

“The Scorpion-Man: Posthumanism in Buñuel’s *L’âge d’or*”

Abstract: This paper takes as its starting point the overlooked inclusion of André Bayard’s little-known nature documentary *Le scorpion languedocien* (1912) at the beginning of Luis Buñuel’s iconic surrealist film *L’âge d’or* (1930). I argue that the inclusion of scenes from Bayard’s documentary throws into sharp relief a distinctly surrealist interest in posthumanism. Following Breton’s first manifesto, I study surrealists Suzanne Césaire’s and Roger Caillois’s theories about nature-culture and human-nonhuman hybridity and argue that *L’âge d’or* presents the “pure psychic automatism” of hybridity. To this end, I focus on the historical and cultural significance of the scorpion as a combined symbol of duality and hybridity. I further consider the human-nonhuman binary by reading it through the ethology-anthropology binary (Caillois), demonstrating that Buñuel’s film breaks both by articulating a human-scorpion hybridity at the levels of narrative and form. I therefore consider scenes from the film that reflect a deconstruction of the anthropological notion of “Man.” By way of conclusion, I refer to Rosi Braidotti and explain how *L’âge d’or*—and surrealism, writ large—could be read as a posthumanism *avant la lettre* in its desire to move beyond the humanism organized according to the nature-culture and human-nonhuman binaries.