

LORCA BUNUEL DALÍ



**FORBIDDEN PLEASURES
and CONNECTED LIVES**

Gwynne Edwards

I.B. TAURIS

LORCA, BUÑUEL, DALÍ



Gwynne Edwards was until recently Professor of Spanish at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth, specialising in theatre and film. He has written extensively on Lorca, Buñuel and Pedro Almodóvar. His translations of Lorca's plays, as well as those of seventeenth-century and modern South American dramatists, have been published by Methuen, and many have been staged professionally.

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INTRODUCTION



FEDERICO GARCÍA LORCA (1898–1936), Luis Buñuel (1900–83), and Salvador Dalí (1904–89) are without doubt three of the greatest and best-known Spanish creative artists of the twentieth century. Lorca's poetry and, in particular, plays such as *Blood Wedding*, *Yerma*, and *The House of Bernarda Alba* are universally acknowledged for their emotional and dramatic force and have been translated into many languages. The name of Luis Buñuel appears regularly in the list of the most accomplished film directors in the history of the cinema, especially in relation to Surrealism. And Salvador Dalí is, of course, recognised throughout the world not only for his extraordinary surrealist paintings, but also for his quite bizarre and often sensational way of life. But if these three individuals are known for their own particular work and have each been the subject of various exhaustive studies, the connections between them, which are many and varied, have rarely been considered.

In the following pages, titles of their works will be given in English except when these works are normally known by their non-English titles. In these cases, the foreign title will be followed by an English translation.

Born within six years of each other, they came from different parts of Spain: Lorca from the colourful and vibrant south, Buñuel from the much harsher northern province of Aragón, and Dalí from the coastal town of Figueras on the Costa Brava. But if their places of origin differed, their childhood circumstances were very similar, for all three enjoyed privileged backgrounds, markedly different from the poverty endured by many others in those regions of Spain. Lorca's father was, as we shall see, a prosperous farmer who owned a considerable amount of land and employed many

agricultural workers. Buñuel's father, having made his fortune in Cuba, owned two luxurious properties, and was so wealthy that on one occasion he was able to save a local bank from insolvency. And Dalí's father, although not quite in the same financial category as Buñuel's, was a well-known notary whose duties brought in a regular and considerable income. It was precisely on account of their privileged backgrounds that Lorca and Buñuel especially felt compassion for those less well-off than themselves and that later on they shared markedly left-wing views that would in turn profoundly affect their personal lives. Dalí too held extreme left-wing views as a young man; they were more a reflection of his father's own anarchist views than anything else, but it seems quite clear that when Lorca, Buñuel, and Dalí became close friends in the 1920s, they shared a similar political viewpoint.

A second and highly important connection concerns their sexuality. If this issue is dealt with extensively in the following pages, it is simply because it was something that played a crucial part in the personal and artistic lives of all three individuals, defining their relationships and expressing itself throughout their work. It is often argued that the personal lives of creative artists have little connection with their work, but there are clearly many whose plays, films, paintings, or music are the expression of their anguish and anxieties, and of whom it is safe to say that without those emotional problems that work would not exist. Tchaikovsky would not have produced his last symphony, the so-called *Pathétique*, had he not been plunged into deep despair. Nor would Strindberg or Tennessee Williams have written the plays they did had their personal lives not been marked by sexual, marital, and family traumas.

Lorca and Buñuel's sexuality was profoundly influenced by their Catholic background, and in Buñuel's case by his education by Jesuits. Although Lorca attended a fairly liberal school, the highly traditional and strongly Catholic society in which he grew up meant that his increasing awareness of his homosexual leanings created in him a crisis of conscience, a need to conceal his sexual nature from his family and others, and, in consequence, it led to a profound sexual frustration that would subsequently characterise most of his work.¹ Buñuel's exposure at school to the strict teachings of the Jesuits left him – as it did many other Spaniards who attended similar institutions – with the deeply ingrained belief that sex

was a sin, and therefore with a sexual reticence that affected him throughout his long life. In this respect, although he was strictly heterosexual, his Catholic background had as profound an effect on him as it did on Lorca.² It is an aspect of Buñuel's life and work that has not previously been studied in detail.

Although Dalí too attended a school run by priests – in this case Marist Brothers – his sexuality, which proved to be, if anything, more bizarre than that of Lorca and Buñuel, was probably shaped less by his education than by other factors that, as we shall see later, led to an aversion to physical contact with the opposite sex, to a predilection, despite a marriage of fifty-five years, for masturbation and voyeurism, and to a possible inclination towards homosexuality, whether or not it was put into practice. It was this that in part led to an extremely close relationship between Dalí and Lorca in the 1920s, as well as to the nature of some of the important work that both men produced at that time. If the earlier connection between them related to the circumstances of childhood and adolescence, it now became very precise indeed in both personal and artistic terms.³

A third and very important link between all three men relates to their arrival in Madrid around 1920 and the time that they then spent together at the celebrated *Residencia de Estudiantes*. There they not only became close friends but, crucially, were exposed to the new ideas and artistic movements that were transforming both the Spanish and the European cultural landscape. The *Residencia* was, as its name suggests, a hall of residence for male students attending courses at the University of Madrid, or, as in Dalí's case, the San Fernando Royal Academy of Fine Arts. Based on the Oxbridge system, the *Residencia* was also a place of considerable cultural enlightenment, visited, as we shall see, by individuals famous in their particular field of activity: writers, scientists, economists, or musicians. If they were not already familiar with some of the new ideas concerning, for example, psychoanalysis, Surrealism, and cinema, Lorca, Buñuel, and Dalí would have heard talks given by experts in those subjects. In addition, Madrid was a city that contained the Prado, important theatres, cinemas, and other cultural institutions, all of which acted as a stimulus to the creative imagination.

Although Buñuel left Madrid for Paris in 1925, Dalí moved to Cadaqués after his expulsion from the Academy of Fine Arts in

1927, and Lorca divided his time between Madrid and the family home in Granada, the separation did not mean that they lost touch with each other. On the contrary, Lorca visited Dalí in Cadaqués on several occasions and developed a strong physical attraction to him that, although Dalí has denied it, may well have been reciprocated to some extent. Indeed, as we shall see, a number of Dalí's paintings at this time contain the head of Lorca, while Lorca wrote important poems expressing his admiration for and attraction to Dalí. As for Dalí and Buñuel, their close association in the late 1920s, rooted in their mutual attraction to Surrealism, led to their dismissal of Lorca's work, which they regarded as far too traditional, and to his virtual exclusion from their growing friendship. Undoubtedly depressed by this, as well as by other aspects of his life, Lorca left Spain for a while, spending nine months in New York and three in Cuba in 1929 and 1930. But he continued to be a presence in the thoughts of both Dalí and Buñuel, both after his murder at the beginning of the Civil War in 1936 and for many years afterwards. Forty years later, for example, Dalí's painting, *The Hallucinogenic Toreador* (1969–70), contained specific visual references to Lorca. In 1946, Buñuel had planned to make a film of Lorca's *The House of Bernarda Alba*, though it was never realised, and in his autobiography of 1982 recalled the playwright as the finest human being he had ever known.

Given the nature of their personalities and private lives, the work of all three men is at its best a fusion of autobiographical and cultural elements. Beginning with *The Butterfly's Evil Spell* in 1920 and ending with *The House of Bernarda Alba* in 1936, Lorca's theatre is deeply rooted in his personal life, the theme of frustrated passion central to almost every play. For the most part, however, he chose in his work to channel his frustration as a homosexual into relationships between men and women, as in the case of the Bride who in *Blood Wedding* (1933) abandons her husband for her former lover, and the young and fiery Adela who in *The House of Bernarda Alba* indulges in an illicit affair with her sister's fiancé. The only truly homosexual play was *The Public* (1930), which, for reasons of censorship and public taste, Lorca knew would never be performed in his lifetime. As for cultural influences, he drew on the traditions of puppetry and farce in such plays as *The Shoemaker's Wonderful Wife* (1930) and *The Love of Don Perlimplín* (1933), historical background in *Mariana Pineda*

(1927), Surrealism in *When Five Years Pass* (1931) and *The Public* (although he denied that his work was truly surrealist), and on Greek tragedy in *Blood Wedding*, *Yerma* (1934), and *The House of Bernarda Alba*. In his poetry, the autobiographical element also combines with cultural influences, as in the gypsy- and flamenco-inspired *Gypsy Ballads* (1928) and *Poem of Deep Song* (1922, published 1931), the surrealist *Poet in New York* (1930, published 1940), and *Diwan of the Tamarit* (1934, published 1940), indebted to Arab poetry. In general, Lorca's work is distinguished, despite its obsessive themes, by its great variety of subject and form and by his constant desire to try new things.⁴

During his eight years at the Residencia and for at least three years afterwards, Buñuel's creative efforts focused not on cinema but on poetry, to which Lorca had opened his eyes, and on short literary pieces that revealed the influence of such contemporary movements as Dada and its successor, Surrealism. Although he was interested in cinema and saw many films both in Madrid and Paris, Buñuel's active participation in cinema did not begin until the second half of the 1920s as the result of working with the famous French filmmaker, Jean Epstein, and coming to the conclusion that Epstein's rather Romantic style of filmmaking was not for him. Sharing Dalí's passion for Surrealism in all its aspects – its emphasis on the unconscious as well as its onslaught on bourgeois values – he collaborated with him in 1929 on the totally original and startling *Un chien andalou* (*An Andalusian Dog*), following it in 1930 with the more socially orientated *L'Âge d'or* (*The Golden Age*) – to the script of which Dalí contributed various ideas – and in 1932 with *Las Hurdes* (*Land Without Bread*), in which the socially committed Buñuel, no longer working with Dalí, revealed in no uncertain manner the way in which the government had neglected the unfortunate inhabitants of the poorest part of Spain.

During the Civil War and for a number of years afterwards, Buñuel worked in Paris, New York, and Hollywood, mainly engaged with editing and dubbing rather than with making his own films. That opportunity did not arise until in 1946 he moved to Mexico, where he spent the rest of his life. Between 1946 and 1964 he made some twenty films, but the essentially commercial nature of the Mexican film industry meant that some of them were quite ordinary and that only in a handful – *The Forgotten Ones* (1950), *He* (1952), *The Exterminating Angel* (1962), and one or

two others – did he achieve his full potential, again combining his fascination with the surreal with his mockery of the bourgeoisie and the Catholic Church. This dual element lies at the heart too of the memorable and assured films that Buñuel made in Spain and France in the last twenty years of his life and which include *Viridiana* (1961), *Diary of a Chambermaid* (1964), *Belle de jour* (1966), *Tristana* (1970), and *That Obscure Object of Desire* (1977), all a final flowering of his genius.

Buñuel's films, like Lorca's poetry and plays, are rich in autobiographical touches, not only in terms of their political emphasis but also with regard to the sexual inhibition and other associated factors that marked his personal life. Sexual inhibition in one form or another is a central element in *Un chien andalou*, *Viridiana*, and *Belle de jour*; jealousy and possessiveness in *He* and *Tristana*; and a powerful assault on bourgeois values in all of them, as well as in *The Exterminating Angel*, *Diary of a Chambermaid*, *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* (1972), and *That Obscure Object of Desire*.

Dalí's close friendship with Lorca and Buñuel meant that, for a time at least, he collaborated closely with both of them: with Lorca on the stage design for the premiere of *Mariana Pineda* in 1927 and a few years later with Buñuel on the two surrealist films. Dalí was, however, too much of a narcissist and self-publicist for any long-term collaboration, and after his first encounter with his future wife, Gala, in 1929, his obsession with her and his absorption with his own work signalled a movement away from his two close friends. Dalí's character, in particular his sexual problems and other anxieties, made him, though – like Buñuel and, to a certain extent Lorca – an ideal candidate for the assimilation and expression of that aspect of Surrealism that focuses on the inner life. His greatest paintings, which belong to the late 1920s and the 1930s – *The Great Masturbator* (1929), *The Lugubrious Game* (1929), *The Old Age of William Tell* (1931), *The Persistence of Memory* (1931), *Metamorphosis of Narcissus* (1936–7) – all depict, in one way or another, the sexual inhibition created by his upbringing and education and his anguish at the prospect of a sexual relationship with a woman. Subsequently, however, in tandem with accumulating wealth and fame, the quality of Dalí's creative work went steadily downhill, in contrast to Buñuel's, and his life increasingly revolved around eccentric acts of self-publicity.

Asserting that Gala had positively altered the course of his life and been his saviour, he began to represent her in paintings of the late 1940s as the Madonna, which went hand in hand with his stated newfound allegiance to the Catholic Church and his championing of the Spanish dictatorship after General Franco's victory in the Spanish Civil War. During the 1950s the self-revelatory paintings of the 1920s and 1930s became the huge and largely empty paintings often on a religious or historical theme: *The Last Supper* (1955), *Saint James the Great* (1957), *The Discovery of America by Christopher Columbus* (1958–9), and *The Ecumenical Council* (1960). Such paintings often earned the Dalís large sums of money, but did little to enhance the painter's artistic reputation.

Dalí's obsession with wealth, which led André Breton to describe him wittily as 'Avida Dollars', also involved him in the 1950s and 1960s in various fraudulent activities. Nothing could be further removed from Lorca and Buñuel's compassion for the poor and their virulent denunciations of the lack of concern for such people on the part of the well-to-do.

The Dalís' fascination with and moral corruption by wealth was also paralleled in the latter part of their lives by sexual excess and perversion. As he grew older and more wealthy, Dalí became addicted to voyeurism, paying couples to indulge in sexual performances of various kinds in his presence. As for Gala, she had always been sexually active, an aspect of her character that, if anything, became more exaggerated and grotesque, leading her even in her late sixties and seventies to numerous affairs with much younger men. By this time she and Dalí were spending much of their time apart, Gala in the castle at Púbol on the Costa Brava that he had bought for her and where she could entertain her lovers for months on end.

By the early 1980s the Dalís were experiencing growing health problems, as well as a serious deterioration in their relationship. Dalí was frequently depressed, in no small measure on account of the mixture of drugs that Gala fed him. Gala experienced gall-bladder problems, broke her leg, became deeply depressed and died in 1982. Dalí lived on for seven more years, beset by depression and other problems. In 1984 a fire in his bedroom left him with serious burns to his body and in the years that followed he experienced increasing heart and lung problems, which led to his death in 1989.

As the preceding remarks suggest, the personalities and outlook of Lorca, Buñuel, and Dalí were shaped by their childhood and adolescence. The connections between them at that point may seem little different from the similarities between many other creative artists, but what is quite unique in the case of these three individuals is the fact that, when they coincided in Madrid, and indeed even afterwards, the characteristics that they already and individually possessed had the effect of drawing them together in close friendship, in considerable intimacy in the case of Lorca and Dalí, and also of stimulating important artistic collaborations that, together with their individual projects, reflected both their separate personalities and the points at which these merged and overlapped. The picture is complex and fascinating, composed of different threads, many of which have not been previously addressed at length. The aim of this book is to do precisely that.

NOTES

- 1 See Ian Gibson, *Federico García Lorca: A Life*, London: Faber and Faber, 1989; Gwynne Edwards, *Lorca: Living in the Theatre*, London: Peter Owen, 2003.
- 2 See Luis Buñuel, *My Last Breath*, trans. Abigail Israel, London: Vintage, 1994; John Baxter, *Buñuel*, London: Fourth Estate, 1994; Gwynne Edwards, *A Companion to Luis Buñuel*, London: Tamesis, 2003.
- 3 See Salvador Dalí, *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, London: Vision Press, 1968; Ian Gibson, *The Shameful Life of Salvador Dalí*, London: Faber and Faber, 1997; Meryle Secrest, *Salvador Dalí: The Surrealist Jester*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1986.
- 4 For translations of the plays into English, see *Lorca Plays: One*; *Lorca Plays: Two*; *Lorca Plays: Three*, London: Methuen, 1987, 1990, and 1994; and the individual editions, with commentary and notes, of *Blood Wedding*, *Yerma*, and *The House of Bernarda Alba*, London: Methuen, 1997, 1998, and 2007. All the translations are by Gwynne Edwards, with the exception of Peter Luke's version of *Yerma* in *Lorca Plays: One*, and Henry Livings's *The Public* in *Lorca Plays: Three*.

CHILDHOOD



FEDERICO GARCÍA LORCA, two years older than Luis Buñuel and six years older than Salvador Dalí, was born on 5 June 1898 in the village of Fuente Vaqueros, some ten miles from Granada in south-east Andalusia. Fuente Vaqueros was one of several villages in the fertile plain to the west of Granada that was fed by the river Genil and its tributary, the Cubillas. By the time of Lorca's birth, the plain, known as the Vega, was an extremely rich agricultural area in which, from around 1880, sugar beet became an important product. Factories for its processing quickly appeared and landowners soon became prosperous. They included Lorca's father, Federico García Rodríguez, who had himself been born in the village in 1859.

A practical and sensible man, he had purchased at the age of thirty-seven a number of properties near Fuente Vaqueros, including a large estate called Daimuz, a fertile area that became the source of his considerable wealth. Lorca's father was, in short, a rich man, though not bourgeois in the sense that his wealth allowed him to lead a life of idleness and pleasure. Indeed, he appears to have been a serious and dignified man who treated his workers with consideration and was highly respected in the region. He also played the guitar quite well, inheriting from his forebears a musical ability that was shared by his three brothers and five sisters. Luis, for example, was a fine pianist who subsequently became a friend of Manuel de Falla, and one of his sisters, Isabel, was an excellent singer who accompanied herself on the guitar.

A love of music was something that was clearly passed on to the future poet-dramatist.

Lorca's mother, Vicenta Lorca Romero, was García Rodríguez's second wife, the first having died suddenly in 1894. Eleven years younger than her husband, Vicenta was a short, dark-haired woman, with a roundish face and a rather melancholy expression. An only child, her early life had been hard – her mother had become a widow just before Vicenta's birth and money was in short supply. At the age of thirteen she attended a convent school for poor children and five years later trained to become a schoolteacher, a career that at least offered some financial security. In 1892 she was appointed to a post in the girls' primary school in Fuente Vaqueros, where, of course, she met her future husband. Like most women at that time, she gave up work after their marriage in 1897, but her interest in the arts and education continued and would clearly influence her children. Lorca subsequently observed that she read admirably to her husband's workers and the household servants, something he himself later did in relation to his poetry and plays.¹ In addition, Vicenta was a religious woman, though not excessively so, and often took the young Federico with her to church. Greatly moved by the rituals of the Church, and particularly so by the sound of the organ, he would enact the Mass at home, dressed in clothes recovered from the attic. From an early stage, acting was in his blood.

Lorca's relationship with his mother was extremely close. His physical defects – he had flat feet and one leg was slightly shorter than the other – meant that, unable to participate in sports demanding speed and nimbleness, he spent more time at home with her than would otherwise have been the case. While the stories of a childhood illness that prevented him from walking are probably untrue, his physical problems undoubtedly meant that his parents shared a concern for his well-being, which would have been exacerbated by the death of their second child, Luis, from pneumonia in 1902. In one sense, the death of an infant son links Lorca's childhood to that of Dalí, but Lorca's parents did not compensate for the loss of one child by unduly cosseting another, as did Dalí's. Rather, Vicenta encouraged her son's evident love of music and of artistic things in general. Later on he would pay tribute to her influence: 'I owe her everything I am and everything I will ever be.'² And, when in Argentina in 1933 he was asked if

he would ever marry, he replied, significantly: 'I belong to my mother.'³ During this time in Buenos Aires, at the age of thirty-five, he constantly received letters and telegrams from her.

As a child, Lorca was also surrounded by other women. Dolores Cuesta had been a wetnurse to his younger brother, Francisco, in Fuente Vaqueros, and worked as a servant to the family for a considerable time, doting on Federico as much as he did on her. Aunt Isabel García Rodríguez had given him his first guitar and was much loved by him. He had two younger sisters, María and Isabel. And then there were his female cousins, all of them some years older. Aurelia González García, Matilde Delgado García, and Clotilde García Picossi all lived in Fuente Vaqueros and the younger Federico was frequently in their company. This is not to say that he lacked male company – he had forty cousins in the village – but it seems likely that the presence of so many women in his early life played its part in the development of what would now be described as his feminine side and contributed too to the deep understanding of women revealed in his mature work.

It is important too to emphasise the impact his physical surroundings had on him, in particular the fertile countryside that surrounded Fuente Vaqueros. He acquired there the deep love of and identification with the natural world that is evident throughout his work, describing it in the following way:

I love the countryside. I feel that I am emotionally connected to it. My oldest childhood memories have the taste of the earth. The meadows and fields have done wonders for me. The wild animals in the countryside, the livestock, the people who live on the land, all of them have a fascination that few people appreciate. I can recall them now exactly as I knew them as a child. If I could not, I would not have written *Blood Wedding*.⁴

On the other hand, rural life also presented a young boy born into a well-to-do family with the sad spectacle of those far less fortunate than himself. Around Fuente Vaqueros, as in many other parts of Spain in the first decade of the twentieth century and for years afterwards, many people lived in considerable poverty. As a child, Federico befriended a little girl whose father worked as a labourer despite severe arthritis, and whose mother endured the after-effects of many pregnancies, as did so many women in rural Andalusia, where a strong Catholicism forbade

the use of contraceptives. Many of the children went around in rags and, on the occasions when their clothes had to be washed, were obliged to stay indoors in a state of virtual nakedness. These were people who were frequently ill and who often died an early death, something that deeply affected the sensitive child that Federico was. His acute awareness of his own privileged life and of the severe disadvantages of others clearly sowed the seeds of the left-wing views he would embrace in adult life. In 1936 he would say:

The day when hunger is finally banished will witness the greatest spiritual explosion the world has ever seen. We can never imagine the joy that will erupt when the Great Revolution comes. I'm talking like a genuine socialist, aren't I?⁵

His exposure to rural life also developed in him a strong sense of a vibrant popular culture. Through his mother, the family servants, the villagers, and the people who worked on his father's estate, he became familiar with the popular poetry, the ballads, the songs and dances, and the vigorous character of local speech, all of which would inform his later creative writing. As a child, he was also witness to the arrival in Fuente Vaqueros of a travelling puppet show, which so enthused him that, at the age of seven, he began to mount puppet shows at home, utilising old clothes and cardboard figures made by his mother. With all this he sought to entertain members of his family, the servants, and the local children, anticipating the theatre director that he would later become.

In 1907 García Rodríguez moved his family from Fuente Vaqueros to the village of Asquerosa (later called Valderrubio), a relatively short distance away – today both villages can be easily reached by bus from Granada. Smaller than Fuente Vaqueros, Asquerosa also stands in the middle of the fertile plain of the Vega and therefore provided the young Federico with the same kind of landscape and people that he already knew. But two years later the Lorca family was on the move again, this time to the city of Granada itself. It marked the beginning of a new phase in Federico's life – he was now eleven – but his connection with the countryside did not come to an end, for his father retained the house in Asquerosa, and the family subsequently spent many summers there, away from the bustle of the city.



Two years younger than Lorca, Luis Buñuel was born on 22 February 1900 in the small town of Calanda, its population then around 5,000, in the north-eastern province of Aragón, at the opposite end of the country and very different from Lorca's Andalusian birthplace. This is a region of Spain that in winter is bitterly cold and in summer intolerably hot, and which, at the beginning of the twentieth century, was extremely backward. Far less fertile than the Vega of Granada, and in general much more isolated from the main centres of civilisation – the region is still described in the brochures of travel companies as 'undiscovered Spain' – the inhabitants of Calanda found life hard and unrewarding. But Buñuel's circumstances, like Lorca's, were rather different.

Buñuel's father, himself a native of Calanda, had run away from home at the age of fourteen in order to join the army and had later gone to Cuba, where he worked as an army clerk during the Spanish–American War. Subsequently, he opened a successful hardware store and, when Cuba achieved its independence from Spain in 1899, sold his share in the store to his two partners and returned to Calanda, a rich man at the age of forty-three. There, Leonardo Buñuel rebuilt the original family house and also constructed an even more lavish property, La Torre, three kilometres away, on the bank of the river. One year later, soon after the birth of Luis, he moved the family to the city of Zaragoza, where he rented a large apartment. He retained the Calanda houses, though, and, just as the Lorca family returned during the summer to their property in rural Asquerosa, so the Buñuel family spent several months in their Calanda retreat during Easter and the summer months.

The extent of Leonardo Buñuel's wealth may be gauged from his son's account of the family houses and his father's lifestyle. The house in Calanda itself was a 'monument to art deco', filled with expensive furniture; the house on the river bank was 'surrounded by a superb garden' in which the family 'often dined . . . under the soft glow of acetylene lamps';⁶ the Zaragoza apartment occupied the whole of the second floor of a building that had formerly been the police headquarters and had as many as ten balconies. Even more revealing is the fact that on one occasion Leonardo Buñuel's wealth was such that it had saved the Zaragoza Hispano-American bank from ruin.

Of his father's daily routine, Buñuel has stated that he 'did absolutely nothing'.⁷ It consisted, usually, of getting out of bed, taking a bath, having breakfast, reading the newspaper, checking on the arrival of his Havana cigars, undertaking a few errands, lunching at home, taking a siesta, visiting his club, and playing cards with his friends until it was time for dinner. This, quite clearly, was the typical day of a wealthy bourgeois and decidedly different from that of Lorca's hard-working and energetic father. From this point of view, then, young Luis Buñuel enjoyed an even more privileged childhood than did Federico, and it doubtless played a part, as we shall see, in the rejection of that background in favour of Communism in later life.

Buñuel's mother, María, was only eighteen when she married the forty-three-year-old Leonardo after his return from Cuba. The daughter of the owner of a Calanda inn, she was remarkably beautiful: tall, broad-boned, and with an aristocratic bearing that still managed to turn heads when she was more than sixty years of age. Unlike the early life of Lorca's mother, María's had not been beset by difficulties, and she quickly settled into the bourgeois environment provided by her new husband. Buñuel described her as a devout woman who regularly attended church and devoted herself to family life, producing three boys and four girls. She ensured that her children were brought up according to the moral conventions of the time, which, in a staunchly Catholic community, were obviously strict. Later on she would keep a photograph of Luis on an improvised altar in a wardrobe, surrounded by other photographs of the late Pope. In terms of her religious values and beliefs, María was not unlike Lorca's mother, but her cultural and educational interests were evidently much more limited, and she played little part in encouraging the young Luis's artistic interests.

In contrast to Lorca, the young Luis was extremely fit and strong. Later on he would take great pride in physical conditioning, devoting himself to exercises that included running, boxing, and wrestling. And as a child he already demonstrated the spirit and independence of mind that would characterise his adult life. His sister, Conchita, has described how Luis and his mother 'waged their daily battle over his refusal to wear his student cap', and how, having asserted that at school he had found an undershirt in his soup, he defied his father in refusing to deny the allegation.⁸

In short, Luis was in no way a child over whom his parents fussed unduly.

On the other hand, there were other aspects of Buñuel's childhood that paralleled Lorca's, not least his love of nature. Calanda, as we have seen, was an isolated place, surrounded by olive groves and vineyards, less fertile than Fuente Vaqueros, but nevertheless providing ample opportunity for close contact with the natural world. Conchita Buñuel has stated that, as children, 'We could walk through a forest crawling with wild animals.'⁹ She has described too not only how the Buñuel house was filled with animals but also the considerable care her brother lavished on them:

At one time or another, we had monkeys, parakeets, falcons, frogs and toads, grass snakes, and a large African lizard which the cook killed with the poker in a moment of terror . . . Luis also had a hatbox filled with tiny grey mice he allowed me to look at once a day . . . Most of our pets belonged to Luis, and I never saw any who were better cared for . . .¹⁰

This early love of and fascination with animals, and also with insects, would lead him in the future to become a student of natural science, which in turn explains the presence of animals and insects in his films. But while in the poems and plays of Lorca, nature is frequently portrayed as an inescapable force in the lives of human beings, Buñuel's observation of the activities of animals and insects is seen to be more analytical, their behaviour closely related to that of men and women, all placed under his microscope and studied just as closely.

As a child in Calanda, Buñuel, like Lorca, was also exposed to the spectacle of people who were far less privileged than himself. He has described, for example, how poor children, between eight and ten years of age, used to gather open-mouthed outside the door of the Buñuel house in the town, dazzled by its luxurious interior. And on their way to the other house on the river bank, the Buñuel family would often encounter on the road children who were undernourished and dressed in rags, whose fathers struggled to scratch a living from back-breaking jobs and whose mothers slaved at home to prepare meals from the scraps they could lay their hands on. Because poverty of this kind often led to illness and even death, the sight of a corpse laid out in a wretched coffin

before the door of the church, the face covered by a veil, was a frequent one. Buñuel has suggested that life in Calanda had, by the first decade of the twentieth century, changed little from the Middle Ages, though at the time he accepted it without question. Nevertheless, just as his awareness of his privileged background shaped his subsequent political views, so did his awareness of utter poverty in rural Spain, exposed so ruthlessly in his third film, *Las Hurdes*.

Apart from the fact that his mother was a religiously devout woman, Catholicism played its part in the young Buñuel's childhood in other ways. He acted as an acolyte for an uncle known as Tío Santos, one of Calanda's priests, and he also sang and played the violin as a member of the Virgin of Carmen choir. Such was his enthusiasm for religion at this point that, as Lorca did as a child, he acted out the Mass at home, dressed in an alb – the white garment worn by priests over the cassock – surrounded by religious artefacts and assisted by his sisters, of whom his favourite was Conchita. In his memoirs, he has spoken of the extent to which he and his friends were deeply imbued with Catholicism and never doubted the universal truths it sought to teach.¹¹

Buñuel's performance of the Mass also points, of course, to another link with the young Lorca: a penchant for theatre. Indeed, just as Federico thrilled to the travelling puppet show and entertained others with his home-made puppets, so Luis put on performances for his sisters and for local children in the toy theatre given to him by his parents. His childhood enthusiasm for theatrical performance anticipates therefore the adult Buñuel, who, with Lorca, regularly staged José Zorrilla's nineteenth-century play, *Don Juan Tenorio*, at the Residencia de Estudiantes. It anticipates too the way in which, as a film director, he would later control his actors, just as Lorca did his student theatre company, La Barraca, in the 1930s.

In comparison, the case of Salvador Dalí is very different and much more extreme, though certain similarities with Lorca and Buñuel can still be perceived. Dalí was born on 11 May 1904 in the family house in Figueras, situated in the north-east corner of Catalonia, a mere twenty-five kilometres from the French border. Much larger than either Fuente Vaqueros or Calanda, Figueras was a town of some 11,000 inhabitants, a relatively prosperous

and sophisticated place with its clubs, music societies, a theatre, a good artistic, literary, and scientific tradition, and, because of its geographical position, a marked French influence.

Dalí's father, Salvador Dalí Cusí, was born in the Catalan fishing village of Cadaqués and in 1900 was appointed to the position of notary in Figueras, some twenty-five kilometres inland. The holder of such an office is, in effect, a public servant who has the authority to draw up contracts, wills, deeds and the like, and who, in consequence, is guaranteed a steady income and a respected position in society. Dalí's father was, therefore, a man of considerable means, less wealthy than Buñuel's or Lorca's but, it would appear, more sophisticated and cultured than either. Many found him to be erudite and intelligent, as well as amusing, but he was also capable of considerable aggression. It has been said of him that he 'always attacked, utilising sarcasm and gestures which echoed throughout the region . . . He was always militant.'¹² This aspect of his character manifested itself in relation to many things, but in particular with regard to his support for the rights of the Catalan people, then ruled over by a Madrid-based central government. In this respect Dalí senior was not unlike many other professionals in Catalonia, an anarchist sympathiser who, despite his position and wealth, would not have included himself in a bourgeoisie that suppressed protests, demonstrations, and strikes against the power of the Right. But if this was one aspect of his character that would influence the young Salvador, so did his large library and the lively debates that took place in the household on politics, literature, and philosophy. In one way or another, then, Dalí's father proved to be an important influence in his life.

His mother, Felipa Domènech Ferrés, a smallish, pretty, dark-haired young woman from Barcelona and two years younger than her husband, was the daughter of a haberdashery importer. As a young girl, she had worked with her mother in the establishment that the latter had inherited from her own father and which specialised in making tasteful decorative objets d'art. Felipa, it seems, was artistically quite gifted, a talent she would pass on to Salvador himself. In his writings he makes very few references to her, but what is quite clear is that her excessive cossetting of him had a profound effect.

In this respect, the key event in his parents' life was the death of their first child in August 1903, at twenty-two months, from what