment where their mutual desire is confessed. Notably, in Act I the first and second motif break the silence that follows the drinking of the love potion. Again, this motif is highly intense, as the motionless Tristan and Isolde wait for death but instead feel the boosting of their desire into an uncontrollable mad love and the union of two individuals.

In the program note to the orchestral Prelude Wagner himself describes it with the words:

‘From the timidest lament in inappeasable longing, the tenderest shudder, to the most terrible outpouring of an avowal of hopeless love, the sentiment traverses all phases of the vain struggle against inner ardor, until this, sinking back powerless upon itself, seems to be extinguished in death.’

(Bailey p. 48)

And the ‘Transfiguration’:

‘Yet what Fate divided in life now springs into transfigured life in death: the gates of union are thrown open. Over Tristan's body the dying Isolde receives the blessed fulfillment of ardent longing, eternal union in measureless space, without barriers, without fetters, inseparable!’

(ibid.)

The ‘Transfiguration’ is the most prominent Wagner excerpt in Buñuel. The hesitations of the Prelude have vanished, and in the opera this is the closest we get to an aria in an aria-less opera. Isolde sings ecstatically about Tristan and their future union, ending with the famous words ‘to drown, to sink, unconscious – supreme bliss’.¹⁰ The words of Isolde are, of course, absent from the instrumental version, but inevitably they are intertextually implied.

‘Transfiguration’ opens with a prominent motif, often referred to as the ‘Liebestod’ motif, which is featured in most of the passages Buñuel uses. The first time it occurs in the opera is in Act II, scene 2, when Tristan and Isolde sing: ‘Then we die, undivided, one for ever, without end...’¹¹ Almost a signature melody of the opera, it is melancholy, but with a sense of release.

¹⁰ In German: ‘ertrinken / versinken / unbewusst / höchste Lust’ (quotes are from the booklet for the CD - Deutsche Grammophon CD 413 315-2).

¹¹ ‘So starben wir, um ungetrennt, ewig einig, ohne End...’



Tristan 3 – Transfiguration motif (so-called ‘Liebestod’ motif)

Another prominent motif is a variation of the second motif from the Prelude, albeit more ecstatic. This motif comes in waves of higher and higher intensity until the final toning down in resolution. I will refer to this theme as the *climax* of ‘Transfiguration’.



Tristan 4 – Climax of ‘Transfiguration’

3.1 *Un Chien Andalou* – Characters and Residual Storyline

The immediate response to *Un Chien Andalou* after experiencing it for the first time is usually dominated by confusion. The unities of action, space, and time and those of cause and effect are eliminated and even parodied. This could lead to giving up ascribing any meaning to it at all. Repeated viewings, however, point in another direction. The collage-element will tend more and more to slide into the background, highlighting instead the many correspondences and continuities. Indeed, as Robert Short has pointed out, in order to create poetic confusion and not mere chaos, the film employs not only visual metaphors and the logic of a dream in order to engage the viewer, but also many conventional features of coherence. The deconstruction of both mainstream and current avant-garde cinema in *Un Chien Andalou* places it in a state of productive ambivalence and a strong part of this lies in the ‘residual storyline’ as well as the semi-consistent characters (Short pp. 94-98).

Should one be allowed to focus on this residual storyline and put the fragmentation and absurdities in brackets for a moment, the plot can be summarized as follows: It is a love-story about a man and a woman in a frustrated relationship. The man goes through many phases and seems to struggle with himself (Man 1 and Man 2 are both played by Pierre Batchef and can be seen as two sides of the same person). The woman leaves him in favor of the apparently more grounded, sporty and self-secure Man 3 on the beach. Their happiness ends in death. See Figure 1 for storyline and overview.

Admittedly, the abstraction from the surrealist elements in the outline above doesn't do justice to the expression of the film as a whole. Still, the residual story is there as a significant thread. I will focus in more detail only on aspects that are connected to the soundtrack – a soundtrack that emphasizes the love-story with its elements of desire and death.

3.2 The 'Mix' in *Un Chien Andalou*

As already mentioned, Buñuel reconstructed his soundtrack in 1960 for a soundversion of *Un Chien Andalou*. The interchanging of *Tristan* and tangos divides the film in five parts,¹² different from the conventional division made from the intertitles (cf. Drummond p. xxii). Figure 1 shows an overview of the music in the film.¹³

Wagner's 'Transfiguration' is cut in two. The tangos are unnamed, and I refer to them as *Tango 1* and *Tango 2* in Figure 1.¹⁴ *Tango 1* is clearly dominant, whereas *Tango 2* seems mainly to fill out the gap as *Tango 1* reaches its end in the middle of a scene.

Apart from the innovation of 'mixing' two records live at the premiere, the juxtaposition between two very different musical languages is in itself highly unconventional at the time. Wagner's harmonic complexity and endless melody meets the simple, melodic tone and repetitive gesture of the tangos - a genre that was highly popular in Paris at the time. What was known as high art and popular culture meet. On other levels, however, the theme of longing, sexual tension and tragedy might potentially give them a common feature which enables a dialogue rather than a simple contradiction of opposites.

¹² One could argue that the shift from Tango 1 to Tango 2 in the piano/donkeys scene could provide another caesura. However, this shift is a result of the finishing of Tango 1 and it comes in the middle of a somewhat coherent scene, suggesting that Tango 2 is primarily expanding the tango sequence, filling out the gap.

¹³ Note to paper version: Figure 1 and Figure 2 conveying an overview of the music of the films are located at the end of the paper (above the bibliography).

¹⁴ My research to track the tangos down has reached the conclusion that they really are anonymous and nameless. A fragment of Tango 1 has been released on CD with anonymous performers and the title 'Un Chien Andalou' (CD *Surrealism reviewed*, LTM 2343, 2002).

3.3 Sections I, III and V: Tango



The dominant *Tango 1* is in many ways typical of the genre. There is also a slightly comical effect embedded in its rough, syncopated rhythms, which is clear in section III with the erotic chase in the apartment (6:30-7:40). In the other sound versions of the film this sequence has a more disturbing atmosphere of sexual threat and potential assault. In this version, the edge is taken off, as the music highlights the playful aspects of the behavior of the characters. The tango partly transforms the chase into a dance and the comical elements endow the sequence with ambiguity. This may be seen as contrary to Buñuel's ambition of creating a disturbing film, but it is consistent with the woman's later reactions towards Man 1, where she sticks out her tongue repeatedly at him in a childish manner before abandoning him.

The choice of ending the film with *Tango 1* instead of the obvious *Tristan* as the loving couple is buried in the sand is somewhat surprising. *Tango 1* is undramatic and

nonchalant in comparison with Wagner and this has the effect of covering ‘the gloomy business’ (Drummond p. xxii), not only of the apartment pursuit, but also of the prologue and the ending. This idea of the tango as a light-hearted counterpoint to the scenes is certainly relevant; to some extent the tango does create an ironic tension between image and sound. It is important, however, not to stop there but to see it as more than simply a move towards harmlessness.

What is striking is, of course, the *blasé gesture* of showing eyeball-slicing and macabre death with the attitude of light-heartedness.¹⁵ *Tango I* is not only light-hearted, but also up-tempo and cyclic, repeating the same two motifs over and over. The gesture appears to be saying ‘these are the inevitable routines of everyday life’, whereas the spectator will normally conceive of the incidents on the screen as highly bizarre and disturbing. In this respect it corresponds with the mock-ordinary, parodic, intertitles. The cynicism of this gesture, then, is on some levels more provocative than a conventional, dramatic soundtrack, not despite, but in virtue of the detachment. *Tango I* thus participates in a dialectics of shock and indifference.

There is a possible affinity between Wagner and the tango as genre in the focus on desire, including its darker, tragic side. Buñuel has, however, chosen a relatively light tango and thus emphasizes the contrast rather than the common features between the two genres.

3.4 Section II – Heroine, Anti-hero, Androgyne

The ‘Transfiguration’ theme is, of course, very charged. In *Un Chien Andalou* it works on two levels: as a specific, *intertextual* reference and as direct, abstract *expression* of certain moods. The most obvious intertextual references are the way that both sections with Wagner music (II and IV) end with a death. The Androgyne is run over by a car at a climax point of the ecstatic theme ‘Transfiguration’ theme mentioned in the introduction (6:08-6:11). The dead body of Man 2 is taken away to the last chords of *Tristan* (11:56-13:05).

¹⁵ This may be an incident of what Michel Chion has named “anempathy”. (Chion p. 8)

At the same time, of course, the music expresses high emotion, longing and sadness, even for those who are not familiar with Wagner.¹⁶ When Buñuel directed the sequence with Batcheff and Mareuil staring out the window he gave the instruction:

‘Stare out the window as if you’re listening to Wagner’, I remember telling Batcheff. ‘No, no, not like that. Sadder. Much sadder.’
(Buñuel *My Last Sigh* p. 104)

Section II was intended to have a *Tristan* mood attached to it. What is important to emphasize, however, is that ‘Transfiguration’ often works more ambiguously here than just as a correspondence or resonance to the images. It sometimes works as subtle counterpoint:

¹⁶ To explain how music can express emotions and moods in a dialectics of nature and cultural convention is beyond the scope of this article. The important thing is that it works as expression. Wagnerian harmony has become an almost trivial expressive code of high emotion in film soundtracks, especially in classic Hollywood dramas.



When Man 1 is introduced in the film to the passionate soundtrack of *Tristan* he appears as the opposite of Tristan or of any knightly lover. He is skinny, dressed in feminine clothes and rides his bicycle very insecurely. The way he falls off the bicycle is just as ridiculous, even comical,¹⁷ since there are no external causes that would put the bike out of balance (2:43). He just turns over and doesn't even try to keep his balance or to break his fall. He is utterly ungainly, a paralyzed anti-hero. He lies in that same position as the heroine rushes passionately down to save or heal him.

The Woman can be seen as an Isolde figure. Isolde reluctantly healed Tristan back in Ireland, even though she had reason to kill him, and the dialectics of love and death which saturates the opera originates in this past moment. The sequence with the bicycle performs an ambiguous intertextual constellation with *Tristan*, and at the same time the

¹⁷ As Drummond has pointed out, the resemblance of Batcheff to Buster Keaton in this scene may be deliberate (Drummond p. xvi).

music as expression endows the sequence with a tragedy that counterpoints the comically absurd elements.

In this phase the Woman is the agent, whereas Man 1 is incapable of doing anything. This loosely parallels the relation of Tristan and Isolde in Act 1 of Wagner's opera. Isolde is the main character, the one who acts, who speaks and who initiates the whole fatal tragedy, whereas Tristan is in denial (Nattiez pp. 141-45). The Woman can actually be considered the 'heroine' of *Un Chien Andalou*; the one in power and the one we follow after she leaves Man 1. Thus, whereas the chase scene may confirm gender conventions, the film as a whole doesn't.



In the sequence with the Androgyne in the street, Wagner's music as expression accentuates sadness and invites us to empathize with the Androgyne in an otherwise absurd scene. It also supports the Androgyne's facial expressions of otherworldliness.

Intertextuality is, of course, at play here. The music moves to the *climax* as she¹⁸ is run over and lies dead on the street, apparently fulfilling the excited premonition of the now more vigorous Man 1 (6:08-6:11). ‘Transfiguration’ intertextually *accentuates* a transcendental aspect of the sequence, where the Androgyne’s strangely absent-minded behavior corresponds with Tristan’s and Isolde’s longing for the other world beyond death and their increasing carelessness towards the worldly. ‘Transfiguration’ amplifies the sense of death, premonition and tragedy.

3.5 Section IV – The Death of Man 2

The second entering of Wagner’s ‘Transfiguration’ is in a sequence with Man 1 and Man 2 (10:29). The sequence is divided not only by the music but also by the intertitle ‘Sixteen years before’. Apart from the primarily comic inversion of the traditional intertitle function from orientation to confusion, this intertitle associates with the past, memory and maybe even nostalgia. This corresponds with the change from tango to *Tristan* and also with the sudden slow-motion. The whole mood of the sequence changes towards a more ‘poetic’ expression.

As we see the face of Man 2 for the first time it is not only clear that he is the double of Man 1, but also that he shows a very different side of his personality (10:37). Until this turning point Man 2 has been seen only from the back, but now he turns around, throws off his hat and shows a remarkably soft facial expression, highlighted by the slow-motion effect and the pronounced facial make-up. Whereas he was evidently a severe, punishing father figure with the manners of a movie gangster before the shift, now we see a more feminized poetic type corresponding to the melancholy of the music. He turns to pick up two books that he apparently cherishes and hands them to Man 1 (whom he has put in the corner in a position reminiscent of a crucifixion) with a very different set of gestures than what characterized his body language before. After he has handed the books to Man 1 we see his theatrically emotional face in close-up as he slowly turns his head with moist eyes; apparently in sad, compassionate disbelief. He

¹⁸ The Androgyne is evidently androgynous, albeit with a predominance of the feminine. Hammond refers to her as ‘second woman’, whereas Buñuel and Dali called her a ‘hermaphrodite’. What we see is a young woman, partly in men’s clothing, including a tie.

affectively reaches out to touch Man 1's shoulder just as the music reaches the *climax* theme - a gesture of reconciliation and care, perhaps even of love (11:09-11:21).¹⁹



Wagner's music works expressively in this sequence, accentuating the sentimental, even pathetic elements that succeed the previous castigation. Man 2's transformation can also be seen as one from a man of action to a refined, or even decadent, man of letters. It corresponds with the musical shift to Wagner's *Tristan*, often considered the quintessence of decadent romanticism. The sequence with its exaggerations of affect is melodramatic to a point where it becomes parodic.

The reception of Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* is divided in two: The negative mocking of its exaggerated, decadent affect and its metaphysical pretensions on the one

¹⁹ There is something therapeutic about this scene, since it is obvious to view Man 1 and Man 2 as not only doubles, but two sides of a man's personality in a dynamic process of struggle, discipline and reconciliation. As with the rest of this film, however, it is not unequivocal.

hand, and the positive worship of it as the most profound emotional expression ever on the other hand.²⁰ As a parallel, the sequence with Man 2 in *Un Chien Andalou* could be seen to play on a similar ambivalence.

The ensuing scene in the park is surprisingly naturalistic, slow and long (11:56-13:05). Man 2 lies dead, is discovered by incidental passers-by and carried away. There are no visual metaphors, no weird behavior, no surreal phenomena whatsoever. The scene stands out from the condensed, playful disorientation of the rest of the film, as if we should honor the death of Man 2 in a way that nothing else is respected here. And why is this scene so long? No critics or scholars have paid attention to it, and admittedly it is rather ordinary or even trivial compared to the rest of the film. The answer may be that it accompanies the end of *Tristan* to the final, redemptive chord of the opera, the B major chord that completes the endless melody and dissolves the dissonance, the longing and frustration. The weighty and highly romantic metaphysics of Wagner both corresponds with the theatrical death of Man 2 and contrasts with the prosaic view of the dead body in the park as something to be disposed of, something that does not really upset the passers-by. Some of them cannot even be moved to get their hands out of their pockets.

²⁰ On the reception of *Tristan*, see Zuckerman. As mentioned below, there is also a second type of positive reception: the simple enjoyment of romantic music by a wider audience.



In the next scene the Woman, in contrast, stares at the death-head moth as if she is somehow in contact with Man 2's death (13:15-13:28).

3.6 Wagner in *Un Chien Andalou* – General Remarks

As we have seen, Wagner's 'Transfiguration' works as both expression and intertext. In addition it has an ambiguous role of accentuation, correspondence, and counterpoint. The film is about love and death; it plays with the dissolution of space, time and individuality – all themes in common with *Tristan and Isolde*. Still, the film is not Wagnerian in the sense that it expresses the same ideals. Rather, it plays with them the same way it plays with various cinematic techniques and conventions. This penetrating irony makes it difficult to extract a 'message' or even a stable meaning from it.



Wagner's music, however, adds a tragic expression to the film, which can lead to an awareness of the love story, of the inner struggle of the Man, of everyday death. It shows us how Tristan and Isolde would behave in a surreal, modern city. They are no longer metaphysical heroes from a distant past, but confused and immature beings in a chaotic world of desire and violence. There are many inhibitions that prevent love from unfolding, not least Man 1's immaturity, but also the burden of civilization, as represented in the grand pianos and their cargo (7:48-8:34). The dialectics of love and death does not end in any transfiguration, although there is an expectation of happy ending as Woman and Man 3 walks along the beach before being buried in the sand (15:14-15:23). The Wagnerian tragedy is intact in Buñuel's *Liebestod*, but now without the possibility of a transcendent rescue.

4.1 *L'Âge d'Or* – Forbidden Desire in a Bourgeois World

L'Âge d'Or is much longer and less disorienting than *Un Chien Andalou*. The characters are more consistent, the scenes are longer and the main part of the film follows a clear narrative logic, despite the occasional absurd elements. I will focus on the main part of the film, since the prologue(s) and the epilogue do not use Wagner and are thematically unlinked to *Tristan*.

This film is unmistakably about forbidden love. The male and the female protagonists are driven by their desire and have problems restraining their sexuality to fit into the codes of bourgeois (high) society. Especially the Man is driven almost completely by instinct and shows random aggression when he is restrained by others.

The parallel of the main part of the film to Wagner's *Tristan* is clear. Tristan and Isolde are in conflict with courtly moral, but their desire drives them to transgress all conventions and pursue their love. The major difference between the two is the ending. Whereas the longing in *Tristan* is resolved in death, the longing in *L'Âge d'Or* is frustrated – perhaps until the disconnected and provocative de Sade epilogue shows the ostensible redemption and apotheosis of desire in brutal torture and sexual violence. This epilogue, however, cannot be regarded as a solution to the situation of the lovers, but rather as a symbolic act of transgressing morality. Before this, the love-story ends with the heartbroken Man raging in his room.

4.2 The Sound Montage and *Tristan* in *L'Âge d'Or*

The dominant sound is the intricate montage of music, dominated by Wagner's *Tristan*, supplemented by numerous other excerpts, especially from canonized classical music (see Figure 2). Furthermore, the sound montage includes various concrete sound effects beyond the mere descriptive – most remarkably in the poetic scene where the woman sits in front of the mirror (25:59-27:08), accompanied by the sound of wind, the echo of cowbells (from the cow that she chased out of her bed), barking dogs (connecting her with the Man) and low, atmospheric strings. This analysis will focus on the use of *Tristan*.²¹

²¹ As for the other musical works employed, it could be noted that Mendelssohn's Italian Symphony corresponds with the part about Rome; The Catalan drums corresponds with the Man's rage. The solo violin fragment from Beethoven's concerto accompanies a man kicking a violin. See Barlow (2001) for

There are four major Wagner sections of various lengths (see figure 2). The most significant is the long diegetic section C with a concert performance of ‘Transfiguration’ in the garden. Two of the sections are interrupted – section A by the flushing of the toilet, section C by the telephone call from the Interior Minister.

It should be noted that the versions of the classical music are recorded especially for this film in arrangements for a small orchestra and piano, without vocals, horns, harp etc. The immediate effect of this is that the various pieces have less divergent sounds. It also makes the small size of the orchestra in the garden less unlikely and thus gives concrete meaning to the words of the Woman quoted in the beginning of this article.

As in *Un Chien Andalou* the use of *Tristan* is ambiguous, and here the ambiguity is sharpened. There is a very clear and dominating correspondence to the story about forbidden love and desire, even of a telepathic connection between the lovers. But there is also, momentarily, an explicit ironic detachment or even deriding of the solemnity connected with this music, most clearly in the fecal interruption in section A. However, when the music becomes diegetic in the garden scene the meaning of *Tristan* cannot be reduced to correspondence, counterpoint or accentuation. As we shall see, the garden concert is perceived differently by the bourgeois audience, the conductor and the lovers, which points toward the unstable status of *Tristan* between refined bourgeois taste, unbearably demanding metaphysics and sexual revolution.

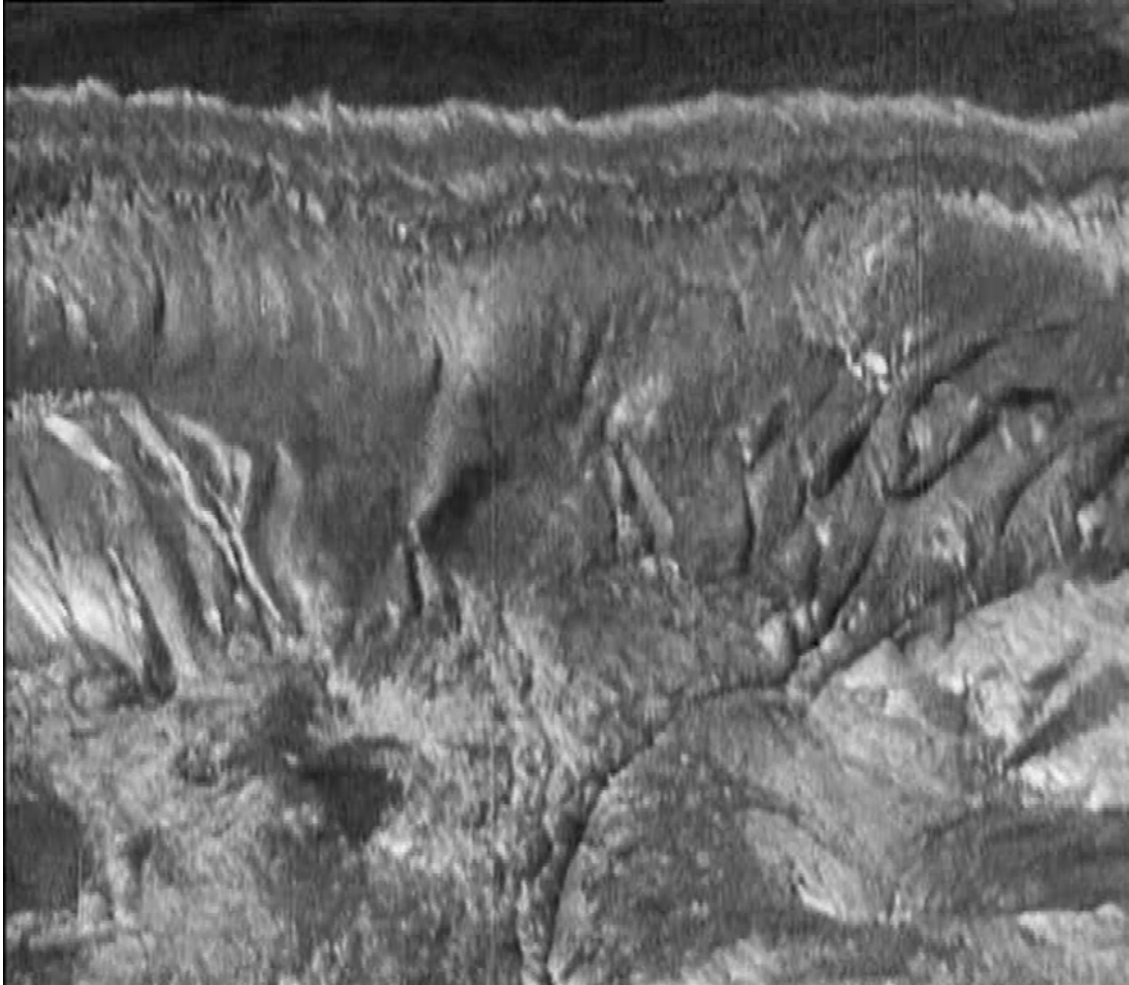
some of these and some other possible referential uses of the music. A thorough analysis of the whole sound montage of this film, including all music, speech and concrete sounds, remains to be done.

4.3 Mud and Feces



As the lovers are rolling scandalously in the mud in section A, the Man is erroneously considered a rapist, even though the woman shows clear signs of lust and pleasure. They look at each other with intense longing as they are separated by force (14:43-15:02). The music accentuates this longing, even when it is brutally interrupted by the woman flushing the toilet combined with images of bubbling, molten lava, reminiscent of feces (15:15-15:21). As the look on the Man's face indicates (and as the screenplay makes clear), this lavatory scene is a result of the Man's 'private fantasy' (Buñuel *The Scripts* p. 29).





The interruption of the music can be interpreted in different ways. It can be regarded as the ultimate blasphemous debasement of the highest spiritual art with an infantile insertion of the lowest of all material things. Also merely in terms of sound, the interruption is unusually brutal. There is no fading; the flushing comes suddenly as a shock in the middle of a melodic development and returns to the music in the same abrupt fashion. As a surrealist, Buñuel is no stranger to debasing jokes, and shocking the audience was no doubt a part of the intention.

But there is more to be said here. The desecrating gesture has an element of profaning Wagner, not simply as a sarcastic rejection, but more literally as a way of materializing the metaphysical aspects of *Tristan*. The move is double: Buñuel takes the solemnity and the sacredness out of *Tristan* by a sudden detaching and profane gesture, *without* eliminating *Tristan*'s primary role as an expression of longing. In a surrealist

context love is often infused with the lowest matter, and the image of the immaculate woman sitting on the luxurious lavatory with a sensual, longing look on her face is one of striking poetry. The affect of *Tristan* is not destroyed, but is *blended* with profane sexual fantasy in a surreal montage.

4.4 The Man as Scandalous Knight

The Man is evidently a moral antithesis to the usual Tristan character. Tristan is at odds with courtly morals only in so far as he cannot resist the forbidden affair with Isolde. And this is allegedly beyond his control, for he is driven by the power of the love potion.²² The Man in *L'Âge d'Or* acts contrarily to moral norms. His aggression, probably stemming from sexual frustration after being separated from his lover, makes him act cruelly towards animals and a blind man. But it turns out that he is also a trusted, official philanthropist, a modern noble knight, one might say, even though he doesn't hold this responsibility in high regard (27:49-29:30). The image of him is ambivalent. Later it turns out that the Minister accuses him of having dishonored and betrayed the trust in him, causing the death of many people (47:36-48:26). After this incident, the dominating moral image of the hero is one of anti-knight, pursuing his egocentric desire for the Woman with little care for other people. The relation to the noble knight Tristan is, however, still dialectic rather than a mere contrast. In Wagner, Tristan and Isolde pursue their love with no regard for the surrounding world (which they perceive more and more as a semblance dominated by attitude and vanity). The result of this disregard is that they are surrounded by dead bodies in the final scene. Many people, including their closest friends, have died as a consequence of their mad love, and they do not care for one second. The dark side of pursuing their desire is that they have moved beyond morality. Thus also the Man in *L'Âge d'Or*.

²² In Wagner's *Tristan* it can be argued that the magic of the potion is unnecessary. They are already doomed by uncontrolled desire before they drink what they think is a death potion. Facing death, they can let go and yield to the passion that especially Tristan has repressed in courtly loyalty.

4.5 Transcending Spatial Separation



In Section B there can be no doubt about the explicit intertextual reference in using Wagner. The second musical motif in the Prelude is played twice out of its musical context. This is an intense moment in the film. After the relatively light, melodic background music from Beethoven and Mendelssohn, there is a long silence as the Man watches the advertisement photograph and we see the Woman sitting in the exact same position (22:24-22:57). As we recognize this connection, the Wagner fragment sounds for the first time. As the Man is being dragged along against his will and the Woman seems to have the spell of contact/desire broken, the motif is played for the second time (22:58-23:10).

The silence and the repeated fragment endow Section B with an intense sentiment that was absent from the previous scenes. The moment of contact between the lovers in

L'Âge d'Or is supported by the second motif from *Tristan* both as intertextuality and as expression.

As in Buñuel, individuality, time and space are illusions in Wagner's *Tristan*, clearly formulated in Act II by the protagonists themselves. This is inspired by Schopenhauer's idea that the principle of individuality is the cause of suffering. As mentioned above (chapter 2), Wagner adds sexual love to the possible ways out of individuality, probably alluding to the ecstasy of orgasm as an experience of losing one's ego in common bliss.

4.6 *Tristan* Concert and Passionate Love-Making

Section C is not only the longest, but also the clearest evidence of Buñuel's intertextual use of Wagner, and this is also the single instance where Wagner is mentioned in much of the Buñuel literature. Most of 'Transfiguration' is played by an orchestra in the garden. This means that the *Tristan* music becomes diegetic, and hence that the characters in the film hear it and become affected by it. The volume is even adjusted so that it is louder when we see the orchestra and the audience and lower when we follow the lovers placed elsewhere in the garden. And during the telephone conversation indoors, the music is inaudible (47:26-48:36).

A striking aspect of the diegetic music is the difference between the reception and reaction from the concert audience and from the lovers. Wagner's *Tristan* cannot be reduced to 'bourgeois music', and neither can it be reduced to transgressive, revolutionary music. It has both potentials. As mentioned above, the positive reception of Wagner's *Tristan* has been divided between those who hear it simply as moving, romantic music and those for whom this is the most radical, ecstatic music; a threat to the whole bourgeois culture in favor of Dionysian desire. Nietzsche was indeed one of the first for whom this music was highly transgressive.²³

²³ Even the late Nietzsche, who condemned Wagner (including the Wagner within himself), acknowledged *Tristan* as the most powerful music ever written; so powerful, in fact, that it suspended critical thought, and therefore dangerous (Zuckerman Chapter III).



This divided reception of *Tristan* is also at stake in *L'Âge d'Or*. The bourgeois audience seems almost unaffected by the music. At least, they have learned not to show any affect, but to listen politely to whatever is being played. For them this is just another concert. Buñuel even plays a discreet, humorous trick on us when we get a brief glimpse of the Woman's mother holding a handkerchief to her cheek in an ecstatic musical passage (47:14-47:17). At first, one may see in this gesture finally a sign of affect. However, it becomes clear that her face is in no way showing any sign of affect, and that she is merely holding a cold cloth against her cheek to soothe the pain from the outrageous slap she received earlier from the Man. The unaffectedness of the bourgeois (or low-aristocratic) audience is mocked, and it is understood that the lovers are much more receptive to the power of music, even though they are not seated as audience let alone focused on listening.



From the beginning, even from the tuning of the orchestra, the film keeps cross-cutting between the lovers and the audience, as if underscoring the difference.²⁴ As the concert begins with the first brittle tones from ‘Transfiguration’, the lovers jump as if given a sensuous shock, even though they are located in another section of the garden. Their passionate, transgressive love, *amour fou*, is much more closely related to the content and sentiment of the music than the audience’s bourgeois manners.²⁵

In the second act of the opera, Tristan and Isolde condemn the sham and hypocrisy of courtly life and find truth in the night, in their passionate union and in

²⁴ There actually seems no other reason for showing the concert in such quantity, since it has no dramatic, visual development. All significant action takes place between the lovers, and yet the concert seems to play an important role, both as a reminder that the music is diegetic and to show the audience as a contrast to the protagonists.

²⁵ The idea that some people are more sensitive to the ecstasies of *Tristan* than others can be seen not only in receptions such as Nietzsche’s, but also in assimilations of *Tristan*, such as Thomas Mann’s short story ‘Tristan’ (1903), even though the heroic status of the lovers is ambivalent.

death. Noble life is dismissed in the libretto as deceit, semblance, greed, guile and many other vices connected with living lies. In Buñuel's surrealist-Marxist perspective (and, indeed, already in Wagner's semi-revolutionist perspective) it will not be far-fetched to transpose these ideas from the medieval court to the bourgeois upper class.

The interpretations of the garden sequence are divided between the optimistic reading of a successful *amour fou* on the one hand and a pessimistic reading of the passage as a permanent *coitus interruptus*, demonstrating the necessity of obstacles to maintain passion, on the other hand. Of those who include the music as part of their analysis, Henry Miller is the most optimistic. He even claims that for the audience and censorship of the film, the most shocking element was the suggestion that Wagner's music could arouse sexual desire and perversion, that music can 'bring on orgasms' and drive people to mad, transgressive love (Miller p. 174). Priscilla Barlow, on the contrary, focuses on how the *Tristan* music has lost its transgressive avant-garde power and how the diegetic music even seems to be a *hindrance* for the consummation of the lovers. She does, however, recognize the positive telepathic element in section B, and seems to conclude that the music only supports the lovers when non-diegetic (Barlow p. 48).

It is true that the lovers in the garden, finally freed from any external constraints, can be viewed as being frustrated by inner inhibitions of psychological as well as surreal and absurd kinds. If we follow this line of thought in the *Tristan* perspective, we roughly reach the following development from the Middle Ages to surrealism: in Gottfried (as well as other medieval versions), the suspicions and intrigues are the primary narrative drives. These problems are not blocking the possibility of sexual consummation (which is clearly frequent), but are a constant threat to the lovers' life and courtly status. In Wagner, the external obstacles are reduced to a minimum in favor of a fundamental impossibility of free love in a world of illusion and lies. In Buñuel, one might see a similar distrust of the possibility of free love in a constraining bourgeois world that has even internalized itself into the psychic life of the lovers represented by inner obstacles. Whereas in Wagner death is a possible redemption there are no metaphysical solutions in Buñuel, only the transgression into sadistic torture, if we see the epilogue as the next logical step.

But the sequence in the garden could also be viewed slightly more optimistically if we regard what happens not merely as psychic inhibitions. The Man is distracted by the foot of the statue (the toe of which the Woman sucks passionately and sexually in his momentary absence) (44:22-44:53 + 46:35-47:08). They behave as a married couple still in love after many years in a conversation without oral speech (49:25-51:44). She falls asleep in his arms; his face is covered with blood and they claim happily to have killed their children (51:52-52:20). He screams his love out ecstatically. All the time they are unmistakably tender and passionate towards each other. These instances can hardly be reduced to psychic obstructions and *coitus interruptus*. They can be seen as a dream-like path to orgasm (Hammond p. 49), as a parody of pornography (Higginbotham p. 44), or even as a union beyond reality, space and time (Kyrou pp. 158-9). These interpretations point to different aspects of this sequence, divided between transgressive sexuality and fetishism, moving, tender love, and absurd gags, and it would be wrong to reduce it to any one of these.



Viewed in the Wagnerian light, the lovers are affected by the music to walk a non-linear path that ends with an abandonment of physical reality with all its ridiculous, petty obstacles in favor of an ecstatic, orgasmic union, reached at the point where the blood-faced Man repeatedly cries out ‘mon amour!’ while the music (almost as an engine of passion) reaches its climax and, shortly after, its halt (52:08-52:31).

4.7 The Erotic Power of the Conductor

The two main obstructions come from the outside: the interruption from the phone call and the final breaking off from the music by the conductor. Whereas the first of these is shaken off and passion easily revived, the interruption from the conductor turns out to be fatal. He holds a certain power, enabling him to replace the Man as the object of the Woman’s desire, despite his old age and unattractiveness. He is normally interpreted simply as a father figure (and if we go along the *Tristan* line, he could perhaps be seen

as a King Marke figure, albeit with success), but in the present context I will focus on his role as the provider of Wagner's music.



The conductor is in some sort of connection with the loving couple during the concert; maybe even a two-way influence, a spiral, where the lovers are aroused by the music and the conductor aroused by the lovers, so that all three end in the highest ecstasy. For the conductor, this ecstasy is too much; he is over-heated and breaks off the concert at its musical climax, acting as if his head is about to explode (52:32-52:52). He steers directly through the garden labyrinth to the place of the lovers, and the Woman leaves the Man to kiss the conductor with increasing erotic passion (53:22-54:33). He seems to be the only person capable of mentally separating the lovers, and I will suggest that his role as a provider of Wagner's Dionysian music provides him with this status. The erotic power of music is emphasized once again.

In both films the woman leaves the man in favor of another man. But whereas *Un Chien Andalou* followed the woman into her new love, *L'Âge d'Or* follows the heartbroken man. The Man's rage is accompanied by the sound of militant Catalan drums. They begin exactly at the moment where he jumps up from his chair in anger (54:10) and continue into the de Sade epilogue. They are, however, interrupted briefly by Wagner in a moment of sentimentality.



In *Section D* 'Transfiguration' returns non-diegetically as the Man throws himself on the bed and cries his heart out. He embraces the pillow for comfort and caresses it in memory of the lost love. There is no doubt that the music here has the role of expressing longing and nostalgia for what happened in the garden. As the pillow is torn open from his caresses and his hands are filled with feathers there is a slow transition from grief to anger, supported by the return of the Catalan drums.

5. Wagner in Buñuel Concluded

I hope to have demonstrated how Buñuel employs Wagner in ambiguous and intricate ways. The ambivalence towards Wagner spawns burlesque gags and ironic counterpoints together with clear correspondences and loyal adaptations, often in the same sequence. Buñuel is able to *deflate* the solemn and metaphysical aspects of Wagner without giving up important aspects in the realm of love, desire, transgressiveness and the power of music. Furthermore, the use of Wagner often accentuates the tragic and emotional aspects of scenes that would otherwise appear more detached, while the tangos in *Un Chien Andalou* accentuate play and detachment in scenes that would otherwise appear disturbing, but with a somewhat cynical gesture. The metaphysics of Wagner is grounded in a more corporeal world – albeit with surreal phantasmatic possibilities. This is done by blending Wagner with profane sex and perversions, surreal gags and impotent or cruel Tristan figures.

As we have seen, *death* plays an important role in *Un Chien Andalou*, where it is closely connected with love. In *L'Âge d'Or* death is primarily present in the form of murders – the scorpion kills the rat; the gatekeeper kills his son; the Man is responsible for many people's deaths; the lovers have killed their imaginary children, and the epilogue is a retirement from de Sade's morbid orgy. The redemption and transfiguration in Wagner's *Tristan* is replaced by failure and aggression in *L'Âge d'Or* and by more worldly deaths in *Un Chien Andalou*. There seems to be no rescue from the pessimism in Buñuel's *Liebestod*.

An important symbolism in Wagner's libretto is that of day and night, connected with life and death. Probably inspired by Novalis, the enlightenment hierarchy is reversed and truth is connected with night, illusion with day. At night, things and individuals blur and merge in an indistinct dreamworld, governed by desire rather than reason. As a parallel, both *Un Chien Andalou* and *L'Âge d'Or* have the surreal logic of dreams - and *Un Chien Andalou* in particular has a nocturnal mood to it, even though most of the scenes are shot in the daytime. Buñuel even connects the medium of the cinema (the darkness in the theatre; the hypnosis of the screen; the possibilities of emulating dream logics) with sleeping and dreaming (Buñuel "Poetry and Cinema" p.

107). Instead of a metaphysical realm Buñuel operates with a more temporary psychological darkness of the surreal.

However, there is a sense of the inner life and the transcendent in Buñuel. As we have seen, time, space and individuality are confused or challenged in both films. There are contacts transcending space, premonitions transcending time and personality splittings as well as symbioses transcending individuality. Like Tristan and Isolde, Buñuel's lovers are connected on levels unrestrained by physical laws. Driven by desire, the lovers seem in close contact with the Schopenhauerian will, and in line with Wagner's revision of Schopenhauer, sexual love is not merely succumbing to this will but also a way of acknowledging it beyond individuality.

In Buñuel, like in Wagner, love cannot be fulfilled in the real world. In *Un Chien Andalou* love is mainly obstructed by Man 1's immaturity. But the final image is enigmatic. The lovers who walk along the beach in what promises to be a happy ending are seen grotesquely buried in the sand 'In the spring'. The pessimism goes further than that of psychic inhibitions. Are they buried because love fades out in their mature monogamous relationship? (Murcia p. 58). Or are they happily reunited in death? The tango gives no answer but expresses that this is everyday life for the bourgeois couple. In *L'Âge d'Or* love is fueled by the power of music, connected with will and desire. Love is as powerfully beautiful for the ones in love as it is brutal and careless towards the rest of the world. When the music's over the spell is broken as is the Man's heart. Transgressive surrealism and a play on melodramatic clichés go hand in hand.

There is no lasting solution to the problem of love in the two films. Whether we die in a *Liebestod* or dispense with all morality in a transgressive *amour fou* or end in a permanent bourgeois relationship it leads to a kind of death. The films are less radical in their metaphysical claims than the opera, but all the more pessimistic.

Figure 1 – Tristan in *Un Chien Andalou*

I

0:00-1:45 **Tango 1.** "Once upon a time...": The slicing of the eyeball.

II

1:45-6:30 **Wagner – Transfiguration** "Eight years later": Enter cyclist (Man 1) and the Woman in her apartment. Telepathic premonition. Bicycle accident and passionate aid. The clothes on the bed. The ants in the hand and its transformations. The death of androgynous woman in the street.

III

6:30-10:28. **Tango 1.** Erotic chase in the apartment. Man 1 pulls grand pianos with cargo.

8:14 **Tango 2.** Still pulling grand pianos. She escapes. He lies on the bed.

"At three o'clock in the morning": Man 2 enters, bosses Man 1 around and puts him in the corner.

IV

10:29-13:05 **Wagner – Transfiguration** "Sixteen years before": Man 2 moves in slow-motion. Gives Man 1 books as part of the punishment. Books become revolvers and Man 1 shoots Man 2. Man 2 falls dead in a park. Long scene where people find his body and carry him away.

V

13:06-end **Tango 1.** Death head moth on the wall. Argument between Man 1 and Woman. Woman leaves and meets Man 3 on the beach. They find and ridicule the clothes of Man 1 and wander happily along the beach.

"In the spring": Woman and Man 3 are buried vertically in the sand.

Film facts

Sometimes given the English title *An Andalusian Dog*. 1928. Written by Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí. Directed and produced by Luis Buñuel. Silent film with intertitles, premiered with gramophone mixing by Luis Buñuel. Sound version with Buñuels reconstruction of the music from the premiere (1960). 16 mins.

Figure 2 – Tristan in L'Âge d'Or

A - 14:32-17:40 *Prelude*.

The Man and Woman have interrupted a ceremony with their ecstatic screaming while rolling erotically in the mud nearby. As they are separated Wagner begins. The Man looks with sad longing after her. Cut to toilet scene and lava (Wagner interrupted briefly by the flushing). The Man is taken away and behaves aggressively. The ceremony continues.

B - 22:49-23:10 *Second motif twice*

The Man looks at a poster. Correspondence and intimations of contact between him and the Woman lying ecstatically in the same position as the image on the poster.

C - 43:36-52:34 *Transfiguration*

The orchestra performs the music (which then becomes diegetic). The lovers are alone nearby, trying to make love. They go through various phases. They are interrupted by a phone call. During the indoor phone conversation (47:26-48:36) the music is absent. The lovers continue. At the ecstatic climax the conductor interrupts the music and leaves the site of the concert.

D – 55:04-55:40 *Transfiguration*

The Man back in his room cries in his bed after the Woman has left him for the conductor.

Other music

Mendelssohn: *The Hebrides* (0:49-3:13); Mozart: *Ave Verum* (3:15-4:28 + 11:42-14:04); Beethoven: *Symphony no. 5*, third movement (5:15-7:25); Debussy: "La Mer est

plus belle” from *Trois Melodies* (9:21-11:39); Mendelssohn: *Symphony no. 4* (“The Italian Symphony”), third movement (17:42-20:05 + 21:30-22:24); Beethoven: *Concerto for violin and orchestra* op. 61, first movement (20:05-21:23); muted strings (25:59-27:08); unidentified classical music (28:14-28:43); Schubert: *Symphony no. 8*, first movement (30:03-34:16); Wagner: “Träume” (Wesendonk-lied no. 5)(39:30-41:32); Catalan drums (54:10-55:03 + 55:41-1:02:10); unidentified light music (1:02:11-1:02:19). As for ‘unknown’: The liner notes to the DVD lists “occasional music by Georges van Parys”.

Film facts

Sometimes given the English title *The Golden Age*. 1930. Written by Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dali. Directed by Luis Buñuel. Produced by Vicomte Charles de Noailles. Sound film with intertitles. 63 mins.

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Discography (sound clips)

'Tristan und Isolde Prelude und Liebestod' on *Wagner: Works*. London Symphony Orchestra, Yondani Butt. Nimbus Alliance, NI 6164, (2012).

Filmography (still images)

Un Chien Andalou and *L'Age d'Or*. 2DVD, British Film Institute, BFIVD623.