

# Simon of the desert: a movie analysis essay



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The movie Simon of the Desert portrays religious themes that touch upon penitence and temptations, as shown through the behaviors of Simon and Satan. The movie is also a testament to the views of the director regarding human pretension and hypocrisy, which are elements that the director repeatedly showed the public through different movies (“Luis Bunuel,” 2008). The story of the movie, cinematography, and surrealism contributed to the movie’s richness and intelligent delivery.

**Summary of the Movie** The movie revolves around the religious penitence of Simon, the lead character, and the temptations delivered by Satan. Simon is painted as a religious individual who is in constant “war,” as he mentions once in a part of the film, and claims to be in eternal penitence and devotion with God. After six years, six weeks, and six days on top of a column, he came down to transfer to another one that is donated by a rich individual who is believed to have been cured by Simon. He lived on subsistence given by priests from the church and an undersized person who takes care of a goat.

The only person who kept close to him all day and all night is his mother, who wished to live close to him until the day she dies. He made it a point to live a modest life in penitence in order to be worthy and deserving of God. Several events showed how Simon fought temptation. Among the temptations included the desire of roaming around, feeling the soil under his feet, and others that are delivered personally by Satan. For all other temptations, it is only in the third, which is also the last, task carried out by Satan that resulted to the separation of Simon from the column that served as the locus of his penitence. Analysis of the Movie: Themes and Surrealism

The movie, as mentioned earlier, reveals religious hints and contradictions in human nature.

Most of the aspects related to religion are emphasized by the actions and behaviors of the people towards Simon and the isolated interaction of Simon with God. The different elements of religion are also shown throughout the scenes of the movie. First, devotees visit Simon carrying their faith and religious inquisitiveness regarding his capabilities. In the first parts of the film, devotees are all present as they carried their prayers to them with the belief that he could provide solutions to their problems through his prayers. Indeed, he is able to bestow a person who has lost hands a pair of new one.

However, it is only considered as a trick that was not given equal appreciation despite the fact that it is a miracle that does not happen every day. The same dull reaction is received from the public who expressed their desire to witness a miracle but still walked away without much appreciation for what happened with the amputated man. In addition to this, the person who received the miracle first used his hands for slapping his daughter, which is nothing close to the goodness expected from someone who is given a miracle. Second, prayers are used in order to communicate with God.

In the movie, this is used by almost everyone who wished to purpose of sending messages to God. Third, sacrifices are also emphasized throughout the movie. The said element is shown through the incessant strings of sacrifices that he undertook. Lastly, there is the constant fight between the good and the evil.

Simon has constantly waged his war against all the temptations that is presented to him during his stay at the top of the column. A battle between the two is further highlighted especially with the temptations from Satan, who is actually embodied in a female character throughout the film. The use of a female Satan is a more precise picture but is usually simpler than the ones usually depicted in other movies. According to Bromley and Ainsley (1995), “Satan [is] the female god of fire, stands for hatred and the separation of all things” (p. 405).

The previous description of Satan fits the character presented in the movie especially in the aspect of gender. However, the central mystery, if not ambiguity, in the movie remains at the ending of the story. With a failure to build up the events that led to the transition between the scene in the column and the dance club, the movie exhibits ambiguity on the motivations that led a religious person under a vow of penitence to contribute to the intentions of Satan. From a personal point of view, the airplane and the aerial scenes of particular areas do not suffice as explanations for the transition between a religious and modest way of life to a rowdy scene in a night club of a rather modern setting than the desert.

Likewise, there are lines at the end of the story that are left unexplained to the readers despite the build-up of events that are presented in the earlier parts of the movie. As a result, the movie’s plot ended as it was starting to reach the climax. In addition to this, the ending does not give the readers a substantial message that can be thought of as a lesson related to the events of the story. In fact, it would leave the audience with an unclear picture of the event.

However, one could dig deeper and consider the event as a transition to the future where Satan shows Simon a picture of what is ahead of him (Kauffmann, 1967). Nonetheless, the perspective of putting Simon in a rather isolated dance club does not totally encompass the picture of the future and can only be considered as a meek representation of what is ahead. Likewise, there is no resulting message and a radically irrelevant answer to the problems initially posted throughout the scenes where Simon is still in the column. The seemingly unclear dilemma shown at the ending is considered as a blatant product of surrealism. According to Cernuschi (2008), surrealism can be defined as the “ artistic and literary movement that explored and celebrated the realm of dreams and the unconscious mind through the creation of visual art, poetry, and motion pictures. Surrealism is greatly influenced by the theories of Sigmund Freud, who posits that people repress their desires and earthly pleasures, which are seen to be against the law of society, at the back of their unconscious minds.

In the movie, the pleasures and temptations are undeniably at the back of Simon’s mind. For example, in one of the scenes, he expressed his desire to be able to run and walk around with the feeling of soil under his feet. The want of walking and running leads to a larger picture of freedom to do as he pleases and to engage in activities outside the columns. The overpowering of Satan is possibly related to the weakening of his soul because of the temptations and earthly pleasures that she tapped in Simon’s unconscious mind. Cinematography The flow of the events in the movie are structured in order to show the development of events that fosters the best understanding of each of the intentions as it is explicitly or implicitly expressed by the

characters. The entire movie is shown in black and white that meant color did not play a significant role in the presentation of ideas, emotions, and other relevant messages.

The setting is mostly in the dessert and mostly focused on the character of Simon throughout the movie. In fact, the only instance that a change in setting happened is when Simon and Satan transited into the night club. Nonetheless, the uniformity in the pattern is important for the story, especially as it relates to the title and the religious requirements of Simon's character. The desert is seen to be a suitable place for the penitence of Simon because of its isolation.

The setting provides for clear skies, which are more often an object that is associated with God and heavens, and quietness, which is necessary for Simon to continue with his prayers. Likewise, it adds to the ability of both the character and the audience to concentrate on the scenes of the movie. Moreover, sound effects are strategically used to emphasize emotions throughout different clips of the movie. Emotions are difficult to express when these are not accompanied by an appeal using sounds because statements made by characters could not be easily associated with emotions just by the mere use of words. However, emotions that signify a particular thought could be used to communicate with the audience a particular set of messages that are related to the emotional facets of human nature through complex brain processes. Aside from the sound effects, the costumes worn by the characters also provide labels regarding the roles they play in the movie that contributes to the better understanding of the events.

Conclusion The movie revolves around particular religious themes, human hypocrisy, and pretension. The different scenes in the movie are used as building blocks to portray the said theme. In addition to this, the movie generally fits the concept of surrealism because of association with desires and the unconscious mind. One of the most interesting parts of the movie is the ending, which basically leaves the readers with ambiguous thoughts regarding the connection between the events that occurred prior to and succeeding the airplane ride.

Lastly, the cinematography of the movie shows coherence and thought in terms of effects, props, plot, and others.