UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

THE GRANDCHILDREN OF FRANCO: EXAMINING THE FUNCTION OF THE AGENTIC CHILD SEER IN CONTEMPORARY SPANISH HORROR

by

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ABSTRACT

There is a long-standing tradition in Spanish cinema of children facing horror. To the extent that the genre of Spanish horror film foregrounds the trope of the watchful child, many horror films employ a haunting narrative which becomes the ideal vehicle for exploring and exorcising that which haunts Spanish society. Yet, as this thesis will examine, far from being a helpless victim, a passive cypher for the future, or a demonic antagonist, the child protagonist in contemporary Spanish horror cinema is an active agent, drawing power and agency from their all-seeing gaze. Consequently, this thesis will demonstrate how the children in each case study are actively looking subjects, who through their status as “other” are able to act as communicators with the supernatural and ultimately bring about justice for the dead who have been wronged. This thesis therefore responds to the current situation in Spain, which is finally making progress in the recuperation of traumatic memory with regards to the Spanish Civil War and the ensuing fascist dictatorship. The objective of this thesis is to subject key horror films to contextual, comparative, and textual analysis in order to argue that the child in each film represents a generation - the grandchildren of Franco - that is sufficiently removed from the initial trauma of the Civil War and the dictatorship to finally enact justice for their ancestors. The environment and family that a child is brought up in significantly influences a child’s development, therefore this thesis will also pay close attention to the family dwelling in each case study, and the guardians of each agentic child.

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1. Introduction

> Once the great-grandchildren's generation disappear, I'm not sure the great-great-grandchildren will have the same interest in disinterring the graves - that's why it's such an urgent issue. (Almodóvar in Delgado, 2022)

This epigraph from Pedro Almodóvar inspires this MA dissertation, which demonstrates how contemporary Spanish horror films that feature a child protagonist or significant child characters are indicative of a generation removed from the initial trauma of the Spanish Civil War and the Francoist dictatorship, who are engaged in attempts to secure justice for their ancestors.

This thesis explores three broad avenues of contemporary Spanish horror film. The three chapters examine the role of the child, the family, and the family home, respectively. As the literature review demonstrates, there is a gap in the academic literature that addresses the child in the horror film as anything other than antagonist or victim. The first chapter of this thesis therefore fills this gap by building on the work of key scholars such as Jessica Balanzategui and Sarah Wright, who have both written on the child in Spanish horror cinema. This thesis then traces the long-standing tradition in Spanish cinema of the child facing horror, which is a tradition that was first established as a product of the *cine metafórico* movement as a means to critique the fascist dictatorship using metaphorical narratives and symbolism. I will argue that this tradition is still vital today and demonstrate this by the close reading of films that still utilise metaphor but are much more blatant in their depictions of trauma induced by the Civil War and the ensuing dictatorship. Whereas much scholarly attention has been paid to

the child facing horror during the transition from dictatorship to democracy, scholarly writings on the contemporary era are fewer and this research aims to rectify this.

Chapters two and three add to the already existing study of contemporary Spanish gothic currently conducted by Ann Davies. Chapter two is primarily concerned with the mother, who in most cases embodies Davies' gothic heroine (2016). In its exploration of Spanish motherhood, chapter two also draws upon Sarah Arnold's concept of the Good Mother and Bad Mother (2013), demonstrating how, in particular, Grace of *The Others* and Laura of *The Orphanage* balance precariously between the two definitions. This, as will be examined in detail in chapter two, positions the two mothers in a long history of paradoxical beliefs surrounding motherhood in Spanish culture and cinema. Chapter two also explores how in each case study, the forming of a non-traditional family unit is a positive experience, which I will argue mirrors the Spanish nation forming a new identity in a post-Franco landscape.

Chapter three investigates the domestic space in which each family resides. The chapter highlights how the dwelling in each case is far from just a home but functions in various ways, as an uncanny double, as a domestic prison and even as the mother's body. The chapter will utilise Barbara Creed's concept of the archaic mother (1993) to analyse the womb-like *mise en scène* in each film. Where traditionally, Creed's re-absorbing archaic mother ultimately means death for the child, chapter three posits how the reabsorption is actually a rebirth of sorts in this specifically Spanish context.

Whilst not a horror film, this dissertation will conclude with a discussion of Almodóvar's *Parallel Mothers* (2021), which does not shy away from outwardly addressing the issue of mass graves in Spain and encapsulates the main assertion of

this thesis. The epigraph that began this introduction is taken from an interview about *Parallel Mothers* with Almodóvar in which he refers to 'the great-grandchildren' as being key to disinterring graves. This thesis will refer to the directors and their cinematic children as the Grandchildren of Franco, a term extrapolated from Marsha Kinder's concept of the Children of Franco from her article 'The Children of Franco in the New Spanish Cinema' (1983). The canon of films that are subject to in-depth study in this research range from 2001 to 2006, a generation removed from the Children of Franco, hence the phrase the Grandchildren of Franco. The great-grandchildren that Almodóvar speaks of are of a current generation whose duty it becomes to resolve the issue of mass graves in Spain.

Whilst Almodóvar's assertion that the fight for justice now lies with this generation, a film as blatant as *Parallel Mothers* also serves as a reminder of the trauma inflicted by the Civil War and the dictatorship and will do so for years to come thereby preventing Spain from forgetting, which is an obligation that I argue is fulfilled by the films subject to close reading in this thesis.

2. Literature Review

This thesis intends to ascertain the value of the contemporary Spanish horror film as a means to excavate and overcome Spain's traumatic past. The thesis will also investigate the function of the child in contemporary Spanish horror cinema to determine the agency of each cinematic child, and in turn demonstrate to what extent the child acts as the arbiter of change in the overcoming of trauma. Aside from the focus on children, this thesis will also address the family life of the children investigated, and the homes in which they live.

The literature review will begin from a broad perspective, discussing several texts with a focus on horror and culture to establish some context with regards to where this research is situated. The literature review will draw upon both classical and feminist psychoanalysis, key frameworks for the analysis of both the horror film in general, gender, and family relations. As the films which will be subject to in-depth analysis within this thesis contain a child interacting with the supernatural or other, significant literature regarding children in horror is the second focus of this literature review. Thirdly, as the research is positioned within the field of Spanish horror cinema, it is important to first gain an understanding of Spanish cinema as a whole to provide necessary context before going on to examine key literature surrounding Spanish horror cinema. Lastly, in order to provide a solid framework which will be applied to the chosen case studies within this thesis, a summary of the academic literature concerning the child in Spanish horror cinema will be presented.

2.1 The Horror Film and Culture

Before narrowing the focus of this literature review to the topic of the child interacting with the supernatural or other in Spanish horror, it is important to first gain a broad understanding of the cultural history of the horror genre. The horror film is often considered to be low-brow and according to Andrew Tudor, from a "culturally elitist perspective" people who enjoy the horror film must be “unsophisticated adolescents” or “perverse and sadistic deviants.” Tudor goes on to state that in terms of the study of horror films, these texts are often subjected to “psychoanalytical reduction” (1989: 106). Whilst this thesis will utilise psychoanalytical theory as an apparatus to dissect certain films, this research will also demonstrate that far from being low-brow and unsophisticated, the horror film is in fact a significant vehicle for addressing real life horrors, and, in this case for the facilitation of the overcoming of trauma in contemporary Spanish society.

Much of the literature engaged with regarding the cultural history of the horror film begins with a discussion of the difficulty in defining the horror genre as horror is based on emotion, which of course is subjective. Brigid Cherry states that the horror films’ ability to horrify is the main process of being able to define a text as belonging to the horror genre (2009). This concept is further discussed by Noël Carroll who states that “horror takes its title from the emotion it characteristically or rather ideally promotes; this emotion constitutes the identifying mark of horror” (1990: 14). Whilst the opening chapter of Cherry’s book *Horror* (2009) focuses on quite basic and broad ideas relating to the definition of the horror film, it is a useful starting point and offers some context to this research. Cherry discusses the horror film as a device for reflecting real life conditions

which “tap into the cultural moment by encoding anxieties of the moment into their depictions of the monstrous” (Cherry, 2009 :11). Cherry provides many examples of the clear links between horror and culture. However, much of the focus is on the slasher genre, body horror and the zombie film and very little attention is paid to the trope of haunting and the supernatural film, a gap which this research aims to fill.

2.2 Psychoanalysis in Horror

Cherry addresses theoretical ideas relating to the horror film and psychoanalysis, drawing on Sigmund Freud's *The Uncanny.* The uncanny is not easily definable and can be perceived in many ways. It does, however, as Freud states, “belong to the realm of the frightening, of what evokes fear and dread” (1919), thus lending itself to the study of the horror film.

Freud begins his exploration into the concept of the uncanny by investigating the semantic substance of the German equivalent *unheimlich.* First Freud examines the semantics of *unheimlich’s* apparent antonym*, heimlich*, and refers to Daniel Sanders *Wörterbuch der Deutschen* (1860) when considering the definitions of *heimlich*. Sanders prescribes the following meanings to the word *heimlich*: “belonging to the house, to the family, not strange, familiar, tame, dear and intimate, homely” (Sanders, 1860). From this Freud deduces that the definition of *unheimlich* is therefore ‘unhomely’, yet still familiar.

It is significant to note that the semantics of *heimlich*, and therefore *unheimlich* are concerned with the home and the family, themes which are central to the chosen case studies. Each of the narratives unfold in a haunted house or a haunted space, the mere

fact that the spaces are haunted in itself brings about feelings of the uncanny and estrangement from the home which should feel familiar. Moreover, the haunted house in the horror film can often appear animate, as Barry Curtis proposes “in haunted places doors, windows and other openings – telephones, screens and channels of communication – often act independently of desires and refuse to stay shut or turned off” (2008:11). Inanimate objects appearing animate, according to Freud, is yet another occurrence which provokes feelings of the uncanny.

Freud states that the “uncanny is in reality nothing new, or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind, and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression” (1919). Haunting narratives have become an intelligible device for dealing with anything which has gone unacknowledged or has been repressed. In the context of this research there is a duality in terms of repression. Firstly, there is the repression of an entire country under the fascist dictatorship of Francisco Franco. Secondly, there is the repression of the horrific truth in the films studied which is only accessible via a haunting narrative.

According to Freud, perhaps the most potent example of the uncanny is “anything to do with death” (1919), and given the fundamentals of what constitutes the uncanny perhaps it can be argued that the ghost could be considered the quintessential embodiment of the uncanny: after all, what could be more familiar yet unfamiliar than a ghost? If we take Santi’s ghost in *The Devil’s Backbone/El espinazo del diablo* (Dir. Guillermo del Toro, 2001) as an example here, he is familiar to the other boys in the orphanage and is recognisable as their friend Santi, however he is also unfamiliar due to

his translucent appearance and cracked skull. This claim is supported by Nicholas Royle, who, when discussing Freud's uncanny states:

> The uncanny is mysterious and strange, ghostly, eerie, weird. It is not simply what is strange by what is *uncomfortably* strange, a disorienting strangeness that has a certain *familiarity* about it. Uncanniness is somehow connected with return or coming back. The uncanny is a *revenant*: this French word has flitted across into English, in the season of "a ghost" or "someone who returned from the dead." "Revenant" literally means that which *comes back.* (Royle, 2014)

Here Royle essentially confirms my claim that the ghost is quintessentially uncanny, it is particularly interesting to note that the literal translation of revenant is that which comes back, forging further connections between Freud's uncanny and ghostly entities which return to haunt.

Within his writings on the uncanny, Freud addresses the concept of the double. He draws on Otto Rank's work *The Double: A Psychoanalytic Study* (1971), stating "He [Rank] has gone into the connections the "double" has with reflections in mirrors, with shadows, guardian spirits, with the belief in the soul and the fear of death" (Freud, 1919: 9). Freud utilises a number of different scenarios to define the double:

> We have characters who are to be considered identical because they look alike. This relation is accentuated by mental processes leaping from one of these characters to another - by what we should call telepathy -, so that the one possesses knowledge, feelings and experience in common with the other. Or it is marked by the fact that the subject identifies himself with someone else, so that he is in doubt as to which his self is, or substitutes the extraneous self for his own. In

> other words, there is a doubling, dividing and interchanging of the self. And finally there is the constant recurrence of the same thing - the repetition of the same features of character-traits or vicissitudes, of the same crimes, or even the same names through several consecutive generations. (Freud, 1919)

Freud's thinking on the double can be applied to a number of the film's considered in this thesis. Perhaps more so to *Pan's Labyrinth* (Dir. Guillermo del Toro, 2006), due to the dual nature of the narrative (Ofelia's "fantasy" world, and post-Civil War Spain), as well as a number of the characters embodying the double in various ways which will be addressed in chapter two.

2.2.1 Unveiling Unconscious Fears

In *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), Freud puts forward the theory that almost all dreams are wish-fulfilment fantasies that have roots in repressed infantile sexuality and unconscious desires. Freud's seminal work on the science of dreams analysed the symbolic language of dreams and the decoding of these symbols in order for the conscious mind to make sense of unconscious wishes. Whilst Freud's study of dreams was ground-breaking, it was also considered reductive in nature due to the emphasis on infantile sexuality. Carl Jung, whilst initially a supporter of Freud's work, believed that there was much more to dissect in the language of dreams. Whilst Jung agreed with Freud on the notion of the unconscious, he also believed that the unconscious worked on two levels: the personal unconscious (the unconscious that Freud speaks of) and the "collective unconscious" (1959: 3). Jung defines the collective unconscious as "a second psychic system of a collective, universal, and impersonal nature which is identical in all

individuals. This collective unconscious does not develop individually but is inherited" (1959: 43). This inherited collective unconscious that Jung speaks of brings to mind the trauma of the Spanish Civil War and the consequent dictatorship that has been passed on through generations.

2.2.2 Cinema as Therapy

It is my contention that there is a correlation between the dream state and the process of watching a film. It could perhaps be suggested that for some, watching a film allows for the conscious mind to relax, and in this sense, film could be considered almost therapeutic. The dreamlike aspect of film spectatorship is further explored by Barry Curtis:

> The cinema auditorium is a carefully cultivated dark space with subtle adjustment of lighting and an arrangement of opening and closing curtains that surrealist Luis Buñuel likened to the shutting of eyelids in preparation for an oncoming dream. (2008: 141-142)

If we are to liken watching a film to dreaming, then we are also able to liken the decoding of dream symbols and the decoding of narrative elements and *mise en scène.* This concept becomes particularly relevant when considering the *cine metafórico* movement in 1960s Spain, a movement which is discussed in much more detail in section 2.5.33 of this literature review. This cinema of metaphors relied on the audience's ability to read symbols in order to decode hidden meanings. Jung states "the dream disguises the repressed complex to prevent it from being recognized" (1959: 7) just as filmmakers of the movement used metaphor and symbolism to disguise their

critique of the Franco regime from film censors. Dreams unconsciously deal with repressed desires or problems in waking life, just as the contemporary Spanish horror film deals with the repression of an entire country at the hands of a fascist dictatorship through the use of narrative events and coded *mise en scène.* The process of watching a horror film allows the audience to deal with their fears in a safe space, in the same way as a dream (or indeed nightmare) allows the unconscious mind to act out fears in a safe space.

2.2.3 The Oedipus Complex

The final avenue of Freudian psychoanalysis which is relevant to this research is the Oedipus complex. In psychoanalysis the Oedipus complex refers to the process in a child's development where a male child begins to desire his mother and sees his father as a rival for his mother's attention/affections. In time both male and female children discover that their mother does not possess a penis, which they process in different ways. The male child associates the penis with pleasure and therefore sees his mother's 'lack' as a threat of castration. The female child blames the mother for denying her the penis and the power that comes with it. As a result of this, the male child stops identifying with the mother and turns to the father, it is here that he transitions to culture. The female child becomes hostile towards the mother as she feels disappointment in being 'lacking' like her mother and may develop what Freud termed 'penis envy' whereby the female child desires the father in a bid to have a child with him, therefore replacing both the penis and her mother (Freud, 1953).

Jacques Lacan reinterpreted Freud's Oedipus complex. Where Freud was concerned with biology, Lacan was concerned with language. Rather than the mother lacking a penis, Lacan uses the word phallus to describe "a signifier", "the 'phallic function'", in other words, is not gender-specific; it relates to being and having, to lack and the denial of lack - for all subjects" (2003: 226). Both Freudian and Lancanian psychoanalysis will be utilised as a framework for analysis in this research.

2.2.4 Feminist Thoughts on Freud

Whilst the Oedipus complex is an undeniably significant branch of psychoanalysis that will inform this thesis, it is not without its problems, especially given the focus on gender and female empowerment that will become evident throughout this research. Traditional psychoanalysis (such as Freud and Lacan) can be viewed as rather derogatory towards women. According to traditional psychoanalysis, the lack that a female child is born with will stay with her for life, unless she gives birth to a son, which will then become a penis-baby (Freud, 1953), a stand in for the woman's lack of penis. This theory of development assumes that women are inferior to men based purely on anatomy, a phallocentric concept which feminists find reductive and demeaning. There have been varying disagreements, revisions and debunking of traditional psychoanalysis (particularly Freudian) throughout the history of feminist psychoanalysis.

Karen Horney is of particular influence, publishing papers on feminine psychology as early as 1923, which challenged Freud's thinking on female sexuality. In *Feminine Psychology* (1973), Horney considers that Freud's concept of penis-envy is in fact a retaliation to male envy of the female. Horney discusses how a woman's disadvantage is

assumed due to her lack of penis, but as Horney proposes “from the biological point of view woman has in motherhood, or in the capacity for motherhood, a quite indisputable and by no means negligible physiological superiority” (1973: 60).

The point that Horney is making here is that it is perhaps the male who experiences a womb-envy of sorts as they do not possess the ability to birth new life. Horney makes a valid observation that the genital difference between the sexes is considered to be of the greatest importance to psychoanalysis, and yet psychoanalysis does not consider the other considerable biological distinction, the different functions that men and women play in reproduction. Horney questions this apparent oversight:

> At this point I, as a woman, ask in amazement, and what about motherhood? And the blissful consciousness of bearing a new life within oneself? And the ineffable happiness of the increasing expectation of the appearance of this new being? And the joy when it finally makes its appearance and one holds it for the time in one’s arms? And the deep pleasurable feeling of satisfaction in suckling it and the happiness of the whole period when the infant needs her care? (1973: 60)

This section of *Feminine Psychology* reads as almost a celebration of womanhood, and more specifically motherhood. Horney suggests that, much like Freud’s theory of penis-envy, “man’s incapacity for motherhood is probably felt simply as an inferiority” (1973: 62), going on to claim that in terms of the Oedipus complex “the girl has no reason at all to envy the boy, in her capacity for motherhood she has such indubitable biological advantages that one could rather think of the reverse, an envy of motherhood in the boy’s mind” (1973: 77).

Rosemary Balsam's *Women's Bodies in Psychoanalysis* (2012) also celebrates the female body, and as stated in the foreword "restores the female body to a site of power and meaning" (Chodorow and Harris, xii). One of Balsam's main claims is that whilst "women as characters are not ignored…the female body itself is neglected" (2012: 4). Here Balsam supports Horney's thoughts on Freud's "lack" of consideration for the female body and all that it can do. Balsam does not wholeheartedly disagree with Freud, rather she scrutinises Freudian theory to highlight what is missing. Balsam argues that the female body is so crucial to our human existence that it should be central to psychoanalytic theory, rather than being completely marginalised in favour of the male body (2012: 4). Whilst Balsam clearly disagrees with phallocentric traditional psychoanalysis, she also takes aim at alternative theories, that may make some effort to liberate women's minds, but once again ignore their bodies. (2012: 10-11). Balsam credits Freud with the close attention he paid to the body but extends his theory to include the function of the female body as the source of new life. Balsam goes on to discuss how Freud's Oedipus complex was so set on the child of either gender turning away from the mother that it does not even consider "the vital nature of female-to-female connection in the growth of a girl" (2012: 52). To Balsam, and to myself, it is incredulous that traditional psychoanalysis refuses to acknowledge how significant experiencing the pregnant mother's body is to a female child, as Balsam states "the mother's pregnancy is an aspect more visible and at least as compelling for the growing girl in terms of a show-and-tell as her genitals alone" (2012: 75). Balsam seems to agree with Horney that the concept of penis-envy is in fact born from womb envy:

> Contrary to the suggestion of Freud and others, the dread of the female that underlies the societal oppression of women, and the accompanying unfortunate exercise of sexualised aggression against them, is not the fear of the "Medusa head" or "*vagina dentata*" alone. Surely, it blends with the unconscious fear of the magical power of the female body to contain live humans and to bring them into the world? (2012: 98)

Chapter two of this thesis will deal mostly with motherhood in its varying forms throughout the chosen case studies. Freud's Oedipus complex as a traditional starting point will be used as a framework of analysis, particularly when considering the development of Nicholas and Anne in *The Others*. One of the main contentions of this thesis is that the reabsorption of the child into the maternal realm acts as a rebirth for each family unit beyond patriarchy and Franco's rule. Horney and Balsam's psychoanalytical celebration of womanhood and maternity lends itself to examining these films, in particular *Pan's Labyrinth* with its entire production design very purposefully being coded feminine which is explored in great detail in chapter three.

2.2.5 Family in the Horror Film

As mentioned above, chapter two will mainly focus on motherhood, whilst paying some attention to the father. The corpus of films studied in this thesis all feature a monstrous or inadequate mother and an often-absent father. The absent and monstrous father in the horror film is a well-known horror concept discussed by Vivian Sobchack in her article "Bringing It All Back Home" (2015). Sobchack deliberates upon the way in which the horror film, the family melodrama and the sci-fi film are utilised to "[seek] resolution,

or at least absolution, for a threatened patriarchy and its besieged structure of perpetuations: the bourgeois family" (2015: 186). It is apparent that the absent and monstrous father "is the synchronic repressed who, first powerfully absenting himself, returns to terrify the family" (2015: 181) and does this as a direct response to a threatened patriarchy. Whilst this is largely true of the American horror film in the sixties, and arguably the twenty-first-century (as discussed by Kimberly Jackson in *Gender and the Nuclear Family in Twenty-first-century Horror,* 2016*)* the absent and/or monstrous father in the Spanish horror film is utilised in a differently, in a way that is specific to Spanish culture and is often representative of Franco as the monstrous, oppressive Father of Spain.

Of course, Barbara Creed's *The Monstrous Feminine Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (1993) is a key text when considering the depiction of monstrous mothers in the horror film. Creed's work challenges the patriarchal view of the woman in the horror film who is presented only as victim. With *The Monstrous Feminine,* Creed presents the first study of the seven faces of the monstrous-feminine using feminism and psychoanalysis to frame her investigation. Similarly to Horney and Balsam, Creed confronts Freudian theories of sexual difference, rereading the Oedipus complex and arguing that woman is not terrifying because she is castrated, but rather she terrifies because of her ability to castrate. In part one of *The Monstrous Feminine,* Creed argues that "when woman is represented as monstrous it is almost always in relation to her mothering and reproductive functions" (1993: 7). It is woman as the archaic mother which is most pertinent to this thesis and will be utilised in chapters two and three when considering the architecture present in each film, and how the haunted house can

become the archaic mother (Creed analyses the spaceship from *Alien* (Dir. Ridley Scott, 1979) to this end) and reabsorb the cinematic child.

Sarah Arnold's *Maternal Horror Film: Melodrama and Motherhood* (2013) explores the function of maternal representation in the horror film. Arnold utilises psychoanalytical film theory and broader feminist theory to support her readings of the maternal in horror. Interestingly, Arnold uses the melodrama to further understand the function of motherhood in the horror film proposing that "horror and melodrama intersect at various points, most specifically in representations of the mother" (2013: 4). Arnold investigates why the horror film seems to be so engrossed by the figure of the mother, with chapters one and two establishing a framework for understanding what Arnold claims are the two predominant representations of motherhood in horror cinema - the Good Mother and the Bad Mother; definitions of which will be examined in detail in chapter two. The second half of Arnold's book utilises her framework for the analysis of various horror films, including *The Others (*Dir. Alejandro Amenábar, 2001*)* and *The Orphanage (*Dir. J.A. Bayona, 2007*),* both of which are films that will be interrogated in this thesis using Arnold's framework.

To add a Spanish specificity to the analysis of the mother it is essential to refer to Marsha Kinder's *Blood Cinema* (1993) in which she seminally portrayed mothers in Spanish cinema as dangerously castrating. With *Blood Cinema*, Kinder aimed to help to demarginalize Spanish cinema through the application of theoretical concepts of film studies, whilst also demonstrating that Spanish cinema should be acknowledged as being as essential to the study of film as are French, Italian and German cinema are. (1993: 9-10). Chapter five 'The Spanish Oedipal Narrative and Its Subversion' is of

particular relevance to this research because Kinder draws on Spanish literature, art, and film to “describe the specific cultural inflection of that master narrative, demonstrating how this Spanish version leads us to new readings of the original myth” (1993: 13). Kinder posits that there is in fact a Spanish Oedipal narrative which subverts the original Freudian reading of the myth. In the Spanish Oedipal narrative “the father is usually absent [...] mothers frequently stand in for the missing father as the embodiment of the patriarchal law (1993: 198-199). This shift of patriarchal law from the father to the mother meant that the act of matricide symbolically represented the death of patriarchy, and as Kinder states “no other national cinema contains so many matricides” (1993: 232). Kinder calls upon Pedro Almodóvar, who, throughout his entire filmography, has explored the concept of Spanish motherhood. Almodóvar explains:

> The idea of motherhood is very important in Spain. The father was frequently absent in Spain. It’s as if the mother represents the law, the police…when you kill the mother, you kill precisely everything you hate, all of those burdens that hang over you. (1993: 250)

Almodóvar’s account of motherhood in Spain reinforces the subversion of the Oedipal narrative that Kinder speaks of. In discussing the Spanish Oedipal narrative, Kinder explains how this shift of focus from father to mother occurred: “In the Civil war, over one million persons were killed, and over 250,000 were sent into exile, many of them fathers; mothers frequently had to take over in the father’s absence. Most families were fractured by fratricidal conflict, and most children who lived through it were traumatised” (1993: 235). This line of thought seems to lead on from Kinder’s concept of the Children of

Franco (briefly mentioned earlier) which will be a foundation of this research. According to Kinder “in the infantilised Spaniard who tries to escape patriarchal destiny, we can see a regression to a pre-Oedipal state where what is all-important is the mother/infant dyad and object relations formed in infancy” (1993: 235). Here Kinder’s thinking aligns with that of this research which, as discussed above, utilises Creed’s archaic mother, but reframes it in a Spanish context to offer a positive reading of the reabsorption of the child into the maternal realm. Kinder’s work on the Spanish Oedipal narrative is of course of most value to this thesis, however, this once again foregrounds the male child’s experience, whilst largely forgetting about the female child. Through the analysis of Ofelia, this thesis will aim to rectify this currently lacking field of investigation.

2.2.6 Feminist Fairytales

Whilst on the topic of Ofelia and gender, it seems appropriate to briefly discuss Deborah Shaw’s *The three amigos: The transnational filmmaking of Guillermo del Toro, Alejandro González Iñárritu, and Alfonso Cuarón* (2013). The section dedicated to *Pan’s Labyrinth* in ‘Part I: Guillermo del Toro: the alchemist’, is of course of particular relevance. Shaw argues the case for *Pan’s Labyrinth* to be considered a feminist fairytale, stating that “[del Toro] rewrites the female role to allow for the development of a feminist (young) heroine” (2013: 89). Shaw’s framing of Ofelia as a feminist heroine supports the claim that she can indeed be considered an active agent of change, as this thesis will contemplate. Shaw discusses how the traditional fairytale is “known to often have a conservative social function” (2013: 88), but through Ofelia, del Toro offers a feminist fairy tale that will be further interrogated in chapters one and two.

2.3 Classic Monsters

Noticeably, much of the academic literature concerned with offering a cultural history of the horror film has a broad focus on monsters, in particular *Frankenstein* (Dir. James Whale, 1931) and *Dracula* (Dir. Tod Browning, 1931). This is particularly true of David Skal's *The Monster Show* (1993), which provides a thorough history of the horror film in America and the cultural undercurrents of various horror film cycles.

War in America is a large focus of Skal's work, drawing parallels between the horrors of war and the popular horror movie monsters of the times. Skal states "wars tend to not resolve themselves, culturally, until years after actual combat stops" (1993: 386), a concept that is particularly pertinent to this research in relation to the Spanish Civil War, a war that has arguably still not resolved itself. Skal crowns 1931 as the year that invented the modern horror film, examining how the Great Depression allowed for the best year for monsters in America and the horror film to become a "dominant form of cultural expression" (1993: 115). Whilst much of the book focuses on various wars, the book also examines other significant cultural happenings in America and their metaphorical depiction in horror cinema. Whilst *The Monster Show* acts as an example of a thorough framework through which the horror film can be considered a mirror of contemporary culture and society, as with *Horror*, *The Monster Show* primarily focuses on monsters, with no discussion of the supernatural or ghosts, once again reinforcing the need for academic literature which examines the cultural significance of the trope of haunting.

Monsters and Mad Scientists: A Cultural History of the Horror Movie (1989), whilst being based on 990 films distributed in Britain between 1931 and 1984, offers

useful information and analysis regarding patterns of the horror genre's development. It also charts the development of the horror film as a “historically specific social and cultural form” (Tudor, 1989: 2). Tudor states, “it goes without saying that horror movies are one aspect of the social construction of the fearful in our society (1989: 5), reinforcing the concept of the horror film as a useful vehicle for portraying real life fears. As with the previous academic literature discussed here, Tudor suggests multiple ways in which certain horror film cycles relate to the cultural fears of the times, with a large focus on the fifties and the mad-science narrative.

What is interesting about Tudor's work is the way in which he categorises the corpus of films studied into three different pairs of terms which he uses to analyse said films. These terms are supernatural/secular, external/internal and autonomous/dependent (1989: 8), a concept that is not without its flaws. Take for example the third pairing, autonomous/dependent: according to Tudor, spirits fall under the heading of autonomous, meaning that "the threatening force is simply there, quite independent of humanity, though posing a threat to it" (Tudor, 1989: 10). If we take Santi's ghost in *The Devil's Backbone* as an example, it could be argued that far from being "independent of humanity", Santi is in fact a product of humanity, because he is murdered at the hands of a fascist and condemned to haunt the orphanage where he died on a quest for justice. This compulsion for justice is arguably a consistent feature of a haunting narrative, suggesting that a ghost is far from being independent from humanity.

Unlike the other literature studied here, *Monsters and Mad Scientists* does dedicate some study to the supernatural film, stating that "supernatural is clearly both

the genre's most pervasive and its most stable fount of disorder" (Tudor, 1989: 159). The consistency of the production of the supernatural film throughout the years covered by Tudor's research serves to highlight the usefulness and the continued relevance of the genre. In his conclusion, Tudor makes some interesting points which serve to highlight the importance of the horror film, once again with regards to cultural and social change. Tudor states “most generally, paranoid horror makes sense in the context of as-yet incomplete social changes" (1989: 223), this is particularly true of the contemporary Spanish horror film which attempts to aid Spanish society in coming to a conclusion regarding its bloody past, which is as of yet, to use Tudor’s terminology, “incomplete”.

It has become apparent from researching for this section of the literature review that the concept of utilising the horror film to reflect or comment on cultural anxieties and fears of the time is not a new one. It appears the horror film is often used to bring to light that which has been repressed, as Wood states “one might say that the true subject of the horror genre is the struggle for recognition of all that our civilization represses or oppresses” (1979: 10). It has also become clear that much of the academic literature engaged with investigates so-called traditional or classic monsters such as the vampire, werewolf or zombie, the function of the ghost appears to be largely under-interrogated. This research aims to offer a significant contribution to this field of study by utilising a close reading approach to the chosen case studies in order to highlight the important role that the supernatural subgenre plays in the overcoming of repressed trauma.

2.4 Children in Horror

2.4.1 The Child as Demonic Antagonist

Before narrowing the focus of this literature review to the child in Spanish horror cinema, it is first important to scrutinise existing academic literature surrounding the child in horror cinema, to gain a broad understanding of this field of research.

The child in horror cinema has a long history. From the 1950s onwards, horror cinema began to present the child as a demonic antagonist in films such as *Rosemary's Baby* (Dir. Roman Polanski, 1968), *The Exorcist* (Dir. William Friedkin, 1973), *The Omen* (Dir. Richard Donner, 1976) and *The Brood* (Dir. David Cronenberg, 1979). The archetype of the demonic child became somewhat of a cliché of horror cinema, representing a society that was fearful of the threats to the family and society as a whole. As Lennard states "where the child villain occurs in the horror film, so do any number of corresponding cultural impressions through which he or she is defined" (2015: 12). The sub-genre of the demonic child reached prominence in the sixties and seventies when cultural anxieties regarding the rise of rebellious youth culture were high and the threat to patriarchy seemed very real. The post-war 'baby-boom' meant that the 1960s saw an unprecedented number of teenagers and young adults who rebelled against their parents' traditional conservative generation. This period saw the rise of Civil Rights movements, the hippie counterculture and sexual liberation, which many thought threatened the traditional values of the decade.

A plethora of demonic child horror films were released in this period, but the 1956 film *The Bad Seed* (Dir. Mervyn LeRoy, 1956) is often credited with "marking the

emergence of the child monster in cinema" (Woodward, 2002), the film being so influential that the term *bad seed* became utilised in the English language to describe a person who is deemed bad by nature. This period also saw the advent of the prescription birth-control pill, which provided women in heterosexual relationships with greater autonomy and therefore seemed to many to threaten patriarchy. The pill was soon to be deemed unsafe, as was thalidomide, a medication prescribed to pregnant women which led to babies being born with horrific birth defects. This combination of reproductive anxieties and women's sexual liberation led to a new wave of gynaecological horror which served as an outlet for these anxieties. Skal states that "in the post-Pill age, 'normal' childbirth ceased to exist, at least in our collective dreamlife. Reproduction crossed over into the realm of Gothic science-fiction" (Skal, 1993: 294).

It is important to note here however, that whilst significant developments regarding birth control were happening in the United States, in Spain the sale and advertisement of contraception was prohibited until 1978. The legislation put in place by Franco's regime dates back to January 1941 when the law on the protection of natality, against abortion and contraceptive propaganda was passed. The legislation had two objectives: "to enhance natality in a country mutilated by civil war and to promote a gender regime in which women's bodies were symbolic and material sites for the reproduction of the new Spanish nation" (Ignaciuk & Ortiz Gómez, 2018: 38). This outlawing of contraception led to the instigation of family planning activism. Outpatient clinics in public hospitals discreetly offered birth control counselling to women and consciousness-raising groups were established (Ignaciuk & Ortiz Gómez, 2018). These organisations had to be strategic about the naming of their groups in order to be able to

give talks and distribute important information about methods of contraception and feminism. These talks were well received and prompted the founding of the first feminist family planning centre in Spain, which was opened in Madrid in 1976, two years before the decriminalisation of contraception and for that reason was not given a name and operated without a licence (Ignaciuk & Ortiz Gómez, 2018).

2.4.2 The Child as Uncanny Medium

In *Bad Seeds and Holy Terrors: The Child Villains of Horror Film* (2015), Dominic Lennard discusses the concept of *the looking child*. Basing his work around Laura Mulvey's concept of *to-be-looked-at-ness* (1975), Lennard asserts that childlike low angle shots are used in horror films which feature a child villain in order to "reflect the hierarchical relationship between adult and child." (2015: 58). Whilst the majority of Lennard's book focuses on the child as villain, within the same chapter Lennard goes on to state:

> Even in those horror films that might appear to adopt the child's perspective by having powerful children as protagonists…the child is always framed by adult agendas of control, behaving, in the end, as the adult wishes him or her to…these films encourage and affirm the viewer's expectation of the *to-be-looked-at child*, and do not ultimately challenge the dominance of the adult gaze. (2015: 65-66)

Whilst this concept may apply to the horror films that Lennard mentions here (*Firestarter* (Dir. Mark L. Lester, 1984)) and *The Shining* (Dir. Stanley Kubrick, 1980)), it could be argued that in fact quite the opposite can be said for the Spanish horror films that are

the focus of this thesis. The children that feature as powerful child protagonists are very much acting of their own accord, and in the majority of the films, are in fact in some sort of control over their adult counterparts. Lennard goes on to discuss the child as "an active, looking subject", suggesting:

> The child's eyes serve the constant purpose of alerting the viewer to him or her as an active, looking subject, upsetting the power of the adult gaze and underscoring the falseness of its claim to universality. (2015: 66)

Many of the films discussed within this thesis feature a wide-eyed child protagonist, first seen in the aforementioned seminal Spanish horror film *The Spirit of the Beehive.* As I will discuss later, these wide eyes are often thought of as being symbolic of the children's all-seeing abilities that, as Lennard describes, disrupts the traditional adult/child hierarchy.

Whilst there is much academic literature that surrounds the child as villain, Sage Leslie-McCarthy highlights that there appears to be a gap in academic literature that discusses the role of the child in the horror film as anything other than a victim or as a symbol of the future. According to Leslie-McCarthy, from the 1990s onwards, a new type of sub-genre featuring prominent child characters emerged. She states that "a depiction of children as 'communicators' with the supernatural" (2012: 2) became apparent. Leslie-McCarthy explains:

> These children do not terrify, scare, or repulse the audience; rather they have the ability to reach, empathise with, and restore others, facilitating both personal and social resolution and justice. (Leslie-McCarthy, 2012: 2)

This concept of the ‘child as “medium”’ in the horror film, “restoring a dialogue between the past and the present” (2012: 2), is a critical framework which will be applied to the corpus of films studied in this research. Leslie-McCarthy argues that the child in horror cinema does in fact play a vital part in memory work, providing the ghostly entities with a voice and ultimately restoring justice by acknowledging the injustices the characters face. One of the films that Leslie-McCarthy applies this concept of ‘child as “medium”’ to is *The Orphanage* and, whilst it is useful to see this framework applied to a case study, Leslie-McCarthy merely scrapes the surface in terms of narrative, leaving much to be dissected by textual analysis, which is a gap that this thesis will fill.

One of the main attributes of the ‘child as medium’ as outlined by Leslie-McCarthy is their status as ‘other’. She states that because of their own “otherness” [children] possess a sense of empathy for the “other”” (2012: 6). Robin Wood defines the other as “that which bourgeois ideology cannot accept but must deal with” stating that “most clearly of all, the ‘otherness’ of children is that which is repressed within ourselves” (1979 :9-10). Here Wood could be referring to a number of repressed qualities, but in the context of this research this repression suggests the repression enforced by the dictatorship on the people of Spain that is only now being brought to the surface through the figure of the child in the contemporary Spanish ghost film.

Jessica Balanzategui further builds upon this concept with her work on ‘the uncanny child’. Balanzategui defines the uncanny child as being:

> Characterised in one of two ways: as a mysterious ghost or spectre...or as an ‘in-between’, seemingly alive yet acting as a mediator or being caught between the

> realms of the living and the dead, the present and the past, the material and the supernatural. (2018: 18)

By this definition, the child protagonists, or prominent child characters that feature in the chosen case studies can be considered uncanny children, thus making Balanzategui's work on the uncanny child a valuable source.

Balanzategui tracks the usage of the uncanny child in horror cinema in the United States, Spain, and Japan from the 1980s onwards; her chapter on Spain will be drawn upon in the final section of this literature review. The main premise of Balanzategui's work is that the uncanny child is a "potent embodiment of trauma" (2018: 18), whose supernatural powers and all-seeing abilities are the key to unlocking past traumas. The films studied all feature uncanny children who "[are] privy to a layer of nonrational understanding not accessible to adult consciousness" (Balanzategui, 2018: 25). It is not until the prominent adult characters make sense of this greater knowledge that justice is restored, and closure is accessible. It could also be argued that this concept can be applied in a broader sense to Spain as a whole, as the pact of forgetting, discussed below, repressed the trauma of the Spanish Civil War and the Franco Regime, a pact which is only just being broken.

2.4.3 The Pact of Forgetting

On the 20th November 1975 Francisco Franco died of natural causes. Spain was not freed from the grips of Francoism overnight and in the years that followed violence was still abundant. Soon after Franco's death, demonstrations were held that demanded amnesty for the many political prisoners that were still imprisoned for opposing

Francoism. In 1977, after the first democratic vote in forty-one years, a general amnesty law was granted. The amnesty law came to be known as the pact of forgetting/*Pacto del olvido.* The pact of forgetting was essentially a country-wide voluntary amnesia whereby the dictatorial past was a forbidden topic of discussion. The aim of the pact was a smooth and peaceful transition from dictatorship to democracy, which in fact served to further repress the countless victims of both Spain's Civil War and the dictatorship. The many crimes committed under the regime went unpunished and the victims were left without justice.

After years of pressure from memory groups since the turn of the century, in 2007 the Law of Historical Memory was passed. The law allowed for families to trace and exhume relatives buried in unmarked graves, as well as the removal of many of the symbols of Francoism from public spaces in Spain. During the time of writing this literature review, Francisco Franco was exhumed from his controversial resting place in The Valley of the Fallen. Whilst there is no doubt that this marked progress for a silenced Spain, the law still faced criticism for not going far enough in terms of acknowledging the rights of the victims. In late 2020 a new law was proposed: The Democratic Memory Law. This law would see the state take legal responsibility for identifying the thousands of victims still buried in unmarked graves in Spain. According to Fernando Martínez, the Secretary of State for Democratic Memory, the law is based around **"**truth, justice, reparation and the duty of memory" and emphasises the importance of this duty of memory to reach schools in order to strengthen democracy and to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past (Martínez, 2020).

As the direct victims of Franco grow older, it becomes the duty of current and future generations to continue the fight for justice. It is my hypothesis that the child in the contemporary Spanish horror film is symbolic of a generation that did not live through Francoism yet are haunted by its ghosts. As Leslie McCarthy states “for justice to occur the “other” must be given back their voice” (2012: 6). The child is a complex and somewhat problematic symbol, paradoxically representative of both the pastness of adult life, as well as the future. It has become apparent through the research conducted here that a child can take on many significant forms, specific to a culture. The function of the child in the contemporary Spanish horror film will be scrutinised in the final section of this literature review.

2.5 Spanish Cinema

Whilst the focus of this thesis is contemporary Spanish horror cinema, it is important to first examine and engage with literature surrounding the history of Spanish cinema as a whole to provide context to this research.

2.5.1 Early Spanish Film Under Franco

The Spanish film industry was rigorously controlled by the state for almost four decades and film was therefore yet another victim of the Franco regime. In the early years, film censorship under Franco meant that prior submission of film scripts were mandatory and foreign films were dubbed and often cut to such an extent as to be unrecognisable in order to satisfy the restrictions imposed by the rigid regime (Higginbotham, 1988). This in turn meant that Spanish filmmakers and audiences were not privy to key developments in cinema such as Italian neo-realism and Soviet cinema. Whilst

later years saw censorship being relaxed to some degree, four decades of strict limitations left the Spanish film industry "both culturally and economically disadvantaged" (Higginbotham, 1988: 15). Whilst Higginbotham's *Spanish Film Under Franco* (1988) is an important text, and one which discusses elements that are key to this thesis, it is now somewhat outdated, especially with regards to Higginbotham's claim that Spain did not have a national cinema.

Although there does not appear to be a general consensus on the advent of a national cinema in Spain, Núria Triana-Toribo claims in *Spanish National Cinema* (2002) "there is no fully fledged national cinema in Spain until the 1940s, since prior to that there was never a consolidated and deliberate state-sponsored effort to create one" (2002: 17). Prior to this deliberate attempt, Spanish films tended to be adaptations of novels and plays, featuring "noticeably Spanish elements", such as "bullfighting, flamenco, bandits, and the dominance of the Catholic church…whose presence endowed films with Spanishness" (Triana-Toribio, 2002: 19). During the dictatorship, due to the rigorous control by the state, subject matter reflected the politics of the regime. It comes as no surprise then that *cine cruzada* (literally 'crusade' cinema) was a popular genre in 1940s Spain. During this period, film was used as a medium for "the winners to celebrate…and to impose their victory on the vanquished" (Triana-Toribio, 2002: 46) and the Falange demanded that films must "celebrate submission to discipline" (Triana-Toribio, 2002: 43). It was not until the mid-1940s to the early 1950s that the state made a deliberate attempt at creating a national cinema. Rather than being concerned with the stylistic characteristics of a film, the state instead was concerned with producing a national cinema which "should carry out the diplomatic mission of achieving international

status for Spain" (Triana-Toribio, 2002: 54). In 1944 the Department of Popular Education created the *Declarations de Película de Interés Nacional*/the National Interest Prize, a prize awarded to films which "best served the nation's interests" (Triana-Toribio, 2002: 55). Winning the prize ensured success for producers and directors thus encouraging them to create films which encompassed "the myths of empire, reconquest and counter-reformation" (Triana-Toribio, 2002: 55). This in turn meant that Spanish national cinema was synonymous with the historical film. As Stone states: "Spanish cinema was press-ganged into the rewriting of history and the dissemination of fascist propaganda" (2002: 37).

Controversy struck in 1952 when José María García Escudero awarded the National Interest Prize to the film *Surcos* (Dir. José Antonio Nieves Conde, 1951) over the Falange-backed blockbuster biopic of Christopher Columbus *Dawn of America*/*Alba de América (Dir. Juan de Orduña, 1951). Surcos* was the first example of Spanish neo-realism which broke with aesthetic tradition and narratively was concerned with a realist depiction of daily life in Madrid. Whilst Escudero was forced to resign and *Surcos* was stripped of the prize, the film marked the beginning of change in Spanish cinema.

2.5.2 The NCE

In the early 1960s, tourism was recognised as a significant industry, and cinema "as a means by which a new image of Spain could be projected through the participation of Spanish films in international film festivals" (Triana-Toribio, 2002: 72). This cinema was named the *Nuevo Cine Español* (NCE). The NCE was to compete with other young European cinema movements, such as the *nouvelle vague*, and was "presented beyond

Spanish borders as the only Spanish cinema" (Triana-Toribio, 2002: 73). It was hoped that the NCE would "update Francoism's authoritarian image" (D'Lugo, 2012: 136) and young directors, who were graduates of Spain's official film school, the *Escuela Oficial de Cine* (EOC) were encouraged to create innovative cinema with the promise of subsidies as an incentive to create artistically ambitious cinema. Whilst this offered slightly more freedom to these young filmmakers, film was still heavily censored. This combination of a so-called artistic freedom and strict censorship ironically led to a metaphorical cinema which "could accommodate the censors yet obliquely attack the regime's ideology" (D'Lugo, 2012: 50); this movement came to be known as *cine metafórico.* Key filmmakers of the NCE included Juan Antonio Bardem and Luis García Berlanga, who in the 1950s had led a cinema of opposition. Berlanga was notorious for utilising satire to critique Francoist Spain, whilst Bardem was concerned with using stark realism to depict the reality of living in Franco's Spain.

2.5.3 *Cine metafórico*

Other notable pioneers of the NCE included producer Elías Querejeta. Querejeta had attempted a career as a documentary filmmaker in the 1950s but was met with severe backlash from the Spanish censorship board. In 1963 Querejeta set up his own production company, which became synonymous with "a particularly politically oriented aesthetic" subsequently known as the "Querejeta house style" (D'Lugo, 2012: 53). Querejeta helped to shape the careers of many directors, but perhaps the most notable and relevant to this thesis are Carlos Saura and Víctor Erice. Both filmmakers adopted the *cine metafórico* discourse to critique the ideology of the regime. Under the Franco

regime a traditional education was denied. Instead, the Catholic Church held all responsibility for education. High illiteracy rates and a familiarity with parables due to the teachings of the Catholic Church meant that the Spanish audience were able to read the films of the *cine metafórico* movement in the way that the directors had intended.

The movement was established in 1965 with Carlos Saura's *The Hunt/La caza* (Dir. Carlos Saura, 1965). This film marked the beginning of the collaboration between Querejeta, who produced the film, and Saura. As Stone states "their collaboration would generate a thirteen-film attack on Francoism and its legacy" (2002: 64). The film follows four men on a rabbit hunt. Three of the men are ex-soldiers in Franco's army, the fourth, a younger man, is arguably the personification of the post-war generation. The action takes place in the dry and barren landscape that was once the scene of bloody battles in the Spanish Civil War. There is no doubt that the film is a war allegory disguised in the form of a hunt, the men turning on each other perhaps symbolic of the mindless violence of the regime. Saura's *Raise Ravens*/*Cría Cuervos* (Dir. Carlos Saura, 1975), once again produced by Querejeta, is, as Maria M. Delgado states, "in many ways the pinnacle of [the political film]" (Delgado, 2013: 7). The film follows young Ana (played by Ana Torrent), and her sisters as they find themselves orphaned and attempt to come to terms with a new way of life. Early on in the film Ana's father, the militant head of the family, passes away which "obliges her to face up to a world beyond patriarchy" (Stone, 2002: 99). The film was produced in 1975, the same year that Franco died. The death of the militant patriarch in the film draws obvious parallels with a Spanish society on the verge of freedom as they attempt to navigate a new Spain.

Many of the elements that are present in *Raise Ravens* are also present in the corpus of films which will be studied in this thesis. As Ernesto R. Acevedo-Munoz states in a particularly useful chapter in *Contemporary Spanish Cinema and Genre* (2008), the majority of these films can be considered "narrative and generic relatives" (2008: 214). Perhaps the most pertinent theme that is present in *Raise Ravens* and the films studied in this thesis is the child facing horror. Ernesto R. Acevedo-Munoz explains:

> There is a long tradition in Spanish cinema of films about childhood that revisit and reappropriate the conventions of the classic horror film… [these films] adopt conventions of horror, introduce monsters and ghosts and various 'uncanny' figures and situations to their plots in ways that are potentially allegorical to the nation's cultural and political transitions of the period. (2008: 205)

This tradition in Spanish cinema will be addressed in more detail in section 2.6.2 of this literature review, as well as in chapter one. Other similarities include the house acting as a microcosm for Spain and the theme of dual realities. Little Ana imagines the playful ghost of her mother, whilst her real memories of her mother are much more painful and traumatic. In *Pan's Labyrinth*, Ofelia constructs an alternate reality full of grotesque monsters that are nowhere near as terrifying as the fascist reality that she faces. There is also a blurring of what is reality and what is fantasy in *The Orphanage,* as we, along with the protagonist Laura, are led to believe that Símon has an imaginary friend. However, as the narrative progresses, we learn the ghostly truth. Perhaps the most shocking of dual realities is present in *The Others* as Grace and the children are unaware of their demise, the realm of the living and the realm of the dead coexist within the house. Many other parallels can be drawn between Erice and Saura's films and

those that will be subject to close reading in this thesis. Ernesto R. Acevedo-Munoz describes the films of Erice and Saura as a "frame of reference" (2008: 207) for contemporary filmmakers working within the Spanish horror genre, stating:

> Whilst the two previous generations of Spanish filmmakers saw themselves 'negotiating' repressions and the transition to democracy as something frantic and difficult, it seems as if [contemporary Spanish filmmakers have] gone through a process of revisionism that emphasises the dangerous weight of the past in their lives. (2008: 213/14)

Here, Acevedo-Munoz reinforces the contention of this research, that the contemporary Spanish horror film is a useful mechanism for the overcoming of trauma and that these films "are perhaps trying to remind us that the weight of history cannot be ignored or trivialised" (Acevedo-Munoz, 2008: 216).

The other notable film of this time period is *¿Quién puede matar a un niño? /Who Can Kill a Child?* (Dir. Narciso Ibáñez Serrador, 1976). As with the examples from Saura discussed above, the film utilises metaphor and allegory to critique Francoism. *Who Can Kill a Child?* will be discussed in more detail in section 2.7 due to the symbolic use of the child in the film. Thereafter, although it may seem an oversight to not include a discussion of *la movida* in a general account of the history of Spanish cinema, as this research focuses on the contemporary Spanish horror film it is appropriate to jump from the 1970s, where we begin to see the use of the child as a proxy for change, to the contemporary case studies that are the focus of this thesis.

2.6 Spanish Horror Cinema

In part one of this literature review, American horror cinema was discussed in relation to culture. This section will delve into Spanish horror cinema from its advent to modern-day to distinguish a link between the Spanish horror film and culture, as well as gaining some broader context in which to situate this research. As Jorge Marí argues, "intriguingly, contemporary Spanish horror cinema is yet to receive the amount of scholarly attention it deserves" (2017: 2), a gap in academic literature that this thesis aims to bridge.

2.6.1 Early Spanish Horror

Spain had a slow start in the field of horror cinema. Paul Julian Smith discusses the belatedness of the Spanish horror film which was "stymied by the strength of the Catholic Church, [due to] film horror's typical archetypes and obsessions [it] did not reach Spanish film until the 1960s, decades after such pioneers as German Expressionism and the 'splendour' of Lon Chaney and Todd Browning" (2013: 148). Due to the strict censorship imposed by the regime as discussed above, it comes as no surprise that the horror genre had a delayed start in the Spanish film industry given the macabre themes that are associated with the horror film. Paul Julian Smith goes on to discuss Spanish horror cinema's tendency towards crudity. He claims, "the interaction between eroticism and violence or sex and death is held to be the most recognisable characteristic of Spanish film in all periods of film production" (2013: 148). Whilst eroticism and violence, and sex and death are prominent themes in early Spanish horror

cinema, it is my argument that they are not, as Julian Smith claims, the most recognisable characteristic in all periods of film production.

Antonio Lázaro-Reboll quotes film review yearbook *Cine para leer* in the opening paragraph of the first chapter of *Spanish Horror Film* (2012) “there was a time when Spanish cinema was tinged with red... bloody red” (1974: 21). Lázaro-Reboll argues that this quote could define what is considered the Spanish horror boom between 1968 and 1975. The review goes on to discuss the nature of these films in terms of their “[gross] depictions of physical, moral and sexual violence” (1974: 21) which is in keeping with Julian Smith’s comments regarding the crudity of Spanish horror. The review asks the important question, did this genre trend stem from merely the need to fit in with already established genre trends of other countries, or do these crude films act as a form of escapism against the repressive regime that Spain found itself in? Horror genre circuits from other countries such as British Hammer Horror, Italian Gothic and the various American horror genre trends discussed previously are undeniable influences on early Spanish horror. This being said, these films must also be understood as a product of the institutional, industrial, and commercial demands that Spain faced during this time period. As Lázaro-Reboll states “the horror genre in the 1960s and 1970s provided, in common with other international counterparts, a barometer of the ideological, institutional and social contradictions and tensions of the times” (2012: 8).

Early Spanish horror cinema is usually associated with filmmakers such as Jesús Franco, Paul Naschy, Amando de Ossorio and León Klimovsky, each filmmaker gaining somewhat of a cult status in their own right. Jesús Franco’s *The Awful Dr Orlof/Gritos en la noche* (Dir. Jesús Franco, 1962) is often credited as being the first Spanish horror

film. The film “broke with Spanish cinematic conventions of the time by moving away from realist aesthetics and into the terrain of mystery, fear and terror.” (Lázaro-Reboll, 2012: 8). Jesús Franco’s cinematic tendency towards pulp horror aesthetics and pornographic depictions of sex and graphic violence often condemn his art to being labelled as no more than (s)exploitation cinema and therefore deemed as unworthy of scholarly attention. Tatjana Pavlovic discusses in *Despotic Bodies and Transgressive Bodies: Spanish Culture from Francisco Franco to Jesús Franco* (2003), that elements of Jesús Franco’s filmography act as a critique or a reaction to Francoist Spain. Pavlovic suggests that Franco’s heroines are the exact opposite of the strict societal roles expected of women in Francoist Spain. *La Sección Femenina* (the women’s section of the Falange), headed by Pilar Primo de Rivera stated that the “principal base of the state is the family, and accordingly the natural purpose of all women is marriage” (Misión y organización de la sección femenina, 1942: 16-17). The female characters of Jesús Franco’s *The Diabolic Dr. Z/Miss Muerte* (1966), *Succubus/Necronomicon - Geträumte Sünden* (1968) and *Vampyros Lesbos* (1971), to name but a few examples, could not be further removed from the model of the ideal women shaped *by La Sección Femenina.* Pavlovic draws interesting parallels between Jesús Franco and Francisco Franco, claiming that “in multiple ways, he appears as almost the inverted, ironic figure of his namesake” (2003: 2) suggesting that “[his] films enact a return of Fascism’s repressed” (2003: 3). This suggests that rather than simply emanating successful horror genre cycles from other countries, Spanish horror did, and in fact does, possess a Spanish specificity.

The combination of pulp aesthetics borrowed from international horror cycles and a local Spanish context is something that is evident throughout the Spanish horror boom of 1968-75. When discussing Amando de Ossorio's *Order of the Knights Templar* (1972) cycle, Lázaro-Reboll states that whilst Ossorio clearly drew upon "contemporary international horror traditions, [he also drew upon] local Spanish sources", suggesting that there is a "...latent local political critique inscribed in [Ossorio's cycle], since these monsters might be said to represent specific ideas, institutions and values pertaining to Francoist ideology" (2012: 81). Whilst this early period of filmmaking in Spain will not be the focus of this thesis, it is useful and appropriate to gain a broader understanding of the history of the horror genre in Spain, particularly in terms of how Spain's fascist past is opposed and critiqued in the works discussed here.

2.6.2 *The Spirit of the Beehive*

As discussed in the previous section, the 1960s saw the emergence of *cine metafórico* as a means of opposing the authoritarian regime. Although discussed in great detail in most scholarly work on the Spanish horror film, it would be an injustice to not discuss *The Spirit of the Beehive,* albeit briefly, whilst discussing the history of the Spanish horror film. As Robert, J. Miles states, *The Spirit of the Beehive* "is now the grandfather of filmic commentaries on the post-war period and living with Francoism" (2011: 196), thus highlighting the film's status as influential. The film is set in post-war Spain, in the small rural village of Hoyuelos and features wide-eyed child protagonist Ana. Ana becomes besotted with James Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931) after seeing the film in a makeshift cinema when the travelling film show arrives in Hoyuelos. Much has been

written regarding the choice of *Frankenstein* as the film that so captures little Ana's attention. Higginbotham claims that a "young Victor Erice, in search of new myths, turns to those of horror film to caricature his country as Frankenstein, a monster that has lost its memory" (1988: 116). Here Higginbotham is referring to the amnesia brought about by the pact of forgetting. Erice's choice of the film *Frankenstein* awards *The Spirit of the Beehive* with what could be considered a meta stance, commenting on the ability of the horror film to metaphorically depict cultural happenings in a horror film which does exactly that. It could also perhaps be suggested that Ana's apparent brainwashing by the act of watching the film draws some parallels with the brainwashing tendencies of Francoist propaganda in the form of the No-Dos (*Noticias documentales*). Ana imagines a *maqui* as her monster, her childish innocence leaving her unable to differentiate between the imaginary and the real, as seen in many of my chosen case studies. Similarly to Ofelia in *Pan's Labyrinth*, here little Ana's "monster" provides her with respite from the trauma of fascism.

The film is permeated by sadness, illustrated by the muted colours, dusty barren landscapes and limited dialogue which is evocative of the repression faced both at the time the film is set and the time the film was made. Whilst the typical scares of the horror genre are not present, the use of ellipses and dream-like cinematography creates a haunting presence that is felt long after the film has finished. *The Spirit of the Beehive* is cloaked in metaphor and allegory, perhaps the most obvious relating to the title of the film. The yellow glass windows of the house where Ana and her family live with their hexagonal panes suggest that the characters of the film are like the bees in Fernando's hives. As Olivia Arigho Stiles suggests "the bees that assiduously labour under the

shadow of Fernando's omnipotent gloved hands evoke the looming overreach of patriarchal authority, and compliance with fascism" (2016). Here Stiles is suggesting that the bees in Fernando's hive draw parallels with the Spanish population, whilst Fernando as beekeeper stands in for Francisco Franco. Aside from the deeply metaphorical subtext of *The Spirit of the Beehive,* the film is influential to this thesis in multiple ways. Arguably, most influential is the child protagonist Ana. Sarah Wright discusses at length the importance of Ana's gaze, which links back to Lennard's concept of the looking child as examined in section 2.4.2 of this literature review. For film studies scholar Kristin Thompson, Erice's use of Ana's point of view "help[s] us to see the world of the adults around [her] through fresh eyes to take the familiar and make it strange" (Thompson, 2017), thus emphasising the uncanny abilities of the child in horror. Sarah Wright's work on the child's gaze and the notion of child as witness will be further explored in the final part of this literature review, as well as in chapter one.

2.6.3 Early Gothic Roots in Spain

The horror genre in Spain was revived in the 1990s, coinciding with the memory boom that emerged after the foundation of the Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory/Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica. Despite Spanish horror "...[dominating] the Spanish box office in 2001, 2007 and 2009" (Lázaro-Reboll, 2012: 199) contemporary Spanish horror is currently a field of underdeveloped study, with Spanish horror as a whole being "a genre which has been excluded from dominant accounts of Spanish cinema" (Lázaro-Reboll, 2012: 5), a gap which this research aims to fill. Whilst Lázaro-Reboll's *Spanish Horror* is an excellent in-depth exploration of the

genre, the book, self-admittedly, has more of a focus on the 1960s/70s era than the contemporary context. This being said, the later chapters do offer interesting textual analysis in relation to allegory and political subtext in *The Devil's Backbone* and *Pan's Labyrinth.*

Much more relevant to this thesis is Ann Davies' *Contemporary Spanish Gothic* (2016), the book being the first to explore the Gothic in relation to Spanish culture and Spain's contribution to the Gothic mode. Davies examines Gothic art, literature, and film within a Spanish context. The definition of Gothic film is somewhat elusive but seems to rely heavily on aesthetics. Xavier Aldana Reyes argues "my contention is that the mode is identified primarily by its look" (2020). Aside from aesthetics, the Gothic mode is generally associated with the psychological and supernatural and "its capacity to represent individual and societal traumas" (Chaplin, 2011), making it the perfect mode for facilitating the overcoming of historical trauma in Spain. By this definition it can be argued that each of the films that will be studied in this thesis could be considered Gothic, as they all take place in Gothic spaces and feature elements of the psychological and supernatural.

As with the horror genre in general, the Gothic was slow to take root in Spain. As Davies discusses "perhaps the most notable contributor to a Gothic sensibility was the artist Francisco de Goya (17-46 - 1828)" (2016: 3). Goya's Gothic aesthetic was arguably the most prominent in the famous collection entitled *Black Paintings.* Guillermo del Toro explicitly references Goya's *Black Paintings* as inspiration, particularly in relation to the character of the Pale Man and Goya's *Saturn Devouring his Son* (Del Toro, 2013: 47). It could also be argued that Goya's Gothic sensibility has inspired other

Spanish horror filmmakers. Goya's *The Dog* appears to draw interesting parallels with Erice's *mise en scène* in *The Spirit of the Beehive.* The small, innocent, helpless dog appears to be swallowed by the yellow landscape; just as small, innocent, helpless Ana is swallowed by the yellow-tinted post-War landscape. Many scholars have contemplated the origin of the *Black Paintings*, the majority believing that the paintings, which were originally on the walls of Goya's home, reflected his apparently deteriorating mental state. Manuela Mena, the in-house Goya specialist at the *Museo del Prado* is of a different opinion, believing that the *Black Paintings* are more in the spirit of satire and are mocking in tone, thus embodying the grotesque (Phelan, 2019).

The Gothic and the grotesque are terms which appear to go hand in hand, and both are apparent in the Spanish tradition of *esperpento. Esperpento* originates from literature and theatre and was coined by Ramon del Valle-Inclán, "as a way of describing the sense of distortion and warping in his work that represents the tragic situation of Spanish society in the early decades of the twentieth century" (Davies, 2016: 5). Whilst *esperpento* cannot be categorised as horror, there are "clear links to the macabre and monstrous elements of the Gothic (where humour is not unknown" (Davies, 2016: 5). This concept of a "sense of distortion" has clear links to the uncanny, something which is familiar becomes distorted, and therefore unfamiliar. The ability of *esperpento* "to reveal historical realities that were traditionally denied in other aesthetic discourses" (Kinder, 1993: 115) hints at the Spanish tradition of *esperpento* being somewhat of an influence on the films studied in this thesis. Mar Diestro-Dópido states in her book *Pan's Labyrinth* (2013), which provides a close reading of the film, that the term *esperpento* "is particularly useful when trying to grasp the juxtaposition of the

nightmarish cruelty of the world that Ofelia inhabits in actuality and the monstrous equivalent that she creates in her imagination in order to confront it" (2013: 49). Whilst these early roots of the Gothic were present in Spanish culture, the Gothic in film did not make an appearance until much later. As previously discussed, much of early Spanish horror cinema in the 1960s/70s was predominantly concerned with exploitation and crudity, and whilst some Gothic titles did exist, for example, Davies mentions *The Spirit of the Beehive* and *The Strange Journey/El extraño viaje* (Dir. Fernando Fernán-Gómez, 1964), it appears that the Gothic 'boom' is a contemporary phenomenon, its birth coinciding with the focus on recuperating memory in Spain.

2.6.4 Gothic Spaces

Much of *Contemporary Spanish Gothic* focuses on the corpus of films which will be the subject of in-depth study in this thesis, making it a valuable source. Chapter four, *The Gothic House: Problematising the National Space* being of particular relevance when considering the symbolism of the Gothic house in a specifically Spanish context. The Gothic house in Spanish horror is often considered a microcosm of the Spanish nation, meaning that in turn, the ghosts haunting these Gothic houses are the victims of the Civil War or Franco's regime who are restless due to the injustice they faced. Davies disagrees with this concept, stating:

> Far from seeing the house as a symbol of the Spanish nation, I argue that the haunted house is unlocatable, a source of pleasure as well as horror, and ultimately a highly questionable way of recuperating repressed memories. (2016: 23)

Whilst Davies makes a valid and interesting point, it is my contention that the sheer volume of contemporary Spanish haunted house narratives which have been released since the turn of the century cannot be considered a coincidence. Especially given that these films deal with themes of injustice and feature children as the arbiter for change, thus favouring the idea that the Spanish horror film, and the haunted house are adept instruments for the recuperation of repressed memories. As Barry Curtis determines “the cinema of the haunted house has created a secular space somewhere between the cemetery and the sitting room where the unresolved issues of the past can be negotiated and symbolically resolved” (2009: 48). Within the same chapter, Davies considers the notion of housekeeping as defined by Jack Morgan:

> Housekeeping, in its deepest implications, is a primal imperative, part of our warding off of abjection - of decay, rot, squalidness. Healthy, civilised communities and individuals evidence an aesthetic interest and care, an engagement with themselves and their environment, that goes beyond the bare minimum to the dimension of a critical practice, an art. Places that evidence the lack of this critical endeavour bespeak incursions of morbidity into the communal body. (Morgan, 2002: 186)

The act of housekeeping takes place in *The Orphanage*. Davies makes a case for “the cleansing of the house [as] an example of housekeeping for the nation” (2016: 94). Whilst this perception is a useful one given the context of this research; *The Orphanage* makes for an interesting case study with regards to this notion. Whilst Laura and Carlos do go about refurbishing the orphanage, in the final scenes Laura is forced to embark on a journey of regression in order to reveal the dark secrets of the orphanage’s past. In a

montage sequence we witness Laura recreating the orphanage as it was in her childhood. Perhaps then here Davies' conception of "housekeeping for the nation" is still relevant, however in the case of *The Orphanage* it acts as more of a warning of papering over the past, literally symbolised by the papering over of a secret doorway which leads to the cellar where Simón, Laura and Carlos' adopted son meets his demise.

2.6.5 The Gothic Heroine

Throughout *Contemporary Spanish Gothic*, Davies makes reference to the Gothic heroine, which she contemplates further in her chapter *Tracing the Borders of Spanish Horror Cinema and Television.* Davies defines the Gothic heroine as:

> Inquisitive and enquiring...these are women haunted by past events that manifest themselves as ghosts or monsters, women occupying Gothic spaces such as old and sinister houses...some contemporary horror heroines seek out the horrible truth lying behind a mysterious situation, only to find that they themselves are the monsters they are pursuing. (2017: 35)

This definition of the Gothic heroine can be applied to the female characters in the corpus of films studied in this thesis. Laura of *The Orphanage* and Grace of *The Others* arguably embody the more monstrous version of the definition. The archetype of the Gothic heroine will be further investigated in chapter two.

It has become apparent through the research conducted here that throughout the years Spanish horror cinema has arguably been closely modelled on successful and popular genre trends of international horror cinema, having to play catch-up due to the

forty year-long dictatorial regime. In more recent years it could be argued that contemporary Spanish horror has become much more authentic and therefore Spanish with regard to its subject matter arguably due to the influence of the memory boom in Spain. It is my assertion that the investigation of the Gothic space in each of the chosen case studies allows for a significant contribution to memory work and plays a vital role in the overcoming of trauma, a concept that will be central to this thesis.

2.7 The Child in Spanish Horror Cinema

The child in Spanish cinema is broadly thought of in two categories. In *The Two Cines Con Niño: Genre and the Child Protagonist in Over Fifty Years of Spanish Film, 1955 – 2010* (2018), Erin Hogan defines these categories as *cine con niño* (child-starred cinema) which emerged in the 1950s, and *nuevo cine con niño* (new child-starred cinema) which emerged alongside the transition to democracy from 1973 onwards. Hogan proposes that "*cine con niño* features dovetail with state propaganda" (2018: 4), whilst *nuevo cine con niño* is "a calculated effort to talk back to its Francoist precursor and re-assert the Second Republic's right to a voice" (2018: 11). This research is concerned with *nuevo cine con niño,* and whilst much is written regarding *nuevo cine con niño* during the early stages of the transition period, the contemporary context is still somewhat of an underdeveloped field of study, especially in regard to the contemporary horror film. The advent of the child in Spanish horror cinema stems from two films already discussed in this literature review, Saura's *Raise Ravens* and Erice's *The Spirit of the Beehive*. Whilst these films are perhaps not considered typical of the horror genre, for the purposes of this thesis I am including and discussing both films as horror due to

the presence of the supernatural in each film. Jessica Balanzategui discusses both films in the context of the child seer and the allegorical moment, claiming that “the central motif to both BEEHIVE and RAVENS is the child’s huge, staring eyes” (2018: 126). The child seer is a significant approach to the analysis of the child as active agent and thus will be further explored in the final section of this literature review.

Ana Torrent, who plays the child protagonist in both *Raise Ravens* and *The Spirit of the Beehive* is considered, as Marsha Kinder states, “the child actress who most vividly represents the children of Franco” (1983: 59). Kinder defines the construct of the children of Franco in two ways. Firstly, she observes that opposition filmmakers during Franco’s rule (specifically José Luis Borau and Carlos Saura, but also applying to Víctor Erice), can be considered the children of Franco. She says of these filmmakers:

> They were led to see themselves as emotionally and politically stunted children who were no longer young; who, because of the imposed role as “silent witness” to a tragic war that had divided the country, family, and self, had never been innocent; and who, because of the oppressive domination of the previous generation, were obsessed with the past and might never be ready to take responsibility for changing the future. (1983: 58)

This definition of the children of Franco is in-keeping with Erice’s *La morte rouge/The Red Death (*2006*),* whereby Erice recalls his first experience of watching a film. As a 5-year-old boy Erice was unable to differentiate between reality and fiction, believing that the horror he witnessed on screen (Roy William Neill’s *The Scarlet Claw,* 1944) was in fact reality, a theme which we see repeated by little Ana in *The Spirit of the Beehive*

some 33 years later. The autobiographical aspects of *The Spirit of the Beehive* point towards Erice as a child of Franco who is obsessed with the past.

If we are to think of filmmakers such as Erice and Saura in terms of being the children of Franco, this also brings into question the significance of their use of the child protagonist. Much has been written regarding the inability of the child to make sense of the traumatic situation that they find themselves in. As Balanzategui states when discussing child-centred art cinema of this period, “the child characters are forced to confront distressing situations that they are not yet equipped to comprehend or contextualise” (2018: 111). Whilst the child characters are unable to affect their situation, their power lies in their dark gaze and ability to see “that these dark pasts coexist with the present in ways that the adult characters refuse to understand” (Balanzategui, 2018: 128). Perhaps the two Anas are representative of the two filmmakers, who, unable to outwardly speak of the horrors of the Civil War and the dictatorship instead created an oppositional cinema which utilised “the child and childhood [to depict] the as yet unfathomable collective trauma that had been denied in Francoist cinema” (Balanzategui, 2018: 107).

Whilst it cannot be said that the directors of the films which will be central to this thesis are the children of Franco, as defined by Kinder, they still utilise the child in a similar way as their forefathers, perhaps it would be fitting then to think of these filmmakers as the ‘grandchildren of Franco’. Jo Labanyi states in *The Languages of Silence: historical memory, generational transmission and witnessing in contemporary Spain* (2009) “in many cases, those responsible for the ‘recovery of historical memory’ in Spain today are the grandchildren of the generation that lived through the war, who have

reacted against their parents' silence, which perpetuated the silence of the generation" (2009: 25). If we are to think of these contemporary filmmakers as the grandchildren of Franco, we are also to think of them as playing an important role in the recovery of historical memory, a role which their forefathers could not fulfil completely due to the 'silence' imposed by strict censorship. This concept of the grandchildren of Franco is further supported by Acevedo-Muñoz's discussion of contemporary Spanish horror filmmakers, referenced earlier with regards to the dangers of the weight of history being ignored or trivialised (Acevedo-Muñoz, 2008: 216).

Whilst it may not seem appropriate to include Guillermo del Toro when thinking about the grandchildren of Franco due to his Mexican heritage, there are multiple reasons for classifying him as such. Firstly, both of his films which are subject to close reading in this thesis are set in Spain and feature the Spanish Civil War as a backdrop to the narrative events. They are not only set in Spain, but were filmed in Spain, and at least partially funded by Spanish companies (*El Deseo/Estudios Picasso)*. In *Guillermo del Toro Film as Alchemic Art* (2014), Keith McDonald and Roger Clark make the interesting observation that "rather like the Mexican del Toro approaching recent Spanish history, the child figure is both inside and outside the historical context, given their often-invisible status within recorded history" (2014: 136). This comparison of del Toro with the child figure further supports my contention that he can be considered a grandchild of Franco even though, as with the other directors whose films are analysed in this thesis, del Toro is somewhat removed from the initial trauma of the Spanish Civil War. This is due to his being of a later generation and his Mexican heritage, which arguably grants him the objectivity to effectively portray and deal with the trauma

inflicted by the Spanish Civil War. Although this thesis does not adopt a strictly auteurist approach, it will become clear that del Toro clearly adopted the Francoist aesthetic in *The Devil's Backbone* and *Pan's Labyrinth*, following in the footsteps of earlier Spanish filmmakers such as Erice and Saura. Furthermore, del Toro was the executive producer of *The Orphanage*, another of the films that will be examined in this thesis, and his involvement here underlines his dedication to the recuperation of traumatic memory in recent Spanish history and establishes his association with the figure of the grandchild of Franco. In addition, despite del Toro only being a young boy during the Spanish Civil War, it is significant that Mexico served as asylum for a great number of Spanish exiles and refugees, including Spanish filmmaker and surrealist Luis Buñuel. Kinder describes Buñuel as "a powerful shifter whose meaning changed according to which particular hegemony he was working against - Francoism, Catholicism or Hollywood" (1993: 291) and, in this respect, del Toro and Buñuel can be considered to be similar. Buñuel is a key influence on del Toro, which, as McDonald and Clark state, "is hardly a surprising pairing given their stature as arguably the two most influential directors of the twentieth century, with comparable if contrasted roots in, amongst other things, Surrealism, Freudianism and (rejected) Catholicism (2014: 31). Moreover, it is Buñuel's "narrative and generic boundary crossing that becomes for del Toro a centrally informing aesthetic" (McDonald & Clark, 2014: 34). The influence of a Spanish filmmaker exiled to Mexico on a Mexican filmmaker who has a preoccupation with creating films about the Spanish Civil War is not insignificant; in fact, as McDonald and Clark suggest, there is some irony in the way that "del Toro has made a reverse journey away from Mexico to Spain and the US" (2014: 32). Given that Buñuel is one of Spain's most notable filmmakers, his

influence on del Toro as a filmmaker only further supports the concept that del Toro can and should be considered a grandchild of Franco.

As mentioned, the other notable Spanish horror film featuring children from this time period is *Who Can Kill a Child?* In this case, these murderous children embody the "demonic antagonist" archetype discussed earlier in section 2.41. Samuel Steinberg discusses the film in terms of geopolitics and post-dictatorship, for him the children in the film are an allegory for the "suffering, infantilized masses of Spain, loosed upon the world following the removal of the conservative, clerical Francoist state" (Steinberg, 2006: 26). Here, as with *The Spirit of the Beehive* and *Raise Ravens*, the child plays an important role with regards to critiquing the Civil War and the dictatorship in a transitional period. After *Who Can Kill a Child?* the child in Spanish horror cinema disappears and does not re-emerge until much later, coinciding with the memory boom in Spain and a surge in contemporary urban horror films. Sarah Wright suggests that "the child might be seen as a *lingua franca* which allows directors to present an attractive and comprehensible face to investigations of the Spanish past (both for Spanish audiences and internationally)" (2013: 93). This concept of the child as communicator is suggestive of the child being an active agent in the recuperation of memory rather than a passive cipher for an adult past or the future, an idea which this thesis aims to further explore.

Whilst Sarah Wright's *The Child in Spanish Cinema* is the first full-length treatment of the topic, the book only dedicates one chapter to 'memory and child witness in art-house horror'. The chapter does discuss two of my chosen case studies; *The Devil's Backbone* and *The Orphanage,* suggesting that said films "seem in different ways to celebrate Derrida's dictum that we should learn to live with the ghosts of the

past" (Wright, 2013: 112), a concept originally devised by Jo Labanyi. Labanyi applied Jacques Derrida's notion of hauntology to the ghosts of Spanish novels and books. Derrida defines hauntology as a variation on ontology, rather than being concerned with being, hauntology is concerned with the ghost who is neither dead or alive, present or absent (Derrida, 1993). For Derrida "ghosts are the return of that which history has repressed…the traces of those who were not allowed to leave a trace" (Labanyi, 2001). In *Specters of Marx* (1993), Derrida discusses the importance of exorcising ghosts "not in order to chase away the ghosts, but this time to grant them the right...to a hospitable memory...out of a concern for justice" (Derrida, 1993: 1993). This thesis will build on Labanyi and Wright's work, applying Derrida's "logic of haunting" (Derrida, 1993: 11) to the chosen case studies in order to highlight the relevance of the medium of film and the child as active agent who acts as the intermediary between the past and the present in an attempt to facilitate the overcoming of trauma and the recuperation of historical memory.

2.8 The Child Seer

The figure of the child seer is the common link between the chosen case studies. As addressed earlier, the child seer originates from the role of little Ana in both *Raise Ravens* and *The Spirit of the Beehive*. Ana's "huge eyes highlight her role as seer whose watchful look penetrates the situations in which she finds herself" (Balanzategui, 2018: 126). Sarah Wright suggests that "the innocent, uncorrupted nature of the child's gaze" emphasises the child as an innocent witness whose gaze is able to see the true horror of her situation (2013: 90). According to Balanzategui "the child's source of power

lies in this horrified, repetitive seeing" (2018: 128), whilst the adult characters remain blind to the trauma that surrounds them.

Jessica Balanzategui examines the concept of the mutant child seer in millennial Spanish horror cinema. When discussing the child seer in *Raise Ravens* and *The Spirit of the Beehive,* Balanzategui quotes David Martin-Jones who suggests that the child seer "directly [encounters] contemporary social and political mutations [and mutates] along with these historically shifting contexts" (Martin-Jones, 2011 cited in Balanzategui, 2018: 126). Balanzategui says of the millennial horror film:

> The spectral children of Spanish horror retain the powers of the child seer, however in an exaggerated form, as their ability to see beyond the adult's present is taken to uncanny and threatening extremes. In these films, the child seer mutates into a source of horror. (2018: 132)

Here, Balanzategui argues that the child seer in contemporary Spanish horror cinema wields more power than their predecessors, "by finally raising and acting out the unassimilated traumas of the Civil War and the dictatorship, these children dismantle constrictive visions of national identity, allowing space for their reformation from the rubble of a post-traumatic context" (Balanzategui, 2018: 132), reinforcing my own concept of the grandchildren of Franco. If the term the children of Franco can be used in relation to both the filmmakers of the *cine metafórico* movement and their child protagonists, then the grandchildren of Franco can be used in relation to the filmmakers of contemporary Spanish horror and their child protagonists. Balanzategui's *The Uncanny Child* is a valuable source due to her argument for child as active agent in contemporary Spanish horror, which is a central argument to this research, as well as

the analysis of two of my chosen case studies, *The Devil's Backbone* and *The Orphanage.*

2.9 Justification of chosen case studies

Guillermo del Toro's *The Devil's Backbone* is set in 1939 in the final year of the Spanish Civil War in a Santa Lucía orphanage. The film focuses on "two juxtaposed worlds, one of ghosts and one of war" (Hardcastle, 2005: 119), the ghost story never being as terrifying as the fascist reality. Del Toro explains "the whole idea was to create a ghost story where the war was a background but eventually crept into the foreground" (Del Toro in Chun: 2002, 29). The ghost in question is the young Santi, a former inhabitant of the orphanage murdered at the hands of Jacinto, the fascist force in the film. Santi embodies the mutant child seer as defined by Jessica Balanzategui and it is through Santi's haunting that the true horrors of fascism come to light. As Anne Hardcastle states "through haunting, the film dramatizes this confrontation with the past in a way that encourages a reconsideration of the contemporary 'reality' of Spain's historical trauma" (2005: 126). Santi is not the only significant child character in the film, however. Carlos, the newest inhabitant of the orphanage, is the one who engages with Santi and embarks on the quest to uncover Santi's traumatic past. The boys' status as seers is further emphasised by their wide, dark eyes, reminding us of little Ana. Whilst Jacinto is now an adult, we learn that he too grew up in the orphanage, thus also making his childhood (which we can assume to be traumatic) relevant. It is not just the presence of the child seer and the haunting, war-time narrative that makes *The Devil's Backbone* a

worthy case study, the film's *mise en scène* is permeated with symbolism that I aim to decode through close textual analysis.

Del Toro's dark fairy tale *Pan's Labyrinth* is his most celebrated film, enjoying international success, and, as del Toro himself has stated, is a companion piece and sister film to *The Devil's Backbone.* This time the film is set in the post-war period and the child seer is female. As with *The Devil's Backbone*, the film features two realities: the dark fantasy world of Ofelia's imagination and the fascist reality of life in post-war Spain under a militant leader. It is through Ofelia's imagination that she is able to "confront her stepfather's cruelty, and that of the times" (Diestro-Dópido, 2013: 10), just as Carlos and the orphans are able to confront fascism through haunting. Captain Vidal is the embodiment of fascism under Franco as well as the evil stepparent archetype of the fairy tale, drawing parallels with Franco as the father of Spain. Even more so than *The Devil's Backbone*, *Pan's Labyrinth* is littered with coded *mise en scène* that finds its origins in folklore, fairy tale, mythology and religion which allows for a multifaceted reading of the film. Del Toro explains that "*Pan* is a game of interpretation where the reward for repeated viewings is not the addition, but the multiplication of meanings" (del Toro in Diestro-Dópido, 2013: 24), thus highlighting the worthiness of *Pan's Labyrinth* as a case study.

Alejandro Amenábar's English-language film *The Others*, whilst set during the World War II era on the Isle of Jersey, possesses a Spanish specificity. As Ernesto R. Acevedo-Muñoz states "the weight of Spanish political and cultural history allows for an allegorical reading of *Los otros*" (2008: 202). As with the other case studies, the narrative of *The Others* centres around the uncovering and acceptance of the traumatic

past in order to achieve peace. Acevedo-Muñoz argues that the film's “insistence on religion as a tool of repression...works to locate *Los otros* (the first non-Spanish-language film to win the Goya Award for Best Picture) within a critically Spanish context” (2008: 212). Grace Stewart, the monstrous mother, uses strict Catholicism to repress her young children Anne and Nicholas, drawing parallels with the role that the Catholic Church played in Franco’s repressive regime (a theme also present in *Pan’s Labyrinth*). Neither of the children in *The Others* can be considered the traditional child seer as defined by Balanzategui simply due to the fact that they do not possess all-seeing abilities, they are in fact blind to the horrific truth which is further emphasised by the constant darkness which shrouds the house. Through the character of the elder of the two children, Anne, Amenábar twists the concept of the child seer as she is the only one who has the capability to see ‘the others’ who we at first believe are haunting the house. Anne is also a significant character as she constantly and fearlessly rebels against her mother, allegorically representing a rebellion against the repressive regime. The setting of a remote Gothic house engulfed by darkness and fog is arguably representative of “Spanish society’s danger of becoming numb to the nation’s violent history and its various media representations” (Acevedo-Muñoz: 2008: 213), thus emphasising the relevance of the film in the context of this research.

My final case study is J.A. Bayona’s *The Orphanage,* its release coinciding with the passing of the Historical Memory Law in Spain in 2007. Our Gothic heroine Laura embarks on a frantic search for her missing son Simón and on the way uncovers the horrific secrets of the orphanage’s past. The film draws quite obvious parallels with the lost children of Franco, a phrase which refers to the murder and enforced adoption of

thousands of Republican children, which at the time of the film's release was gaining media attention, thus emphasising the film as a deserving case study in the context of this research. The child and childhood play a crucial role in the uncovering of the traumatic past. Upon multiple viewings it becomes apparent that the entire film is concerned with Laura's regression into childhood which is marked by her return to the orphanage at the beginning of the film. It is not until Laura takes part in childish activities, such as a game of 'Grandma's Footsteps' that the trauma of the past can be revealed and dealt with. As with the other case studies, there is still much to be dissected here in terms of *mise en scène*.

In conclusion, this literature review has revealed that whilst much has been written regarding the child in the Spanish horror film of the transitional period, the function of the child in the contemporary Spanish horror film is still an underdeveloped field of study. The purpose of this research is to fill that gap and offer a significant contribution to this area of study. It therefore employs a close reading approach to each of the above case studies, which, whilst differing in terms of popularity and scholarly attention, are similar in terms of themes, narrative, and characters. It examines how useful the contemporary Spanish horror film is in facilitating the overcoming of trauma as well as investigating the function of the child in Spanish horror cinema, determining whether or not the child possesses agency. As outlined in the literature review, family life and Gothic spaces will also be an area for interrogation, given the important role that a child's parents and their environment plays in their development.

3. The Grandchildren of Franco

3.1 Introduction

The first chapter of this thesis examines the role of the child in each of the chosen case studies. This chapter will challenge the dominant reading of the child as a cipher for victimhood in contemporary Spanish horror, instead contemplating how the cinematic child possesses agency and does in fact play an integral role in inciting change. In the literature review, the term the grandchildren of Franco was employed to define the agentic child and their directors who rewrite the traumatic past through film. This interpretation of the child will be central to this chapter and the thesis as a whole. The three films that will be subject to analysis here are all similar in terms of themes and characters. *The Devil's Backbone* and *Pan's Labyrinth*, both directed by Guillermo del Toro, are considered companion films. *The Orphanage,* whilst not considered a sibling of the former, shares many similarities to the companion pieces. Each of the films contain fairy tale elements in various forms, whether that be characters, narrative, or *mise en scène.* The inclusion of these elements in each of the case studies suggests that the use of the fairy tale is of significance and will therefore feed into the analysis of each film.

3.2 Collective Agency in *The Devil's Backbone*

The Devil's Backbone is set in the final days of the Spanish Civil War in a remote Santa Lucía orphanage. The film focuses on child protagonist Carlos, an orphan taken in by the Republican sympathisers who run the orphanage. Carlos soon discovers that the

orphanage is haunted by the murdered ghost-child Santi. His discovery kickstarts a dual narrative as Carlos investigates the dark secrets of Santi's death whilst taking on the fascist forces that have infiltrated the orphanage. Del Toro himself has stated that the orphanage is a "microcosm of the world going on outside [...] the older professor being the Republic, the young, class-conflicted fascist being the fascists, and the young children being Spain" (del Toro in Chun, 2002: 29). Del Toro's admission that the young children are symbolic of Spain highlights the worthiness of *The Devil's Backbone* as a case study in the context of this research.

The figure of the child is utilised in multiple ways in *The Devil's Backbone*, making the film an ideal candidate for investigation. This analysis will explore the cinematic child as an active agent through the characters of Carlos and Santi, but also the collective group of orphan boys. Whilst now an adult, the character Jacinto also makes for interesting reading given his traumatic childhood and its significance with regards to his actions in the film.

The opening sequence is composed of seemingly disjointed yet horrific images: a bomb dropped from an aircraft into the courtyard of the orphanage, a young boy bleeding on a cobbled stone floor before being submerged in water by an unknown force, and deformed foetuses floating in jars of amber liquid. The voiceover narration which accompanies these juxtaposed images of violence provides its audience with further clues as to the nature of the film:

> What is a ghost? An emotion, a terrible moment condemned to repeat itself over and over? An instant of pain, perhaps? Something dead which appears at times

> alive. A sentiment suspended in time, like a blurry photograph, like an insect trapped in amber.

The same voiceover narration is repeated at the end of the film and gains significance as the narrative progresses; for now, it serves to introduce its audience to the two intertwined worlds of war and phantoms.

We are introduced to our wide-eyed protagonist Carlos as he stares out of the car window with a child-like curiosity. Unaware that he will be the latest inhabitant of the orphanage, upon arrival he examines his new surroundings with intrigue, emphasising his status as child seer. As Sarah Wright observes, Carlos' gaze is fluid and free and is recreated by the camera (Wright, 2013: 115). This was a purposeful decision by director del Toro and cinematographer Guillermo Navarro who intended to create the sense of "a voyeuristic camera" (del Toro in Chun, 2002: 30) with the use of discreet but constant movement which further emphasises Carlos's role as observer.

Carlos' attention is soon drawn to the huge, unexploded bomb in the courtyard. As Carlos edges closer to the bomb, its scale becomes apparent when viewed against his small frame (figures 1 and 2). Carlos approaches the bomb without fear. He is inquisitive towards the bomb, he strokes it, knocks on it, and places his ear to it, smiling as he does as if expecting a response. In fact, none of the boys are afraid of the unexploded ticking bomb, which is present in almost every shot throughout the film, acting as a constant reminder of the ongoing Civil War. The boys do not ignore the bomb as the majority of the adult characters do, they are seen interacting with the bomb on multiple occasions and even decorate it with ribbons and plant pots.

Figure 1. The unexploded bomb towers over Carlos. The Devil's Backbone/*El Deseo*

Figure 2. Carlos examines the unexploded bomb. The Devil's Backbone/*El Deseo*

The boys' lack of fear and ignorance towards the bomb perhaps signifies that it is time that the presence of the war and the dictatorship should no longer loom silently over Spanish society, and that, as proposed in the literature review, it is the duty of the grandchildren of the generation that lived through the war to break the pact of silence and bring about some closure as represented by the young boys in the orphanage. The size of the bomb is historically inaccurate and in reality, would have been much smaller. This was a deliberate decision by del Toro who wanted the bomb to be totemic to the boys and act as a mother figure (del Toro, 2013: 111).

We see Carlos prescribe this same sense of wonderment to a slug he discovers in the courtyard, picking up the slimy creature and examining it closely before placing it in his box of treasures. Here del Toro is constructing our young protagonist as inquisitive towards what could be described as the disgusting underbelly of the world he finds himself in. His innocent and unjaded curiosity will allow him to uncover the truths that lurk in the orphanage's past.

It is directly after this sequence, at only seven minutes into the film, that Carlos sees ghost-child Santi for the first time. The appearance of a phantom this early in the film and in broad daylight is not typical of the genre. Santi breaks the rules of the Gothic tradition, his disobedience establishing him as an active agent. Rather than being afraid, Carlos goes to investigate the room in which he saw Santi. As Carlos approaches the stairway that leads to Santi's watery grave he observes the shadow of the ghost-child descending the stairs. It is unusual for a phantom to be able to cast a shadow, the fact that Santi is able to do so once again serves to reinforce his status as active agent. In fact, throughout the film Santi is "equipped with a material physicality normally denied to

the spectre" (Haddu, 2001: 148). As well as casting a shadow Santi also has a reflection, can leave footprints, and even touch our main protagonist, Carlos. It is significant to note here that Santi only materialises in interior spaces and is often framed within doorways or windows gazing outwards, he is confined and entrapped by frames within frames, doomed to inhabit the orphanage forever.

Carlos' investigation is cut short by the introduction of two orphans, Gálvez and Owl. Interestingly, when introducing Owl, Gálvez says of him *"*he doesn't speak but he looks a lot*"* (figure 3). Although Owl is not our main protagonist, del Toro ensures that each of the children are presented as "active looking subjects" as defined by Lennard in the literature review. Like Carlos and Santi, both Gálvez and Owl have large dark eyes to draw attention to their status as child seers. The casting of all the orphaned boys was based on Spanish comic series *Paracuellos* (figure 4). *Paracuellos* is an autobiographical comic based on creator Carlos Giménez's time growing up in various state-funded orphanages during the Franco regime. Del Toro has stated that *Paracuellos* was one of the bigger influences on *The Devil's Backbone*, especially when it came down to casting the children: "casting the kids was done carefully using the comic book and photographs, to make the kids look exactly like his comic" (del Toro, 2017: 80). When comparing the images from Giménez's *Paracuellos* and del Toro's *The Devil's Backbone,* the most prominent features are the boy's eyes. For del Toro the eyes of his child characters are of great importance, he explains "the children I cast in my movies, I cast the eyes. If they can look at things and look like they are thinking, you know?" (del Toro, 2017: 102). It is no coincidence then that each of the orphan boys

have a dark, powerful gaze that unites them as all-seeing truth seekers at the close of the film.

Figure 3. Gálvez introduces himself and Owl to Carlos, their large eyes are prominent. The Devil's Backbone/*El Deseo*

Figure 4. *A screengrab from Carlos Giménez's Paracuellos.*

After being left at the orphanage by his tutor, Carlos is shown to the dormitory. He is given Santi's bed as if he is destined to solve the mystery of what happened to the ghost-child. Santi must also believe this to be the case as he visits Carlos on his first night in the orphanage. Anne Hardcastle has suggested that as:

> Carlos has neither participated in nor witnessed the trauma that initiates the film, the dual horror of the bombing and Santi's murder[...]his courage and distance from the events allow him to save Jaime, uncover the past, and restore justice to the ghost's memory. Carlos's journey (and, in effect, that of the entire film) is not the journey of the Spanish people who fought the Civil War, but that of a new generation that, having inherited a legacy of trauma, seeks to resurrect the past and learn to live with its ghosts. (2005: 123)

Hardcastle's suggestion firmly aligns with this thesis, that it is the duty of a new generation to exorcise the ghosts of Spain's past. Santi's visitation initiates Carlos' quest to uncover the truth of Santi's demise. Each encounter with Santi leaves Carlos less afraid and more curious and after Santi's first visitation it is Carlos that actively seeks out Santi. Whilst the other boys in the orphanage acknowledge the ghost's presence, they fail to acknowledge that the ghost is their missing friend Santi, instead they name him The One Who Sighs and have no desire to question why he haunts the orphanage. The young boys' casual acceptance of the spectre is unusual, but perhaps it is testament to the war-time world in which they have been brought up in that they are able to live alongside ghosts as it were the norm. The adults on the other hand completely refuse to acknowledge Santi's presence, much like their refusal to acknowledge the bomb in the courtyard. Jacinto and his near namesake Jaime are the only two who know the truth of

what happened to Santi. The fact that Jacinto and Jaime are near namesakes is no coincidence, all the main characters have coded initials; Carlos, Carmen, Conchita, Casares, Jacinto and Jaime. Jaime was destined to follow in Jacinto's footsteps, seduced by the power that comes with being a tyrant. That is until the arrival of the well-educated Carlos who disrupts Jaime's journey into fascism.

Santi repeatedly warns Carlos that many of the boys will die. Santi's transition to what Jessica Balanzategui has defined as the "mutant child seer" (Balanzategui, 2018) grants him the power to see into the future, "no longer bound to the flow of linear time or the physical encasing of selfhood, Santi's mutation to a ghost renders his penetrative gaze all the more powerful" (Balanzategui, 2018: 136). It is not until two-thirds of the way into the film that we learn the truth of what happened to Santi. Santi and Jaime sneak to the cistern late one night where Santi witnesses Jacinto trying to break into the safe. Santi's all-seeing gaze is so powerful that a threatened Jacinto must murder Santi. In a fit of rage Jacinto strikes Santi, causing him a vicious head injury. Panicked, Jacinto submerges Santi in the cistern, Santi becomes an "insect trapped in amber*"* which draws visual parallels with the deformed foetuses floating in jars of amber liquid. Santi's murder at the hands of Jacinto serves to underline the threat that the child's gaze poses to the adults in the film. Whilst Santi does demonstrate instances of agency throughout the film, he is literally transformed into a frozen object by Jacinto. In other words, the children in the film only become passive at the hands of adults who are threatened by their active gaze. Anne Hardcastle suggests of Santi's murder "in the context of this traumatic haunting, Santi comes to represent not merely one unjustly murdered boy, but all the victims of Spanish fascism relegated to the dustbin of history yet still eerily

present as ghostly echoes of a past not entirely forgotten in the modern, cosmopolitan image of democratic Spain" (Hardcastle, 2005: 127). Santi's refusal to be forgotten and his quest for justice is in-keeping with my definition of the grandchildren of Franco.

It is in the last third of the film that the boys' agency really comes into play. With all the adult characters killed by the explosion caused by Jacinto, the young boys are left to confront the villain, and therefore fascism, alone. Here we see both Jaime and Carlos band together and take on adult caregiver roles for the younger boys. Carlos attends to the injured boys, here taking on Dr Casares' role. Carlos' status as child seer and careful observations of Casares throughout the film have empowered him to be able to take on the adult role of doctor. It is in this final act that Carlos seeks out Santi one final time to ask the ghost-child what it is that he wants. Santi asks for Carlos to bring him Jacinto. Jacinto locks the boys in a room with the intention of killing them once he has found what he is desperately searching for - the gold. Rather than admit defeat we witness an extraordinary display of collective agency whereby the boys recall a lesson that Carmen taught them early on in the film about how prehistoric men would hunt mammoths. The scene perhaps pays homage to the classroom sequence in *The Spirit of the Beehive,* where we witness an anatomy class taking place. In this case the class is made up of all females but is headed by a female teacher whose outfit is not dissimilar to the one that Carmen wears. This sequence also serves to highlight the important role that education plays in inciting change. The boys exhibit their resourcefulness by sharpening pieces of wood with broken glass in order to create spears to use as weapons against Jacinto. One of the boys climbs through the small window in an attempt to unlock the door from the outside and free the other boys. Del Toro chooses to not let the boy be successful in

his mission, instead he chooses the ghost of Dr Casares to be the one that sets the boys free. If we are to think of Casares as a symbol of the Republic, then we are to think of him setting the boys free as perhaps a plea to the grandchildren of Franco to take the reins and act where their predecessors could not. It is interesting that Casares only becomes active once he is a ghost. In an earlier sequence he is immobile whilst his friends and fellow Republicans are murdered, however after death he is able to operate freely and aid the boys in their fight against fascism.

The boys violently 'hunt' Jacinto with their homemade spears in the very same place where he violently murdered Santi. They deliver Jacinto to Santi who wraps Jacinto in a tight embrace in the murky amber water, condemning Jacinto to the same demise, the two orphans murdering each other emulating the nature of Civil War. The photographs of Jacinto's childhood float to the top of the cistern, reinforcing my earlier contention that Jacinto is trapped by his childhood. The final shot of the film sees the wounded and mutilated boys head out into the dusty barren landscape that surrounds the orphanage, "a literalization of the maiming and crippling legacy of the war" (Brinks, 2004: 305). If the film was a historically accurate depiction of the Civil War, these young boys are walking out into a Spain where fascism will rule for a further forty years. However, in the microcosm that is the orphanage, the boys defeated the fascist force and perhaps walking away from the site of so much trauma is in fact a hopeful image, one that connotes peace, justice, and unity. The voiceover that we heard at the beginning of the film is repeated again. This time we understand its significance and know that it is Dr Casares who is the narrator. The monologue is almost entirely the

same apart from one extra line of dialogue: *"*a ghost, that's who I am*",* Casares has made peace with his fate.

3.3 Ofelia as Mythical Trickster: Repositioning the Child as Active Agent in *Pan's Labyrinth*

Pan's Labyrinth is often termed the sister film to *The Devil's Backbone*. Both cover similar themes of a child facing horror in a war-torn Spain and follow similar narrative structures. Where *The Devil's Backbone* is a ghost story, *Pan's Labyrinth* is a Gothic fairy tale. Both modes of storytelling are utilised to bring about justice. And, where the protagonist in *The Devil's Backbone* is male, in *Pan's Labyrinth* our protagonist is Gothic heroine Ofelia. The literature review established Ofelia as a feminist heroine, drawing on the work of Deborah Shaw, as Shaw explains "in Ofelia, del Toro creates a feisty, courageous, disobedient, rebellious, imaginative, good-hearted heroine to counter the passive feminine archetype in the traditional fairy tale" (2013: 88). As will be demonstrated, not only does Ofelia counter the passive feminine archetype in the traditional fairy tale, but she also counters the passive role of the child in the traditional horror film.

As with the opening to *The Devil's Backbone*, we are confronted by a violent image of a bloodied child dying on a stone floor. The camera rotates in an anti-clockwise motion and zooms into Ofelia's face, the blood streaming from Ofelia's nose travels backwards and the camera penetrates Ofelia's eye. The voiceover narration begins *"*A long time ago...", the backwards blood flow and this staple fairy tale introduction signifying that we are dealing with the fantastic. The penetration of Ofelia's eye by the camera suggests that the child's point of view is going to be a significant theme in the

film. Fiona Noble has suggested that the “non-chronological movement [of the camera] and visual penetration of the body of the child [...] embraces a vision of childhood in opposition to its conventional understandings as a “vertical movement upward (Bond Stockton, 2009, p.4)” (Noble, 2017: 442), here Noble implies that our child protagonist Ofelia is breaking free from the traditional role of the cinematic child. The narrator goes on to introduce us to the tale of the curious Princess Moanna who wandered to the surface from her underground realm only to be blinded by the sun and her memory erased. Princess Moanna forgets her origins, perhaps an analogy for the country-wide amnesia enforced by the pact of silence, or indeed the lost children of Francoism. As with *The Devil’s Backbone*, the opening sequence serves to invite us into the two juxtaposed worlds of historical brutality and fantastical fairy tale.

We are formally introduced to Ofelia as she travels in a car with her mother Carmen to her new home, once again structurally mirroring our introduction to Carlos. Ofelia is lost in her fairy tale books, constructing her as both educated and imaginative. Throughout the film she is scolded on multiple occasions by both her mother and Captain Vidal for believing in such childish nonsense. This lack of imagination and cynicism that comes with being an adult is exactly where the child’s power is drawn from “as they have not yet become disillusioned by the harsh realities and cynicism of the world” (Barros, 2010: 200). Ofelia’s supposed childishness causes her to be largely underestimated throughout the film allowing her, for the most part, to continue her journey of discovery unfettered. When the car is stopped for a heavily pregnant and unwell Carmen to get some fresh air, Ofelia takes the opportunity to explore her new surroundings. She is clearly at one with nature. We follow Ofelia’s curious gaze up into

the trees and back again and her earth-toned clothing makes her appear as though she is a part of the lush green forest. Ofelia happens across the missing eye of a mysterious faun statue, as she picks up the eye the wind blows and the tinkering of piano keys can be heard, marking this event as significant. Ofelia returns the eye to its rightful place, recalling the sequence from *The Spirit of the Beehive* where little Ana places the eyes on Don Jose, enabling him to see. This act is not only symbolic of the power of the child's gaze and their ability to make others "see", but it also serves to initiate us and Ofelia to the fantasy world. A stick insect emerges from the mouth of the statue which Ofelia believes to be a fairy, according to Mar Diestro-Dópido, it is this encounter that triggers "Ofelia's ability to see beyond her oppressive reality and to discover the fantastic" (2013: 55).

On arrival at her new home, Ofelia is introduced to Captain Vidal, her would-be 'father'. Vidal embodies not only the evil stepparent archetype of the fairy tale, but he is also a quite literal personification of Franco and his regime. Ofelia is immediately disobedient, offering him the wrong hand to shake upon their first meeting. It is not clear whether this is a deliberate act, but this small rebellion establishes Ofelia as part of the Resistance. This confrontation with authority and fascism is immediately countered by the appearance of Ofelia's 'fairy'. Ofelia drops her fairy tale books on the ground, which up until now she has held tightly to her chest, in favour of a 'real-life' fairy tale experience and an introduction to the labyrinth. Ofelia is visited by the 'fairy' on her very first night in her new home, just as Santi visits Carlos. It is here that we first witness the power of Ofelia's gaze. At Ofelia's will the 'fairy' transforms from a stick insect into the somewhat sinister incarnation of a fairy in Ofelia's book. Ofelia follows the fairy to the

labyrinth late at night without hesitation. Here she meets the Faun who will be her guide through the three tasks she must undertake in order to prove herself to be the true Princess Moanna. The Faun presents Ofelia with the Book of Crossroads, providing her with minimal instruction, only to open it when she is alone, and it will tell her of her future and show her what must be done. Once again, Ofelia's influential will is illustrated here when the pages start to come to life under her touch and gaze.

The three tasks that Ofelia will undertake are of great significance and are symbolic in nature. The rule of three is itself a common feature of the fairy tale, occurring multiple times in *Pan's Labyrinth*; the three tasks, the three fairies, the three doors in the Pale Man's lair, the three thrones at the end of the film. According to Bruno Bettelheim "the number three in fairy tales often seems to refer to what in psychoanalysis is viewed as the three aspects of the mind: id, ego, and superego" (1976: 102). In his 1923 study *The Ego and the Id,* Sigmund Freud explored his claim that the human psyche is made up of these three elements that interact with each other. Freud defined the id as the most basic of human instincts that acts on impulse. The superego is in essence, the opposite to the id, controlling our morals and conscience. Finally, the ego acts as a mediator between the id and the superego, "like a man on horseback" (Freud, 1923: 10). Through the repetition of tasks, Ofelia can establish a balanced development of the three elements of her psyche. Her status as a child, and therefore an underdeveloped blank canvas, allows her to achieve this balance. If we take the second task as an example here, Ofelia gives in to her id and eats not one, but two grapes from the forbidden feast for which there are horrific consequences. The three tasks act as a learning curve for Ofelia, she develops an agency of the mind which further awards her

with a status of active agent. This turns the common misconception of the child as weak on its head. Ofelia's childish innocence, far from being a weakness, is in fact a source of power. Ofelia is able to act and think differently from the adults in the film due to being uncorrupted by their limiting regimes and beliefs.

Ofelia's first task is to crawl into a cavernous decaying fig tree and retrieve a golden key from the stomach of a monstrous toad that has taken up residence in the roots of the tree. The toad is killing the tree by consuming all its nutrients, Mar Diestro-Dópido has likened the toad to the "Francoist regime that was sucking the life out of Spain, literally starving insurgents in the post-war hunger years" (2013: 66). The tree itself distinctly resembles a uterus and fallopian tubes, making Ofelia's journey into the tree one of great significance, as often fairy tales are about returning home, the womb being the first 'home' of a child. Uterine imagery is evident throughout the film and will be analysed in greater detail in chapter three.

Figure 5. Ofelia makes her way to the fig tree for her first task. Pan's Labyrinth/*Tequila Gang.*

Where Alice's dress is blue, Ofelia's is green, further emphasising Ofelia's affinity with nature (figure 5). Ofelia must crawl through thick mud in order to reach the toad, Karen Lury suggests that "the mud in [this sequence] functions literally to impede the young protagonist, to manifest physically [her] struggles and [her] willingness to ignore one of the principle behaviours of civilisation - cleanliness" (2010: 131). This is further supported by Paul Julian Smith who notes that the crosscutting between Ofelia's first task and the dinner sequence in which Captain Vidal declares "I want my son to be born in a new clean Spain" awards the sequence a deeper meaning:

> The obsessive abjection of the fantasy (Ofelia's snow-white skin is covered in slime and mucous, her shiny patent shoes and prim party dress caked in mud and drenched by rain) might be read as del Toro's critique of the equally obsessive hygiene of the real-life realm of Fascism. (Smith, 2007: 8)

The crosscutting of these two sequences also serves to further establish Ofelia as a disobedient active agent and aligns her with the rebels. Ofelia should be present at the dinner party rather than embarking on the task. She inhabits the rebel's territory in the forest, her green dress a visual echo of their uniform. This is further reinforced when Carmen tells Ofelia that she has disappointed her father. As a further demonstration of disobedience, Ofelia replies, "You mean the Captain?*"* while a mischievous grin spreads across her face, she revels in the pure delight of disappointing her evil stepparent.

Ofelia's second task is one that is full of rules, yet another fairy tale trope. She must visit the underground layer of the Pale Man and retrieve a dagger from behind one of three doors. Not only does Ofelia have to do this before the last grain of sand falls in the hourglass, but she must also resist the lavish feast delectably arranged on a long

table of which the Pale Man sits at the head. Without any explanation, and ignoring the advice of her fairy guides, Ofelia chooses the correct door that houses the dagger. Ofelia's instincts are a source of power throughout the film, her perceptiveness perhaps a symptom of her status as child seer. As previously mentioned, the temptation of the food becomes too much for Ofelia, she eats two grapes which awakens the Pale Man from his slumber at the head of the table. Up until this point, Ofelia's disobedience has been a source of power and rebellion, however this time it leads to consequences in the real world. Carmen dies giving birth to Ofelia's brother and the Faun abandons her, leaving her to confront the brutality of the real world alone.

Taking pity on the young girl, the Faun gives Ofelia one last chance to prove herself. Her final task is to bring her baby brother to the labyrinth. There has been much debate between fans and scholars alike with regards to whether or not the fantasy world in *Pan's Labyrinth* exists or whether it is merely the coping mechanism of an imaginative young girl. This final task points towards the former. Ofelia's brother is kept under close watch in Vidal's room, Ofelia uses her magic chalk gifted to her by the Faun in the second task to draw a doorway and enter the room. Once inside, Ofelia spikes the Captain's drink with her mother's tranquiliser. She knows just how many drops to use as she observed Dr Ferreiro early in the film when he was treating her mother, just as Carlos observed Dr Casares. Ofelia's keen observation skills and all-seeing abilities serve her well and underlines the importance of the child seer motif.

Ofelia's boundary crossing, both in the sense of her literal boundary crossing into Vidal's room, and the crossing of the boundary between the real and the fantastical, determines her as a female trickster as defined by Maria Tatar. Traditionally, the

mythical trickster is a male character found in folklore and religion. As the name suggests, the mythical trickster is known for playing tricks and being disobedient but is also intelligent and wise. Paul Radin's *The Trickster* (1955) is the first comprehensive study of the mythical character, Hynes and Doty draw upon his work in their book *Mythical Trickster Figures: Contours, Contexts and Criticisms* (1993). They state, "the essays in Radin (1955) are united in treating the trickster figure as a transcendental or "archetypal" characteristic of the human psyche, stemming from its most archaic strata" (1993: 2). If we are to think of Ofelia as embodying the trickster archetype, then Radin's view seems to further support the concept suggested earlier in relation to Ofelia's journey to developing a balanced psyche. Most of the scholarly definitions of the trickster seem to agree that the trickster acts as a "culture hero", as Brian Street states "a universal feature of the trickster is his role as both revolutionary and saviour" (1972), roles that Ofelia fulfils. Tatar builds on the concept of the mythical trickster as an alternative archetype to the warrior woman or passive victim of the fairy tale. Tatar suggests that "trickster's [have an] uncanny ability to develop creative intelligence in hard times" (2014: 41), a characteristic we see in Ofelia as she uses her colourful imagination and intelligence to outsmart Captain Vidal after the death of her mother. As previously stated, the crossing of boundaries appears to be one of the main attributes of the female trickster, an activity which we witness Ofelia consistently take part in, so much so that the boundaries become blurred. As Tatar explains "the mythological trickster becomes a boundary crosser, and in her female incarnation she is supremely irreverent about the borders separating fairy tale from myth and other fictions" (2014:

45). Ofelia's status as female trickster further awards her with the title of agentic child whose actions bring about cultural change.

Ofelia flees to the labyrinth with her baby brother and Captain Vidal in close pursuit. Here Ofelia's magical world aids her in her quest to the centre of the labyrinth, dead ends transform into new pathways under the power of her gaze. Once at the centre of the labyrinth, Ofelia plays out the ultimate act of defiance by refusing to spill the blood of her innocent new-born brother, her superego is fully formed. When the Captain catches up to Ofelia, the camera momentarily takes on his point of view to show Ofelia talking to herself. It is this shot from Vidal's perspective that makes the audience question the reality of the fantastical world. Some choose to believe that this world of grotesque fairies and monsters is a little girl's mechanism for escaping a brutal fascist reality. Given that the fantasy world has repercussions in the real world on more than one occasion, it appears to be more likely that through Ofelia's status as child seer and "her own unrelenting faith in the power of fiction and fairy tales" (Diestro-Dópido, 2013: 59) she is granted the power to access this other world. Contrastingly, Vidal's failure to believe in anything other than brutality and fascism denies him the capacity to see beyond the surface of things.

History repeats itself; Vidal takes the baby from Ofelia and shoots her in the stomach, here we see the same shot from the beginning of the film repeated. The murder of an innocent child at the hands of Captain Vidal functions much in the same way as the murder of Santi at the hands of Jacinto, as a stand-in for all the innocent blood spilled in the Civil War and the Franco regime. In yet another rewriting of history, Captain Vidal does not escape victorious with his son. Distracted by Ofelia, he is

confronted by the rebels at the entrance to the labyrinth. Determined that his son will know of his father's legacy, Vidal asks Mercedes to tell his son what time his father died, in one final act of defiance against Vidal, Mercedes cuts him off mid-sentence and tells him, "He won't even know your name." Vidal is killed by the rebels and, his son, a symbol of the future, in an inversion of the lost children of Francoism will be brought up as a Republican, knowing nothing of his true origins.

Del Toro chooses not to end the film here. Instead, the spilling of Ofelia's innocent blood opens the portal, and she is reunited with her mother and father in the Underworld Realm, her shiny red shoes recalling those of Dorothy from *The Wizard of Oz* (Dir. Victor Fleming, 1939); Ofelia is home. The narration that accompanies the final images of the film states that Ofelia "left behind small traces of her time on Earth, visible only to those who know where to look " whilst a flower blooms on the fig tree which was the site of Ofelia's first task. The narrative itself is thus just as disobedient as our young protagonist, refusing to conform to conventional filmmaking/fairy tale ideals. The ending is ambiguous and can be interpreted in many ways. Mar Diestro-Dópido notes that this ambiguity offers "a truly democratic perspective [which] of course is the exact opposite of the rewriting of history perpetrated by Franco's regime" (2013: 74). Ofelia's death at the hands of the adult male emphasises the fragility and weakness that comes with being a female child. However, Ofelia's transcendence through death to the fairy tale underworld where she is not only alive but regal construes her as a powerful "agent of change" (Tatar, 2014: 47). As Shaw observes:

> Ofelia does not need to be rescued by a male hero, whose prize is often to marry the princess. Neither does she become a princess through marriage to a

> handsome prince; rather she tackles the tasks herself and assumes her royal status thanks to her own efforts. Indeed, she saves her brother and her sacrifice results in the Captain being exposed and alone, which, in turn, leads to his ambush by the rebels. (2013: 87)

Here Shaw supports the suggestion that Ofelia's death does not strip her of her title of agentic child, and that the fact she transcends to royalty without the help of a male hero further supports Shaw's framing of Ofelia as a feminist heroine.

3.4 The Lost Children of *The Orphanage*

Juan Antonio Bayona's *The Orphanage* was produced by Guillermo del Toro and therefore shares many of the themes present in both *The Devil's Backbone* and *Pan's Labyrinth*. The film follows Gothic heroine Laura as she returns to the abandoned orphanage where she spent her childhood with her husband Carlos and son Simón. Laura intends to restore the orphanage and open it as a home for children with disabilities. When her son Simón goes missing, Laura embarks on a treasure hunt to find him and along the way she discovers the horrific secrets of the orphanage's past.

The pre-credit sequence serves to highlight the important role that the child will play in the film, and in particular the importance of Laura's childhood. A slow pan downwards from the sky reveals to us the Gothic space in which the narrative will take place, finally resting at perhaps what can be considered a child's point of view as we see Laura as a child playing a game of Grandma's Footsteps with her friends. The title sequence further demonstrates that children and the uncovering of secrets are going to be central to the narrative as we see children's hands tearing at wallpaper. Early on in

the film it is established that Simón has imaginary friends. Therefore, when Simón has his first encounter with the ghost-child Tomás in the cave, his parents pass this off as just another imaginary friend. However, it is apparent from Laura's facial expression and further exploration into the cave that she doesn't entirely disbelieve Simón, thus hinting that Laura's perception will be central to the narrative. Although Simón is missing for the majority of the film, early sequences emphasise his big brown eyes which highlight his status as seer whilst also reminding us of the child characters of *The Devil's Backbone* and *Pan's Labyrinth.* We learn that Simón is HIV positive, his condition perhaps representative of the inherited trauma that the relatives of Franco's victim's face. Simón's condition also serves to further add to his 'othered' status and thus his status as child seer.

Throughout the film, references to children's games, stories and fairy tales are made*. Peter Pan* (1911) is mentioned several times, the narrative of the film drawing obvious parallels with the classic story, from the children who never grow up, to Laura embodying the character of Wendy. In the final moments of the film Simón even refers to the children in the orphanage as the "lost children", which acts not only as a reference to *Peter Pan*, but also recalls the lost children of Francoism. Here, *The Orphanage* shares similarities with *The Devil's Backbone*. Like Laura, Jacinto grew up in the orphanage, and despite his hatred for it, returns as an adult to work there. Both Laura and Jacinto seem to be unable to break free of their past, signified by the return to their respective childhood homes. Whilst Laura embodies the character of Wendy, perhaps Jacinto embodies Peter Pan himself, despite his physical growth he is the boy that never grew up. Carmen describes Jacinto as "the lost one", once again conjuring thoughts of the

lost boys. Neverland draws parallels with both orphanages' as in Neverland nobody knows what a mother is and Peter and the lost boys are unaware of their origins, just as the orphans are. There is no concept of time in Neverland, and time no longer has any meaning for the ghosts who haunt the orphanages. Further fairy tale references can be observed in *The Orphanage*. When Simón and Laura leave the cave to return home, Simón leaves a trail of seashells for his new friend Tomás to follow, which is reminiscent of *Hansel and Gretel* (1812). The inclusion of these references once again serves to reinforce the importance of the child and childhood in the film but also serves a deeper purpose in regard to the function of the fairy tale which will be clarified in the conclusion of this chapter.

It is through playing the treasure hunt game, and a regression to childhood that Laura uncovers the truth of both the traumatic past from her childhood and the recent past. During Laura's game of treasure hunt she unknowingly discovers the skeletons of her childhood friends on the grounds of the orphanage. The release of the film in 2007 coincides with the passing of the Historical Memory Law in Spain, which allowed the families of the victims of the Franco regime and the civil war to trace and exhume their relatives buried in mass, unmarked graves. Laura's gruesome discovery mimics this important development in the recuperation of historical memory.

Upon multiple viewings of the film, it becomes apparent that the entire narrative is concerned with Laura's regression to her childhood, marked at the beginning of the film by her return to the orphanage. Ann Davies suggests that Laura "break[s] the boundary between the role of mother and of children because of her original status as an inhabitant at the orphanage and her memory of her childhood companions there" (2011:

87), here drawing parallels with Ofelia as a boundary crosser. The pinnacle of Laura's regression comes in an eerie montage sequence whereby she attempts to recreate the orphanage as it was in her childhood. The dolls which Laura places around the table to symbolise each of her childhood friends evokes images of a doll's tea party and feelings of the uncanny. Following this sequence in a desperate attempt to get the ghost children to appear to her, Laura plays a game of Grandma's Footsteps. Far from the brightly lit pre-credit sequence of childish fun, this sequence is perhaps the scariest in the film. This time the camera stays close to Laura's face and turns with her to see the ghost children slowly approaching, before changing angles to look directly behind Laura as one of the children reaches out and touches her shoulder. The adult female playing childish games comments on Laura's apparent lack of progression from child to adult, she is stuck in a cycle which is symbolised by her partaking in the same game she played as a child. As Sarah Wright observes, this act of playing also creates a sense of the uncanny and has strong links to Derrida's concept of 'time out of joint' (2013: 118). Wright suggests:

> Laura is a 'present past', in a perpetual mourning for her lost son, and the aesthetic of the orphanage - gothic house, grey uniform, doors locked with keys - evokes the orphanages of the *Auxilio Social.* The incinerated bodies of the children she finds provide a link between Laura's own loss and the 'Spanish Holocaust' which here takes on the figure of a lost child. (2013: 118-119)

Like the children in the film, Laura too occupies the liminal space between past and present, it is not until the traumatic past is made sense of that the children and Laura are able to move on. This narrative is supportive of Derrida's pronouncement that we should

“learn to live with the ghosts of the past” and exorcise them “not in order to chase away the ghosts, but this time to grant them the right […]to a hospitable memory […]out of a concern for justice” (Derrida, 1993).

In the climax of the film, the ghost children lead Laura to discover the horrific truth of what happened to Simón. Laura discovers a secret door which has been wallpapered over, perhaps a metaphor for the papering over of the traumatic past in the form of the pact of forgetting. The door leads to ‘Tomás’ little house’, where, because of his facial disfigurement, Tomás lived his short life. Through the use of flashbacks, we become aware that it was in fact Laura who trapped Simón in the secret forgotten space by placing heavy poles against the concealed doorway. The ‘bumps in the night’ which upon first viewing we take to be the ghost children haunting the orphanage, were in fact Simón trying to escape his entombment in the hidden room. Due to Laura’s refusal to recognise the hidden traumas of the past sooner, she is powerless to affect the situation and history repeats itself. In a similar way, Jacinto’s unwillingness to deal with his traumatic past ultimately leads to his demise and entrapment in the very place that he despises. Perhaps the climax of both films serves as a warning that if Spain ignores its traumatic past, then history is doomed to repeat itself.

After her discovery of the truth, Laura makes the ultimate sacrifice and takes her own life to be with Simón once more. Her transition into the spirit world is marked by the creaking of the orphanage as if the building itself is coming to life, followed by light from the lighthouse that we know no longer works. The stream of light illuminates Laura’s face, perhaps signifying the revelation of the truth. As Laura turns towards the lighthouse, she sees her younger self run away, suggesting that her traumatic childhood

has finally been dealt with. *The Orphanage* utilises childhood and the child to bring about recognition of the traumatic past in multiple ways. Simón is the seer of the film, and his imagination and childish naivety allow him to see and engage with Tomás and the other ghost children. Through haunting, the ghost children activate the immobile past and bring it into the present and in the process "point to the danger inherent in mis-recognizing national history as a present that has long since passed, instead of a past that *is" (*Balanzategui, 2018: 149). Finally, Laura's own childhood plays a vital role in the recuperation of traumatic memory as she must regress to her childhood in order to reveal the truth.

3.5 Conclusion

The close textual analysis of the chosen case studies in this chapter has displayed the important role that the child plays in allowing justice and bringing about change. Each of the cinematic children demonstrate instances of agency and the power of their all-seeing gaze, contradicting the stereotype of the child as weak and passive. Even in *The Orphanage*, where our protagonist is not a child but an adult female, it is her regression to childhood that enables the truth to be realised and closure to be achieved. Whilst the initial focus of this chapter was the agentic child seer, through the writing of this chapter the use of the fairy tale became a significant theoretical framework of analysis. This chapter has explored how the fairy tale is an adequate instrument for "ensuring that a culture of silence cannot descend on us" (Tatar, 2014), as it has descended on Spain. The nature of the fairy tale allows for retellings across generations, something that up until recently has not been possible in Spain. Maria Tatar suggests:

> Rather than sending messages, teaching morals, or constructing lessons, [fairy tales] get conversations going. Piling on one outrage after another, they oblige us to react, to take positions and make judgements, enabling us to work through cultural contradictions using the power of a symbolic story. (Tatar, 2014)

It is my assertion that by adopting the child's point of view, as is so often done in fairy tales, the chosen case studies allow for a retelling of what has, up until now, been repressed and in turn provide a means of working through trauma. Another interesting perspective when utilising fairy tales in this manner, and for such a purpose, is to consider its audience. Fairy tales are traditionally aimed at children; however, they often feature dark themes which are thought to better prepare children for adult life. Bettelheim has proposed:

> The fairy tale proceeds in a manner which conforms to the way a child thinks and experiences the world; this is why the fairy tale is so convincing to him. He can gain much better solace from a fairy tale than he can from an effort to comfort him based on adult reasoning and viewpoints. A child trusts what the fairy story tells, because its worldview accords with his own. (Bettelheim, 1976: 45)

If we are to think of the Spanish population as infantilised by Franco, or as the grandchildren of Franco, then what Bettelheim suggests here about the fairy tale being so convincing to a child audience reinforces the concept that the mode of storytelling as favoured by the directors of the chosen case studies is an effective vehicle for provoking change and justice. The central position of the child seer within these dark films, intended mainly for a more mature audience, invites the viewer to reconnect with their

inner child and in some way relearn/unlearn previous lessons and form an altered, more radical perspective.

4. Monstrous Mothers and Absent Fathers: Restructuring the Family Unit Post-Franco

4.1 Introduction

The dysfunctional family has long been a source of terror in the horror film. In fact, as Tony Williams has suggested “all horror films, in one way or another, are family horror films” (2015: 196). When the ideological norm of the nuclear family is questioned, the horror film reacts accordingly. In American horror cinema we can trace the decline of traditional family values from the 1960s onwards when the children born in the post-war period began to come of age. This new generation rejected the traditional conservative standards of their mothers and fathers and as briefly mentioned in the literature review, this was reflected in the horror film with an abundance of demonic children on the big screen. In the late 1970s the blame for the lack of conformity to a traditional family structure shifted from the child to the parent, specifically the father. Patriarchy under siege manifests itself in horror cinema as murderous father figures who seek vengeance (usually on their children and/or wives) for a perceived dwindling of their patriarchal power.

4.2 The Figure of the Mother in Francoist Spain

In Spanish culture, the figure of the mother is paradoxical, simultaneously worshipped yet repressed by a misogynistic society. The dominance of Catholicism in Spain is arguably the origin of such adoration for the maternal. The Virgin Mary is a sacred figure in Spain. According to Catholic doctrine, when a disheartened and discouraged St.

James the Greater came to Spain to bring Christianity to the region, the Virgin Mary appeared to him and assured him that his efforts would not be futile. She also requested that a church be built in her name, leaving behind a pillar of jasper to mark the location of her appearance. The *Basílica de Nuestra Señora del Pilar* in Zaragoza is considered the first shrine to the Virgin Mary. Further demonstrations of the sacrality of the Virgin Mary in Spanish culture include the proclamation of her as the Patroness of all the Kingdoms of Spain in 1760 and the national holiday *La Purísima.* It is an exclusive and controversial Catholic belief that, like her son Jesus Christ, Mary was also conceived free of original sin. *La Purísima* (also sometimes known as *La Inmaculada Concepción*) on December 8th is a celebration of Mary's apparent immaculate conception.

During the dictatorship, family values and structures were controlled by the Franco regime, which in turn meant the Catholic Church. The authority that the Catholic Church had over Spanish society "severely limited the place of women [whom] could aspire to marriage and motherhood but little more" (Shubert, 1990: 214). In fact, the Franco regime reinstated the Civil Code of 1889 which meant that married women were legally subordinate to their husbands. The primary intention of marriage in Spain was childbearing, with the Franco regime offering prizes for the parents of large families. Article 83 of the Civil Code reinstated by the regime forbade the impotent from marrying, further emphasising that the aim of marriage was children (Sponsler, 1982). The dominance that the Catholic Church had over Spanish society during this time period gave women the identity of mother and little else.

4.3 *Raise Ravens*

Whilst the castrating mother (addressed in the literature review) dominated Spanish screens during the early years of the transition to democracy, the 1980s saw a radical shift with the representation of the mother image. Andrés Zamora credits Carlos Saura's *Raise Ravens* as being the origin of this shift, stating "[the] film recurs to the old image of the mother-nation as passive victim and martyr, in this case suitably at the hand of a military and unscrupulous patriarch" (Zamora, 2009: 7). Whilst the film has been discussed in the literature review with regards to the child seer, it has not yet been considered in terms of motherhood.

In the film, little Ana recounts her traumatic childhood with a mother who suffers from marital unhappiness and an unknown illness (which she ultimately dies from), and a militant father who turns a blind eye to his wife's illness and loneliness. The film opens with a montage of family photographs. Ana's mother María is unsmiling in these photographs, which as Megan Scott states suggests that "her experience as a mother is punctuated by suffering [which] stands in contrast to the beliefs of Francoism" (Scott, 2018). Through the adult Ana's recollections, we learn that María was once a talented pianist, sacrificing her career to become a doting mother and wife. Maria José Gámez Fuentes suggests that María's "struggle to fit into a bourgeois maternal role that demanded total acceptance of her military husband's infidelities and complete dedication to her daughters [resulted in] María's body somatising her frustration by falling ill" (2003). Fuentes further suggests that María's dying words, which Ana bears witness to, "clearly refer to the emptiness of the female position she was made to assume" (Fuentes, 2003).

MARÍA: It's all a lie. There's nothing. Nothing. They lied to me. I'm afraid. I don't want to die. I'm afraid. I don't want to die! It hurts!

Scott, however, posits that in her death comes "her moment of great rebellion" and suggests that by admitting her fear of death to her daughter, María opposes "the fundamentals of Catholicism [and] stands in contrast to the beliefs of Francoism '' (2018). For much of the film Ana is consumed by painful memories and wishful fantasies of her mother. But, by the close of the film, she has come to terms with her mother's death and manages to finally achieve a grasp on reality, this is signified by a single line of dialogue. When Ana's elder sister Irene is telling Ana that she dreamt of their parents, Ana replies: "Mama and Papa are dead."

This being said, the fact that the film is essentially the adult Ana's memoir of her childhood and her attempt to understand the mother-daughter relationship, implies that the memory of her mother still haunts her even in her adult life. Fuentes states that "Ana's mother represents a risk to be framed and oppressed within stereotypical femininity" (2003), therefore adult Ana's memories of her mother serve to warn her against conforming to Francoist/Catholic ideals regarding femininity and motherhood. Fuentes further expounds that "the mother may have disappeared, but the institutions that configured her continued to exist in the transition towards democracy" (2003). Here then, María paves the way for a changing of ideology regarding motherhood and femininity.

4.4 The Re-Emergence of the Castrating Mother

Ann Davies states that in the contemporary era, the castrating mother has re-emerged in a new output, Spanish horror cinema (2011). Each of the chosen case studies feature a dysfunctional or fractured family unit, where, more often than not the mother figure is to some degree monstrous, and the father figure absent, thus in-keeping with Marsha Kinder's theorisation of Spanish motherhood and Davies' suggestion of the resurgence of the castrating mother in Spanish horror.

In *The Devil's Backbone* and *Pan's Labyrinth* new family units are formed that are not strictly conventional and, in both cases, we witness children taking on adult caregiver roles. *The Others* and *The Orphanage* present us with a more traditional family unit, but the loss of the patriarch in one instance, and the child in the other, has disastrous consequences. This chapter will consider these restructurings of the family unit in a post-Franco landscape, highlighting how in each case a moving away from the fascist Catholic definition of family is a source of power and hope.

4.4.1 *Pan's Labyrinth*

The ambiguous ending of *Pan's Labyrinth* and Ofelia's apparent rebirth in a metaphysical world suggests that the working through of trauma has not properly been realised in this instance. As will be further analysed in this chapter, in the other three case studies we see the ghosts of each film come to terms with their status and learn to live in the real world, whereas Ofelia retreats to the fantasy world that she has created to escape her oppressive reality. For this reason, it is pertinent to begin this chapter by discussing *Pan's Labyrinth.* For the most part, *Pan's Labyrinth* adheres to the traditional

family structure as favoured by the Franco regime, perhaps due to the period in which the film is set. Ofelia's biological father is absent, as per Kinder's observations regarding the Spanish Oedipal narrative. In this instance, the father is replaced by Captain Vidal, the evil stepparent of the classic fairy-tale and a personification of the Franco regime. Carmen, Ofelia's mother, embodies the docile female role expected of her during this time period.

Carmen remains passive, immobile, and sedated for almost the entirety of her screen time. Ironically, Carmen's role as expectant mother incapacitates her from being able to fulfil her role of mother to Ofelia, in fact the roles are somewhat reversed. Ofelia cares for her sick mother, administering her medicine and, at Carmen's request, reads her unborn brother a bedtime story, an act associated with the mother. Another instance of nurturing behaviour comes when Ofelia places a mandrake root bathed in milk and blood (both fluids associated with the maternal) under Carmen's bed which she believes will cure her mother. The mandrake root itself resembles a baby, both in terms of how it looks and the babbling and gurgling sounds that it omits. Ofelia cares for the baby-like creature by nourishing it each morning with two drops of blood (figures 6, 7 and 8).

Figure 6. Ofelia takes care of the mandrake root. Pan's Labyrinth/*Tequila Gang.*

Figure 7. Ofelia takes care of the mandrake root. Pan's Labyrinth/*Tequila Gang.*

Figure 8. Ofelia gives the mandrake root the blood it needs to survive. Pan's Labyrinth/*Tequila Gang.*

After the discovery of the mandrake root by Vidal, Carmen takes the root and throws it on the fire. Its baby-like resemblance causes this act to appear brutal and murderous, reinforcing the concept that Carmen is an unfit mother. She is instantly punished, as the root writhes and screams in pain, so too does Carmen as she falls to the floor in agony. This sequence echoes the scene from *Raise Ravens* discussed above. Whilst Carmen and María suffer, their daughters look on helplessly. Carmen dies in childbirth; she is merely a vessel for the birth of Vidal's son. A fact that Vidal makes apparent when he tells the doctor that, if it comes to it, to save his son over his wife as he will bear his and his father's name.

One of the only motherly tasks that we witness Carmen accomplish is when she makes Ofelia a dress. At first glance this appears to be a tender moment of mother-

daughter bonding, as similarly seen in the sequence where Anne tries on her holy communion outfit in *The Others* (discussed later in this chapter), however, it becomes apparent that Carmen's prime intention is not to bring Ofelia happiness, but rather it is an attempt to impress her husband, Captain Vidal. This is further reinforced when Carmen tells Ofelia: "I want you to be beautiful for the Captain."

It is Mercedes instead who takes on the role of surrogate mother, even when Carmen is alive, performing motherly duties such as drawing Ofelia a bath and singing her a lullaby. Mercedes even milks a cow in order to provide sustenance for Ofelia who, although too old to be breastfed, partakes in the ritualistic drinking of the milk, further supporting the concept of Mercedes as nourishing mother. Mercedes is unable to produce her own milk, however, she undertakes the act of milking the cow in order to become an adequate mother. Mercedes' mothering role extends to her brother Pedro as well as Carmen and Vidal's son. Mercedes supplies food and medicine to her brother and his band of *maquís,* providing nurturance and enabling them to survive. Where Ofelia's brother is concerned, we see Mercedes comfort him in Carmen's absence and by the close of the film she becomes his primary caregiver.

Figure 9. Mercedes comforts Ofelia. Pan's Labyrinth/*Tequila Gang.*

Figure 10. Mercedes cradles Vidal & Carmen's son. Pan's Labyrinth/*Tequila Gang.*

The patriarch of the family unit, Vidal, is controlled by the memory of his own militia father, who, like Ofelia's father, is also absent, interestingly Vidal's mother is never mentioned. We witness Vidal perform his grooming ritual on multiple occasions throughout the film; he appears to be obsessed with the upkeep of a regimented appearance, shaving even when he does not appear to have any facial hair (figure 11). In the Spanish Oedipal narrative, the act of shaving is considered a symbolic castration; one normally performed by the woman. (Kinder, 1993). However, it could be argued that in this case Vidal is a victim of fascist, patriarchal oppression at the hands of his father. Although his father has passed away, Vidal is still very much oppressed by his father's memory and is obsessed with living up to his legacy. Therefore, it could be surmised that this habitual act of shaving symbolises the castration of Vidal by the memory of his father. This perspective is further reinforced by the sequence in which Vidal slits his reflection's throat in the mirror after glancing at his father's watch in contempt, which, as well as representing symbolic castration also suggests that he resents the control that the memory of his father has over his life (figure 12). This image of Vidal in the mirror is repeated three times during the film, Mar Diestro-Dópido has suggested that the function of the mirror in Vidal's case is to "reflect an inner turmoil" (2013: 50), which we can assume is his complicated relationship with his dead father. Of further significance is the title of the song playing during Vidal's grooming activities: 'I Am a Poor Prisoner', which additionally reinforces the perception that Vidal is castrated and imprisoned by the memory of his father.

Figure 11. Captain Vidal obsessively shaving. Pan's Labyrinth/*Tequila Gang.*

Figure 12. Captain Vidal slits his reflections throat. Pan's Labyrinth/*Tequila Gang.*

The passive, dutiful wife, and the tyrannical, militant husband both meet their demise in the film. Both are archetypal of the gender ideals promoted by the Franco regime. Perhaps their deaths here are suggestive of the need to move away from fascist principles. If this is the case however, the ambiguous ending runs counter to this approach. The resolution in the fairy tale realm reinstates the nuclear family, with Ofelia's father as not only the head of the family but the King of the realm. However, Mar Diestro-Dópido suggests that Ofelia "is reborn in the Underworld Realm the way she wishes herself to be" (2013: 72), therefore it comes as no surprise that she wishes to be reborn into what she constitutes as a happy family. Furthermore, we must not disregard that Vidal's death signifies the death of fascism and therefore the family unit in the underworld realm operates in a post-Franco landscape.

Ana Vivancos discusses how Ofelia's two role models, Carmen, and Mercedes, only provide her with the options to either "fade away like her mother, or to become invisible like the maid" (2012). She proposes that:

> Ofelia opts for a gradual disappearance into her fantasy world, one in which she can obtain the agency that is denied to her in real life. The loss of agency entailed in the process of becoming a woman propels her in the opposite direction of growing into an adult; instead, she will ultimately decide to fall back into childhood by means of her escape into fairy-tale narratives. (Vivancos, 2012)

To refer back to Balsam here, perhaps Ofelia's decision to fall back into childhood is a result of her witnessing her mother's bloody, traumatic death during childbirth. Ofelia's rebirth as Princess Moanna functions as the ultimate fall back into childhood. To refer back to Shaw here once again, "Ofelia refuses the passive position embodied in

her mother, disabled by her pregnancy and entirely controlled by her husband, Captain Vidal, who sees her as no more than a vessel for his son" (2013: 89). The voice over narration that accompanies the final images of the film informs the audience that Ofelia reigned for many centuries, which suggests a prolonged childhood. Her death in the real world stunts her growth and binds her to childhood forever. In this sense, the film is similar to *The Others* and *The Orphanage*, whose children are condemned to never grow up. These children, however, "live" on in the real world, whereas Ofelia departs the real world altogether and inhabits her fantasy world. In his director's commentary, Guillermo del Toro discusses his belief that a spiritual reality is just as real and objective as the material world and highlights the fact that people do not have a problem accepting religion whereas fantasy is denied ('Commentary with Director Guillermo del Toro' in *Pan's Labyrinth*, 2007). Whether or not the audience chooses to believe in the fairy tale world, the fact remains that Ofelia retreats to a world where she is happier and her family is restored, which has been her goal throughout the film. Mercedes and the *maquís* remain in the real world, where, as a collective, - another type of family - they defeat the fascists. As Mar Diestro-Dópido states "it is not down to an individual to save the world (be it Vidal, Franco or Jesus Christ), but rather the responsibility of the community, an idea that is reiterated throughout the film and GdT's work in general, but especially so in both *Devil* and *Pan"* (2013: 76). Furthermore, Mercedes upholds her position as matriarch at the head of this new family unit, signified by her physical place at the front of the crowd with the baby in her arms (figure 13). In a rewriting of history in the microcosm of the mill, fascism falls to the Republic who are under the command of a

female, here contradicting both the outcome of the Spanish Civil War and the place of women in Franco's Spain.

Figure 13. Mercedes at the head of the rebel forces. Pan's Labyrinth/*Tequila Gang.*

Figure 14. Captain Vidal dies surrounded by the rebels. Pan's Labyrinth/*Tequila Gang.*

4.4.2 *The Devil's Backbone*

Like *Pan's Labyrinth*, *The Devil's Backbone* enacts a brutal rite of passage for its young protagonists. Throughout the film, we bear witness to different family formations. Initially, the surrogate family is headed by Carmen, the harsh and domineering headmistress, and Dr. Casares, the gentler and more nurturing father figure. Each of the surrogate parents are incomplete and are lacking in some way. Whilst Carmen is strong-willed and liberal, she is missing a leg and engages in a sexual relationship with one of the orphans, sullying her role as surrogate mother. Casares, although distinguished and kind, is impotent and a coward. Abigail M. Cathcart suggests that Casares' lack of virility and inability to consummate his relationship with Carmen condemns him to assume the nurturing role that is usually reserved for the woman (2015). In opposition to their surrogate parents, the children participate in a joining of weaknesses in order to collectively become the only complete character and strong unit in the film.

As in *Pan's Labyrinth*, the supposed mother figure is not fit for purpose and opposes the ideals circumscribed by the Franco regime. In Carmen's character biography, del Toro divulges that Carmen is in fact barren, immediately establishing her as inept in terms of ideal motherhood. Del Toro describes Carmen as having a "dread of motherhood" (2017: 135). This dread of motherhood that del Toro speaks of, alongside Carmen's lack of motherly tendencies aligns her with Sarah Arnold's concept of the Bad Mother, which was explored in the literature review and will be examined in further detail in section 4.4.3 of this chapter.

Carmen's complicated and incestuous relationship with the once-orphan Jacinto makes for interesting reading. Jacinto was only sixteen years old, and still under the care

of the orphanage, when his sexual relationship with Carmen began, marking her as a monstrous mother who abuses her position as caretaker of Jacinto. Carmen makes it abundantly clear that she is ashamed of her sexual relationship with Jacinto, for her their relationship is merely fulfilling a physical need, and this in itself is something she is ashamed of. Carmen's rejection of Jacinto is twofold, she not only rejects him as a mother, but as a partner. Despite Carmen's constant dismissal of Jacinto, he still demonstrates affection towards her. In an intimate moment Jacinto helps Carmen to attach her prosthetic leg, both the prosthesis and the incestuous relationship recalling Luis Buñuel's *Tristana* (1970).

In Bunuel's film, young Tristana goes to live with ageing lothario Don Lope following the death of her mother. It is implied that Don Lope may have once been Tristana's mother's lover, Dave Kehr proposes that this is Buñuel's way of discreetly suggesting that Don Lope could in fact be Tristana's biological father (2013). Don Lope even announces to his young charge: "I am your father and your husband." The pair soon enter a taboo sexual relationship, just like their successors, Carmen, and Jacinto. Tristana falls in love with a painter which ignites her will for freedom causing her to flee from her father figure. She is forced to return when she falls ill with a tumour in her leg which results in amputation and the wearing of a prosthesis. Far from further oppressing Tristana, her amputation empowers her. As Ela Bittencourt states "Buñuel shows his true genius in having Deneuve handle the stump with secret glee, practically gloating at its possession", which, as Bittencourt suggests, brings to mind surrealists Dalí and Max Ernst whose work often depicted the amputated female form (Bittencourt, 2019). Of course, the amputation of a limb conjures up thoughts of Freudian castration. In the case of Carmen, whilst she is

symbolically castrated by her amputated leg, and arguably also by her inability to have children, she additionally embodies the role of castrator. The very cane that she uses to walk acts as a symbol of this status, an observation which becomes all the more significant when, after a heated argument, Carmen strikes Jacinto with the cane, causing injury to his face and more specifically, his eye. The loss of one's eyes has long been a metaphor for castration as detailed by Freud in *The Uncanny* (1919). In the tale, the Sandman is an ominous figure who tears out children's eyes. In discussing *The Sandman* (1816), Freud states "a study of dreams, phantasies and myths has taught us that anxiety about one's eyes, the fear of going blind, is often enough a substitute for the dread of being castrated" (Freud, 1919). The damaged eye once again recalls Surrealist imagery and the work of Luis Buñuel, in particular Dalí and Buñuel's *Un Chien Andalou* (1929) and the iconic eye slitting sequence (figure 15).

Figure 15. The iconic eye-slitting sequence from Un Chien Andalou.

Whilst this is perhaps the most well-known image that is associated with the film, the human hand is also a symbol associated with both Surrealism and castration and is present in various forms in *Un Chien Andalou.* Sabina Stent suggests “the repetition of wounded and severed hands in the film represents castration fear, and more specifically, a disembodied phallus. This is emphasised when we realise that all the hands, whether injured or exuding ants, are male” (Stent, 2014). Given Buñuel’s notoriety as a filmmaker and as an opposer of fascism, the similarities in terms of themes of castration and incestuous relationships cannot be a mere coincidence, instead they act as a nod to one of the most influential Spanish filmmakers to date.

The physical damage caused to Jacinto’s eye by Carmen’s cane is the ultimate symbol of castration and is arguably the final straw for Jacinto. Sarah Arnold explains “in essence the Bad Mother is the source of friction within the horror text” (Arnold, 2013: 68), Carmen’s poor treatment of Jacinto and the crossing of motherly boundaries is the catalyst for Jacinto’s rage that results in not only Carmen’s death, but the death and wounding of many others. When Jacinto learns of Carmen’s plans to leave the orphanage, his vulnerable, child-like side betrays him as he asks her, “what about me?”. Here, as with the affectionate way Jacinto helps Carmen to attach her prosthesis, Jacinto’s bravado falters as his greatest fear, abandonment, becomes a reality. Carmen does not respond with sympathy or reassurance as a mother should, instead she once again uses her cruel words to castrate Jacinto:

> CARMEN: Of all the orphans you were always the saddest. The lost one. A prince without a kingdom. The only one who was really alone.

The ferocity of Carmen's castrating words causes Jacinto to retaliate by announcing their illicit relationship in front of the others, it is here that Carmen strikes Jacinto with her cane. If it were not for the glimpses of tenderness and vulnerability that Jacinto displays, it would be easy to categorise him as a greedy villain who is only interested in the gold that he knows Carmen has hidden. He is, however, a product of his environment and his inadequate surrogate parents. Carmen's monstrousness breeds a monster. Abigail M. Cathcart has suggested that Santi's haunting and the mystery of what happened to him seems to come secondary to the film's exploration of Carmen's monstrousness (Cathcart, 2015). Cathcart goes on to suggest that Carmen's seeking of sexual satisfaction from one of her charges leads her to shame herself so much that Jacinto grows up to feel "both empowered and like an embarrassment, both virile and inferior" (Cathcart, 2015). It is arguably this internal conflict that leads Jacinto to turn to hypermasculinity and fascism, and the power that comes with it. As Ellen Brinks states "Carmen's reading of Jacinto's character [as the prince without a kingdom], turns into a self-fulfilling prophecy at the very least and grounds for vengeance at worst, nurturing Jacinto's latent fascism" (Brinks, 2004).

As briefly mentioned, the surrogate father figure, Casares, is equally as inadequate as his counterpart Carmen. Casares is impotent and unable to consummate his relationship with Carmen. Instead, he reads her poetry through the walls, even this he cannot do face to face. Whilst kind and gentle, Casares is portrayed as being insincere and hypocritical, epitomised by the sequence in which he explains how he exploits the townspeople by selling them limbo water to cure their ailments. Casares makes it clear

that he does not believe in this superstition, yet when Carlos leaves the room, Casares drinks from the limbo water, perhaps in the hope that it will cure his impotence.

As considered earlier, it is only after Casares' death that he is able to act. In life he cannot consummate his relationship with Carmen, or even tell her how he really feels about her. He turns a blind eye to the quasi-oedipal relationship that is going on between Carmen and Jacinto and he does not shoot Jacinto when he has the opportunity, an action which would have saved many lives. His transcendence to the spirit world affords Casares the ability to finally exert power. He unlocks the door to the room where the children are trapped, their freedom allowing them to defeat Jacinto. This supports the broader argument that the ability to resolve past traumas lies beyond the reach of Casares' generation, with the focus now being on the grandchildren of Franco. As such, it is only when Casares is free of his physical existence on earth and no longer tied to the inactivity of his generation, that, in death, he is able to act.

The orphan's collective agency and banding together has already been discussed in much detail in chapter one, however it is important to note here that together they form the only successful family unit in the entire film. Carlos and Jaime become the leaders (or parents) for the younger boys. Together they are able to do what the adult characters were unable to do: defeat the antagonist and deliver him to the ghost-child Santi for retribution. The final image of the film shows the new family unit walking away from the orphanage and into the unknown. It is from Casares' vantage point that we view this image, "suggesting that the events of the past frame the psychic terrain of the present" (Brinks, 2004).

Both Jaime and Carlos appear again later in *Pan's Labyrinth* as *guerilla* soldiers who unfortunately meet their demise at the hands of Captain Vidal. Of course, it is significant that after their ordeal at the orphanage, the boys were inspired to join the war effort on the side of the Republicans. *Guerrilla* warfare, by its nature, is a small-scale uprising against a greater power meaning it is doomed to fail. Perhaps the deaths of Carlos and Jaime, at the hands of Captain Vidal, suggests the need for a united large-scale effort to succeed.

4.4.3 *The Others*

Grace of *The Others* and Laura of *The Orphanage* both exhibit qualities of the Gothic heroine and embark on paranoid journeys of discovery. They are also the only adult protagonists in my chosen case studies and for these reasons they will be examined collectively. I will draw upon Sarah Arnold's concept of the Good Mother and the Bad Mother in horror cinema in order to demonstrate how Grace and Laura possess characteristics of both types of mothers. In essence, according to Arnold, the Good Mother is "all-nurturing and self-abnegating" (2013: 23) and is often "defined by self-sacrifice" (2013: 38). In contrast, the Bad Mother is "sadistic, hurtful, and jealous; she refuses the self-abnegating role, demanding her own life" (2013: 23).

Grace straddles the border between the two definitions, her struggles with motherhood oftentimes marking her as defiant against the traditional gender role that is expected of her. The film is set in an isolated, Gothic mansion. Grace's husband Charles has gone away to war, despite being adamant that he will return, Grace knows that the likelihood of his return is slim. Abandoned by the patriarch and the servants, Grace must

care for her photosensitive children alone. The children's allergy to light means that the house is constantly shrouded in darkness and that the doors must remain locked at all times. Grace's very literal entrapment in the domestic sphere causes her descent into madness. Grace performs the most sinful of acts, committing both infanticide and suicide, which according to Sarah Arnold "serves a dual function, it is a bold repudiation of the maternal image of self-sacrifice and nurturance and offers the opportunity to escape from the institution of motherhood (2013: 109), thus positioning Grace precariously between the definition of the Bad Mother and the Good Mother. The film opens after this horrific event has taken place, Grace, the children, and the audience are unaware of their demise.

Before a single image adorns the screen, Grace's very first line of dialogue immediately establishes her as a nurturing caregiver as per the Good Mother definition as she adopts the motherly position of storyteller: "Now children, are you sitting comfortably? Then I'll begin." The story that Grace tells her children is the creation story. Within the first 30 seconds of the film the two defining characteristics of Grace's personality are established: motherhood and religion, both of which are also defining characteristics of the Franco regime. Grace endeavours to force a strict Catholic upbringing onto her two children, instilling in them the fear that if they don't believe in Christ they will be doomed to eternal damnation. Grace's devotion to Catholicism, and in turn, the repression of her children leads them to rebel. Anne, the eldest of her two children, is the forerunner of rebellion often questioning the realities of Grace's beliefs. Anne's consistent rebellion forces Grace on more than one occasion to question her ideology and her own authority. Yet, even when presented with Anne's clear logic,

Grace continually defaults to her Catholic teachings. Ernesto R. Acevedo-Muñoz describes Anne as:

> Aggressively fearless, curious, even seduced by the strange and unexplained sounds, ghosts, and unseen horrors that Grace's house bears, and that Anne insists are the doing of "the others", the mysterious presence haunting their household and that initially Anne alone can see and feel. (2008: 213)

Here, Anne is established as the traditional child seer in contemporary Spanish horror, she alone knows the truth of the situation. Her refusal to conform to the rigid regime enforced by her mother assigns her the role of active agent, drawing her power from her disobedience just as Ofelia does in *Pan's Labyrinth.* As Tasio Alexopoulos and Shannon Power argue:

> Anne refuses to censor what she says. It is through Anne's mouth that the truth attempts to escape multiple times. She mutters to the servants about her mother hurting herself and Nicholas, talks to Nicholas about the time their mother went mad, and she speaks to and as a conduit of the 'spirits' in the home. As Grace's attempts to silence Anne intensify, so too does the tension of the film. (2018)

This generational opposition can be read rather blatantly as representative of the repressive ideology of the Franco regime being brought into question by liberal Republicanism. The silence that Grace attempts to inflict on Anne acts as an obvious metaphor for the silence inflicted on Spanish society by the 1977 Amnesty Law.

For the majority of the film, it appears that the narrative is concerned with identifying who the ghostly 'others' are and what it is that they want from the family of three. However, by the close of the film we come to realise that in fact the film deals with

acceptance as the overcoming of trauma. Grace has repressed the traumatic memory of what she has done to her children, and the children, whilst hinting at what their mother has done to them on various occasions are unaware that it is they who are the ghosts that haunt the house. The arrival of the servants and 'the others' marks the beginning of this journey for Grace and the children. Grace's abandonment by patriarchal figures; her husband, the priest and even the postman, act as a catalyst for the horrific events. "Grace's relegation to an exclusive and isolated maternal role creates horror" (Alexopoulos & Power, 2018). Her isolation and imprisonment in the domestic sphere are repeatedly echoed in the *mise en scène.* We often see Grace looking out longingly beyond the house and its grounds, but she is always trapped by the physicality of the house, behind windowpanes or the large iron gates that surround the Gothic space (figures 16 and 17).

Figure 16. Grace's ghost-like reflection in the windowpane. The Others*/Cruise/Wagner Productions*

Figure 17. Grace trapped behind the iron-gates of her home. The Others/*Cruise/Wagner Productions*

Inside the house, the darkness is almost suffocating and moves fluidly like water to drown its main protagonist. Grace's dark clothing further engulfs her into the claustrophobic darkness.

The breakdown of the patriarchal family structure and imprisonment in her role of mother prompts Grace's transformation into the Bad Mother. If we are to refer to psychoanalytic theory here, the lack of a father figure means that there is no resolution to the Oedipus complex. In the case of *The Others,* Grace's lack could be that of her husband Charles. She does not so much get in the way of the resolution of the Oedipus complex, or the transition to the Symbolic, to use Lacanian terms, there is simply no other alternative due to Charles' absence, her lack forces her to embody the role of Bad Mother. In horror film history Bad Mothers are often overbearing and smothering, such as Mrs Bates of *Psycho* (Dir. Alfred Hitchcock, 1960) and Margaret White of *Carrie* (Dir.

Brian De Palma, 1976). It becomes significant then that Grace's method of infanticide is suffocation, she literally smothers her children to death. The manner in which Grace murders her two children could also be read as an attempt to permanently silence them "result[ing] in an interminable childhood, the stunting of their psychological and physical growth and development. They are bound to their mother, entombed in the womb-like home forever" (Alexopoulos & Power, 2018). This stunting of the children's psychological growth and development at the hands of Grace again lends itself well to a Lacanian reading. Nicholas is the younger of the two children. We are unaware of how long Charles has been absent for and therefore unaware of how much of an input Charles has had in young Nicholas' life. His lack of a father figure therefore relegates him to the maternal realm of the Real and the mother-as-omnipotent stage of development. This is demonstrated by Nicholas' needy behaviour throughout the film. In one sequence he asks Grace for a kiss before she leaves him alone, using the childish phrase "mummy". Grace replies by telling Nicholas that she cannot be with him all the time, that he must learn to be alone and advises him that whenever he feels afraid, he should squeeze his rosary and the Lord will be with him. Here Grace is abiding by the duty of the Good Mother by turning away from her son and instead turning him towards a male influence, in this case God.

As Anne is older, she has begun the transition to the mirror stage, which for Lacan, is where a child is first able to identify itself as autonomous and separate from its mother. Anne's transition to the mirror stage is perhaps signified/personified by the sequence in which Anne tries on her Holy communion outfit in front of the mirror. It is during this sequence that Anne seemingly becomes possessed by an old woman which

results in Grace attacking Anne and hysterically screaming “you are not my daughter”. The attack severs the already fragile mother/daughter bond that the two shared. Anne evolves from a state of dependence to independence, as per the mirror stage.

By the close of the film, with help from Anne and the servants, Grace is finally able to come to terms with what she has done and in the process renounces Catholicism. In order to inhabit the supernatural female universe, she must discard her religious beliefs and therefore also discard the Law ruled by patriarchy. As Sarah Arnold explains “the film acts as a form of revision, with the mother initially rooted firmly within the patriarchal Symbolic, the Law. As the film progresses the mother must reflect on her previous existence and learn to define a new one, not structured by the Law” (2013: 105). This liminal, transitional space that Grace and the children now occupy is a place of freedom for the mother. As Susan Bruce states:

> Limbo, and the liminal thus operate in this movie not as a temporary space of disorder whose limited nature eventually allows the return to a social structure only temporarily left behind, in the interest of shoring up conservative political and social hierarchies, but as the space in which a kind of transformative recognition can take place. (2005: 33)

To situate this in a Spanish context we can compare Grace and the children’s existence in a space of otherness to Spain being in a liminal, transitional space after the death of its patriarch Franco, both parties finding themselves free to operate beyond patriarchy. The narrative does not allow for the reinstatement of patriarchy and instead allows Grace and the children a space to experiment with their new identity. Grace’s renouncement of Catholicism in favour of believing in the supernatural could function as

a commentary on the importance of Spain moving away from the rigidity of the Franco regime and Catholic domination. Most simply, acceptance as an overcoming of trauma is a strong message in the film. Grace reclaims the domestic space that she once described as prison-like, announcing “this house is ours”, a statement she makes the children repeat like a mantra. Grace and the children “find value in the return to a symbiotic union once threatened by the outside world” (Arnold, 2013: 110), which is depicted in the final image of the film where the camera slowly moves away from the house and the children cling to Grace in the upstairs window.

4.4.4 *The Orphanage*

As in *The Others*, J.A. Bayona’s *The Orphanage* foregrounds the desperate truth-discovering quest of the mother in the domestic sphere. In this case, our protagonist and mother Laura gives up everything in order to learn what happened to her adopted son Simón. Like Grace, Laura embodies aspects of both the Bad Mother and the Good Mother and ultimately transcends to an otherworldly space where she is reinstated in her role of mother.

After the pre-credit sequence, examined in chapter one, Laura is awoken by Simón screaming “Mummy!” repeatedly. Carlos tells Laura that he will go see to Simón as it is his turn, whilst turning over in bed and going back to sleep, an action that is repeated later in the film. Here Laura is established as the primary caregiver whilst Carlos takes a passive role whereby he prioritises his own needs over those of his child and wife. Simón is concerned that his imaginary friends cannot get into the house. Rather than quashing Simón’s creativity, Laura plays along, opening the window so that

Watson and Pepe (his imaginary friends) can enter Simón's bedroom and even speaking to them. Although Laura asks Simón if he is too old for imaginary friends and later discusses with Carlos that they should perhaps address Simón's inventive imagination, she nurtures and encourages this side of him, even telling him a make-believe story in the same sequence to comfort him. Simón asks if he can sleep with Laura that night, like Nicholas he is yet to turn away from his mother. Whilst Laura tells him that he is pushing it, she stays with Simón, this is telling of the close bond that they share and how much Simón depends on Laura. In fact, their bond is established as being so strong in the first third of the film that although Simón is absent for the majority of the narrative we still feel the intensity of their connection.

Whilst Carlos is present throughout two thirds of the film, there is not a single sequence which features Carlos and Simón alone. Furthermore, sequences which feature the family of three are minimal. When Simón asks Carlos if he is coming to the beach, Laura replies for him and says he will meet them there later. Although Carlos is not absent in the same sense that Charles is absent in *The Others*, he dedicates very little time to his son, his lack of attentiveness towards Simón therefore strengthens the mother-son bond.

Simón learns the truth of his adoption and illness from mutant child seer Tomás. This truth strains the mother-son bond which is put to the ultimate test during the party sequence. Simón demands that Laura comes to see his new friend Tomás's little house, but she is preoccupied by the party causing Simón to anger and lash out at Laura when she doesn't immediately cater to his needs. Laura retaliates and hits Simón, as in *The Others*, the act of violence inflicted on the child by the mother causes the bond to be

severed and, in this case, instigates the horror. Simón goes missing and Laura frantically searches the house, its grounds, and the nearby beach, badly injuring herself in her desperation to find her son. Her injury renders her somewhat immobile and reliant upon a wheelchair, here recalling the inadequate mothers of both *Pan's Labyrinth* and *The Devil's Backbone*. The rest of the film is concerned with finding Simón; his absence, rather than uniting Laura and Carlos, serves to reinforce the conflict between the pre-Symbolic and the Symbolic. This division is first made apparent by police psychologist Pilar, who, despite being female, is a representative of the Law and therefore patriarchy. When Laura tells the police that she saw Simón in the sea cave, Pilar tells her that she must have imagined it in all the confusion. Here Pilar firmly establishes herself on the side of rational patriarchy whilst conversely positioning Laura in the realm of the supernatural female, which in this case is depicted as irrational.

This theme of the pre-Symbolic vs. the Symbolic is exhibited throughout the remainder of the film in various ways. Carlos gives Laura his St. Anthony necklace as a good luck talisman in the search for Simón, significant as St. Anthony is the Patron Saint for lost articles. Laura says to Carlos that he does not believe in such things, to which Carlos replies, "exactly, but you do." This shared moment is highly symbolic in further establishing the disunion of the rational, sceptical paternal realm and the open-minded, supernatural maternal realm. Laura and Carlos go about their search in oppositional ways that further reiterate the divide. Whilst Carlos takes a methodical approach, composing an evidence board, Laura chooses to enlist the help of paranormal investigators. In a homage to the *cine metafórico* movement, the medium named Aurora who visits the orphanage, and uncovers the horrifying truth of how it came to be

haunted, is played by Geraldine Chaplin. Chaplin was once a ghost herself in Saura's *Cría Cuervos* as discussed earlier. Up until this point Laura has been somewhat passive in her search for Simón, as if demobilised by his absence, reinforced by the use of the wheelchair mentioned earlier. Yet in her passivity she remains adamant that Simón is not dead and that his imaginary friends had something to do with his disappearance. Carlos invites Pilar to the *séance* as in his eyes she is another rational/sceptical mind. Laura and Carlos sit at opposite ends of the room throughout the sequence, the distance between them representative of them growing apart as a couple, but also of their differences in opinion. Pilar stands at the back of the room, making her scepticism apparent.

Once the *séance* is over Aurora addresses only Laura about her experience. Laura sits at her feet, hanging on to her every word whilst Carlos and Pilar stand at the very edge of the room. Carlos angers at the suggestion of ghosts in the house and when he confronts Aurora, she still addresses only Laura directly when she tells her:

> AURORA: When something terrible happens sometimes it leaves a trace, a wound that acts as a knot between two timelines. It's like an echo repeated over and over, waiting to be heard. Like a scar or a pinch that begs for a caress to relieve it.

Aurora's message can be read in multiple ways given the context of this thesis. As Antonio Lázaro-Reboll suggests:

> On the one hand, it repeats the central idea of Guillermo del Toro's ghost story *El espinazo del diablo*, and, on the other, it links *El orfanato* with *Cría cuervos* (Carlos

> Saura 1975) [...] through the casting of Geraldine Chaplin. In *Cría cuervos*, Chaplin's dual role as María, a terminally ill mother, and Ana, María's grieving daughter, two decades later provides a complex exploration of emotional thresholds and traumas and of the knotted lines of past, present, and future. (Lázaro-Reboll, 2012)

Aurora's statement also carries significance when we consider that, as discussed in chapter one, the film was released during the same period of time that the Historical Memory Law was passed in Spain. Perhaps the Law is what Spain has been longing for to relieve the pain of the Civil War and the ensuing dictatorship.

Pilar and Carlos exchange cynical glances and eventually Carlos demands the paranormal investigators leave. Pilar stands in solidarity with Carlos declaring that the *séance* was a farce and a sideshow trick. Before leaving, Aurora provides Laura with one last word of advice, firstly assuring Laura that she is a good mother, and secondly telling her that only she knows how far she is willing to go to find her son. The *séance* is a pivotal moment and turning point in the narrative as Carlos finally relinquishes his hopes of finding Simón whilst Laura intensifies her search for him. The knowledge of the traumatic past mobilises Laura and she is finally able to act, it facilitates her regression to childhood which was subject to an in-depth analysis in chapter one.

Laura must endure a similar self-reflexive journey to that undertaken by Grace, one where she must come to terms with the role that she played in her son's death. Rather than live her life without Simón, Laura opts for self-sacrifice, which is, as Sarah Arnold states, one of the defining elements of the Good Mother and 'essential motherhood.' Essential motherhood refers to the "'natural' inclination towards extensive childcare

(rather than simply giving birth)" (Arnold, 2013: 39). Laura embodies this notion of essential motherhood as she cares for children that she has not given birth to herself. When Laura is 'reborn' into the otherworldly realm, Simón tells her that his wish is for her to stay and look after all of them, signalling to the other ghostly children who Laura grew up alongside at the orphanage. As Ingrid E. Castro and Jessica Clark articulate "Laura serves as a "supermom" figure, eternally willing to commit herself to the needs and desires of all lost children, while the father's non-biological connection to his otherworldly child is secondary (2018: 243). The exclusion of the patriarch from the supernatural world is symbolic of a re-articulation of motherhood away from the patriarchal universe. Like Grace, Laura now exists solely in the domestic sphere, but this does not feel like an entrapment, and instead is perceived as a transformative maternal realm beyond the Law and the patriarchal paradigm.

In her chapter 'Horror and the Monstrous-Feminine: An Imaginary Abjection', Barabara Creed discusses the concept of the archaic mother. Creed argues that even when the mother is constructed as the pre-Oedipal mother, she is always "in relation to the father, the representative of the phallus, without her 'lack', he cannot signify its opposite - lack of a lack or presence" (2015: 55). Creed's archaic mother allows us "to talk about the maternal figure as outside the patriarchal family constellation [where] the mother is the sole parent" (2015: 55). Whilst the notion of the archaic mother stems from mother-goddess narratives, in the horror film the archaic mother "is reconstructed and represented as a negative figure, one associated with the dread of the generative mother seen only as the abyss, the monstrous vagina, the origin of all life threatening to reabsorb what it once birthed" (2015: 56). Whilst Laura did not give birth to Simón, through her actions she traps

him in the domestic sphere which could be read as being womb-like (a concept that will be further addressed in chapter three). Like Ofelia, Santi, Nicholas, and Anne, Simón will never grow up and instead resides with Laura in the pre-Symbolic realm. However, as suggested earlier, this is not depicted as being a negative series of events, rather it presents us with a hopeful image of freedom and transformation. As in *The Others,* the new family unit is free to explore their new identity.

4.5 Conclusion

Each of the films discussed in this chapter are united in their themes of dysfunctional/inadequate families. In each case a new family unit is formed that is stronger than the last due to the hardships that each family member has endured. In most cases, each of the new family units are far from traditional, the moving away from the definition of family as defined by the Franco regime is a beneficial experience. The children play an integral role in the restructuring of each family unit, once again supporting the concept of this thesis, the notion of the grandchildren of Franco.

5. Haunted Houses and Maternal Realms: Production Design as Facilitator of Transcendence and Closure

5.1 Introduction

It is apparent through the analysis conducted in this chapter that in each case the child is reabsorbed into the maternal realm. As each of the films considered in this thesis can be described as familial horrors, the domestic space in which each family resides must be examined within the parameters of this research. Both *The Others* and *The Orphanage* take place in a traditional Gothic mansion utilising the haunted house narrative, and as already examined in detail, feature monstrous mothers as protagonists. For these reasons the films will be considered comparatively. *The Devil's Backbone* and *Pan's Labyrinth* both feature architecture and *mise en scéne* which allow for an analysis of key concepts relating to motherhood and the facilitation of transcendence.

5.2 The Haunted House

The very nature of the haunted house "naturally lends itself as a vehicle for commentary" (Bailey, 1999: 6). As Barry Curtis states "the archetype of the haunted house is a place where the past is still alive" (Curtis, 2008: 40). Often the haunted house of Spanish horror cinema is perceived as a microcosm for Spain itself, and therefore, the traumas that happen within the house can be interpreted as the traumas of the Spanish people. For example, Miriam Haddu discusses how the orphanage in *The Devil's Backbone* "act[s] as a microcosm of the external conflict taking place nationally" (Haddu, 2014: 145). Del Toro himself states on the director's commentary that the building symbolises the nation of Spain ('Director's commentary', 2007). The conflict that takes place within

the orphanage's walls therefore stands in for the Civil War. Haunting and the necessity for first understanding, and then acceptance, in each of the case studies can thus be understood as a commentary on the need to acknowledge in order to heal from past injustices and trauma inflicted by both the Spanish Civil War and the Franco Regime.

The Others opens with a series of hand drawn pictures which depict the shadowy interior of a large house. The images flicker as if lit by candlelight and are partially hidden in shadows, a visual motif that is recurrent throughout the film. The images detail different rooms in the house, with the staircase featuring multiple times (figure 18).

Figure 18. The staircase from the opening titles of The Others. The Others/*Cruise/Wagner Productions*

The title sequence ends on a hand-drawn image of the house from afar which dissolves into the actual house itself (figures 19 and 20). It is from this vantage point that the grandeur of the house becomes apparent, and its Gothic features are revealed. Pointed roofs, large windows, columns and of course, the ominous fog that shrouds the house and its grounds recalls scenes from Gothic classics such as Alfred Hitchcock's *Rebecca*

(1940) (figure 22) and Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* (1941) (figure 21) and makes for a Gothic spectacle. The house is reflected in the lake outside, immediately bringing about thoughts of the uncanny double, a common Gothic motif (Bailey, 1999: 4) addressed in the following section.

Figure 19. The gothic mansion of The Others depicted as a hand drawn image. The Others*/Cruise/Wagner Productions*

Figure 20. The fog-shrouded gothic mansion of The Others. The Others*/Cruise/Wagner Productions*

Figure 21. Xanadu, the gothic residence of Charles Foster Kane. Citizen Kane/*RKO Radio Pictures*

Figure 22. Fog surrounds Manderley. Rebecca/*Selznick International Pictures*

This first encounter with the house is via an establishing shot, which is characteristic of the genre. Inside the house, its vastness and layout are not apparent due to the darkness that engulfs each room, as Curtis states, “[haunted houses are] explored as fragmentary, dispersed and incoherent components” (Curtis, 2008: 179). The ambiguity of the haunted house in terms of spatial uncertainty adds to its status as other-worldly. The lack of light in the house not only disguises the house itself, but it also makes it impossible to determine the time of day. The time of day is further distorted by the absence of bird song or any other natural sounds, and the suffocating fog. Inside the haunted house, “the laws of nature are suspended - time has been occluded by some traumatic incident that continues to exert a hold on the present through the persistence of energy that can continue to manifest itself” (Curtis, 2008: 54). It is not until Grace and the children are able to come to terms with their new existence that light fills the house and the all-encompassing fog lifts. It is only once the traumatic incident has been uncovered that we are afforded a semblance of the time of day.

5.3 The Haunted House as Uncanny Double

Much of the scholarship surrounding the haunted house in film and literature is adamant that the house not only functions as a setting, but also a character, and in many cases an antagonist. The haunted house is often self-aware, and as Bailey states “possesses its own malign will” (Bailey, 1999: 22).

Andrew Hock-Soon Ng posits an interesting approach to the analysis of the Gothic mansion in *The Others.* Ng proposes that “in the film, it is the architecture that functions as the protagonist’s double” (Ng, 2015: 145). The basis for Ng’s argument is

that Grace is unable to accept that she has murdered her children and committed suicide, so instead projects this trauma onto the house. “As a result, the house becomes invested with the unspeakable, which is represented as haunting in the film, against which she struggles, unable to realise that it is actually they who are the ghosts. Functioning as her alter-ego, the house would then protect the family from the revelation of Grace’s acts and ensuing deaths” (Ng, 2015: 145). This theory is supported by Bailey who posits “the gothic house, the haunted house, becomes in the end a distorted mirror of the self” (Bailey, 1999: 34).

Throughout the majority of the film, the house embodies the traditional role of antagonist. It is the house itself which poses a threat to the children. The house must be strictly policed by Grace in order to protect her photo-sensitive children. Its fifty doors must be kept locked, and the curtains drawn to minimise its threat. The house is completely cut off from the peril of the outside world, both by the containment offered by the locked doors, drawn curtains, and thick fog, but also because there is no radio or telephone. Ng postulates that “such a situation is characteristic of doppelgänger narratives, in which the double’s significance as threat fundamentally reflects the prototypical subject’s unconscious motivation to externalise what she cannot admit by inscribing it onto an other” (Ng, 2015: 148).

When Grace attempts to leave the house, her journey is impeded by the all-encompassing fog which prevents her from leaving her domestic prison (discussed in the following section). Her husband Charles seems to materialise from the fog, it is almost as if the house itself is providing Grace with what she yearns for. Grace’s inability

to leave the house and its grounds supports the idea that the house is Grace's double. As Ng states:

> In Gothic literature, despite the double's oppositional stance against its prototype, the two are nevertheless profoundly intertwined and completely dependent on each other for existence. Grace, as such, cannot leave her house because the very fact of her being is contingent to her spatial occupation since she can have no presence as a ghost unless she identifies with a specific place. (Ng, 2015: 147)

This offers an explanation as to why Charles is so vacant when he returns to the house for a brief time. As Charles dies 'on the front' he is not rooted to a dwelling, he occupies a non-space that leaves him unable to operate in the domestic sphere. His death in a non-space mirrors the many deaths of Franco's opposers buried in mass unmarked graves all over Spain. Their unknown whereabouts denies them their right to a dignified burial, as well as denying their families closure and a place to visit, mourn and celebrate their lost loved ones.

It is not until the close of the film when Grace and the children are forced to confront their trauma that the house then becomes "an ally with which they identify, and from which they will never leave, as evinced by Grace's chilling declaration just before the film closes" (Ng, 2015: 146): "This house is ours!". Once the 'threat' of the house has been neutralised and Grace has come to terms with her crimes, the house is reinstated as a loving, family-orientated space that Grace claims dominance over rather than it having dominance over her.

5.4 The Haunted House as Domestic Prison

In the Gothic tradition, the haunted house often acts as a prison to its female inhabitants. Dale Bailey discusses Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959) and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892) as prime examples of female imprisonment in the haunted, domestic space. Bailey says of *Hill House "*the eponymous house comes to represent the vast web of expectations and obligations, of female duties, which enmeshes the central character, Eleanor Vance" (Bailey, 1999: 28). In a similar vein, Bailey states:

> In this tale [*The Yellow Wallpaper*], the haunted house - the wallpaper and the woman trapped behind the paper, imprisoned in the walls of the house - must be seen as a perverse literalisation of the angel-in-the-house ideology which confined most nineteenth-century women not only within the roles of wives and mothers but within the walls of their own homes. (Bailey, 1999: 33)

In each case, Bailey makes it clear that the entrapment of the female protagonists in the haunted house is a materialisation of their entrapment in their gender assigned duties.

As discussed in chapter two, Grace exists solely in a maternal role and her imprisonment in her haunted house is ultimately what sends her mad. Grace herself describes the house as a prison, and as highlighted in chapter two, the *mise en scéne* is reflective of Grace's imprisonment. Grace's confinement to her motherly duty reinforces the gender ideals promoted by the Franco regime, as well as situating *The Others* firmly in the genre of the Gothic. In contrast to Grace, Laura of *The Orphanage* chooses to stay in the haunted house. It could be argued that Laura's obligation to be a mother to Simón leaves her with no other choice than to take her own life and therefore exist in the

maternal, domestic realm forever. Laura's decision renders her the surrogate mother to all the orphaned children. A concept that creates an association with the Virgin Mary that will be examined in section 5.7.2.

5.5 Exploration and Excavation as Exorcism

In both *The Others* and *The Orphanage*, both mothers are forced to embark on a journey of self-discovery which takes place within their houses. In each case, the exploration and excavation of their houses and grounds act as an exorcism of the traumatic past. The journey that each Gothic heroine takes differs in terms of the actual search, however, the outcome is the same.

Although sceptical at first, Grace's exploration of her haunted house involves the hunting down of 'the intruders'. Two sequences in particular stand out when considering the uncovering of secrets; Grace literally uncovers items covered in white sheets in the junk room in one sequence and demands that all the curtains be opened so that no corners are in darkness in the other. The junk room sequence is playful in the sense that the covered items resemble a stereotypical ghost. This is also an important sequence as this is the first time that Grace herself has an experience with the intruders. She hears their whispers and witnesses the junk room door close in the mirror. Significantly, the junk room does not have curtains and is flooded with light, a striking contrast to the hallway and staircase beyond the room, here acting as a literalisation of the term to shed light on a situation.

Laura's exploration is more demanding and challenging. Her first significant discovery is that of the murdered children's skeletons in the boat shed on the grounds of

the orphanage. This gruesome discovery fuels Laura in her quest to uncover both the truth of what happened to her childhood peers, and the truth of Simón's disappearance. Towards the close of the film, Laura locates the secret room beyond the cupboard under the stairs, which Simón refers to as Tomás's little house. It is here that the disfigured Tomás was kept during his life, as well as being the location of Simón's death. This hidden space which once housed the young boy who was kept a secret, is typical of the Gothic genre and embodies Freud's definition of the uncanny as something that should have remained hidden that has come to light (Freud, 1919).

As Barry Curtis states "all explorations of the haunted house involve a kind of archaeology, the uncovering of an occluded narrative that constitutes the exorcism" (Curtis: 2008: 32), this is certainly true of Grace and Laura's encounters. Through the process of exploration and excavation, each mother discovers the truth of their individual traumatic past. Their journeys serve as an exorcism of both the literal ghosts, and the trauma experienced, and in turn allows both families to enjoy closure and union.

5.6 Absence and Presence in The Haunted House

As with Grace in *The Others*, the ghost children in *The Orphanage* rely on their haunted house for their very existence. This haunted house allows the as yet undiscovered parallel world of the dead to exist. Laura's arrival at the location of her childhood activates the traumatic past and initiates the murdered children's quest to become acknowledged. Through their active haunting, the children reject the historical erasure which, up until Laura's return, has been forced upon them.

As discussed in chapter one, Laura restores the orphanage to its former aesthetic, Ng suggests that “Laura’s attempt to communicate with the children’s ghosts by reorienting the interior of the house precisely erases the present/past, reality/unreality, us/them boundaries necessary to overcome grief” (Ng, 2015: 161), boundaries which the Historical Memory Law also aims to eradicate. As mentioned in chapter one, the film's release coincided with the passing of the law, the predecessor to the current Democratic Memory Law which aims to take further steps to bring about closure and justice to the victims of the Franco regime. The ghost children that long for acknowledgement by the living can therefore be read as the countless victims of the Civil War, and ensuing dictatorship, who long to be salvaged from historical oblivion. Whilst this is an obvious metaphor, it is place that this chapter is concerned with. The house becomes a space where the disembodied children can inscribe their presence, therefore the house becomes a site of both absence and presence. It is through their haunting of the house that the children are able to reject historical erasure (Ng, 2015: 166). The state-imposed amnesia created a similar liminal space whereby the victims of the regime were relegated to a forgotten realm beyond the living, but still existing in the consciousness of many. Therefore, if we are to think of the house as a microcosm for Spain, the haunting that takes place in the house draws parallels with the haunting nature of the unspoken crimes against humanity committed in the name of Franco.

For Laura, the house becomes more than just a place or residence, it becomes the instrument through which she is able to communicate with the dead. For the dead, the house is the very reason for their being, without it they would not exist. As Laura becomes more consumed by grief, she detaches herself from the living and instead

attaches herself to the house. By the close of the film, Laura's affinity with the house is complete. She rejects the world of the living and embraces the house as the site of her existence, just as Grace does. It is Laura's sacrifice that affords the dead their goal of acknowledgement. The final image of the film is not one of sadness or mourning, instead it is celebratory. Carlos approaches the commemorative plaque outside the house which not only includes Laura and Simón, but all of the lost children by name. As Ng states, the fact that the children are named "suggest[s] that the ghosts have succeeded in their endeavour to reject historical oblivion since the plaque directly overturns Benigna's intentions of erasing their memory altogether" (Ng, 2015: 177). Once again, we cannot ignore the obvious parallels that this ending draws with the aims of the Historical Memory Law and Democratic Memory Law, especially with regards to the excavation of mass unmarked graves and granting the dead to a dignified burial and a legitimate remembrance.

5.7 Climbing the Sacred Staircase of Motherhood: Catholicism and Maternal Identity

5.7.1 The Staircase

Section 5.2 commented on the repetition of the staircase in the title sequence of *The Others*. The looming staircase is a fundamental feature of the iconography of the haunted house, and as Sylvia Ann Grider posits, is one of the main locations where the action in a ghost story takes place (Grider, 2007: 149). The staircase plays a liminal role, connecting the downstairs to the upstairs whilst being neither up nor down, but acting here as a place of transition. It is on the staircase in *The Others* that Grace first starts to believe Anne about the intruders in the house, as well as being the site of Grace's

learning of the truth of the situation from the servants. Similarly, the staircase that ascends to the servant's quarters also delivers Grace towards the truth, as it is here that she finds the post-mortem photograph of the servants who currently work in her house. The grand staircases that loom large in the entranceways in both *The Others* (figures 23 and 24) and *The Orphanage* (figure 25) evoke a likeness to the opulent staircase at the Gothic Burgos cathedral (figure 26).

Figure 23. The grand staircase in The Others. The Others/*Cruise/Wagner Productions*

Figure 24. The grand staircase in The Others. The Others/*Cruise/Wagner Productions*

Figure 25. The grand staircase in The Orphanage. The Orphanage/*MEDIA Programme of the European Union*

Figure 26. Oppulent staircase in the Burgos Cathedral, Spain. Burgos Cathedral staircase. (2023) [online image] Available at: <https://www.travelinfusedlife.com/burgos-cathedral/>

The staircase plays an important role in each of the chosen case studies. There is not only the imposing gothic staircase in the entranceway in *The Orphanage*, but a hidden dilapidated staircase that leads to 'Tomás's little house' (figure 27). The very same staircase that leads Laura to the truth of Simón's demise, as well as causing his death as he falls through the banister. The concealment of the staircase, and its state of disrepair mimics the concealment of Tomás and his facial disfigurement, presented in stark contrast to the grand staircase visible to all. In *The Devil's Backbone*, the small, winding, stone staircase which leads to the cistern (figure 30) is arguably the apparatus which delivers Jacinto to Santi where he enacts his revenge, thereby bringing about

closure and justice. In *Pan's Labyrinth,* Ofelia descends into the labyrinth via a stone, spiral staircase, it is here that the entire narrative is activated, and, if we are to believe in the Underground Realm, it is the place where Ofelia learns the truth of her identity (figures 28 and 29). These simpler, stone staircases also have roots in Spanish Gothic architecture. The Huesca Cathedral features a simple helical staircase enclosed in the bell tower. The very nature of a spiral staircase itself allows for the concealing/revelation of secrets as the geometry of the spiral staircase obscures the view of whatever lies beyond. It is fitting then that a spiral staircase is employed for moments of discovery in both *The Devil's Backbone* and *Pan's Labyrinth*, delivering our young protagonists to the truth. It is apparent that in each case study the liminal staircase is instrumental in transporting the characters towards the truth of their situations and thus allowing for transcendence to a new reality.

Figure 27. The staircase that leads to 'Tomás's little house'. The Orphanage/*MEDIA Programme of the European Union*

Figure 28. *Ofelia descends the stone staircase into the labyrinth.* Pan's Labyrinth/*Tequila Gang.*

Figure 29. Ofelia descends the stone staircase into the labyrinth. Pan's Labyrinth/*Tequila Gang.*

Figure 30. Carlos descends the stone staircase which leads to the cistern. The Devil's Backbone/*El Deseo*

As briefly referenced above, the staircase is a potent element in Catholic iconography, found in most places of worship. Aside from featuring physically in religious architecture, the staircase and what it symbolises also plays a significant role in Catholicism. Chapter two discussed the sacrality of the Virgin Mary in Spain, the following section of this chapter will further address the Virgin Mary, principally in comparison to Laura of *The Orphanage.* In relation to the staircase, it is the early life of the Virgin Mary that is of significance, detailed in the gospel the *Protoevangelium of James*. Whilst not included in the bible, and condemned by the Church, the *Protoevangelium of James* tells the story of Mary's birth, childhood, and adolescence, some of which aligns with Catholic teachings regarding Mary, chiefly the immaculate conception of Mary and her perpetual virginity. It is Mary's presentation at the Temple which is of relevance here. It is stated that at three years old, Mary ascended the stairs to the Temple of the Lord without looking back towards her parents, as a child normally

would, an act that is thought to demonstrate her holiness. She was thus accepted into the Temple by the high priest. Mary's acceptance into the Holy of Holies is significant as only the High Priest was granted entry, and only once a year. Mary's entry into this sacred space granted by God mirrors Laura being granted entry into the spirit world of the children, and Ofelia being granted access to the Underground Realm. This passage from the *Protoevangelium of James* also supports the concept of the staircase as facilitator of transcendence seen in each case study, as Mary transcends her 'normal' childhood to be brought up in the Temple and embrace her holiness.

5.7.2 Laura as the Virgin Mary

There are further similarities between Laura and the Virgin Mary. In Marian doctrine, the Virgin Mary is referred to as the mother of all and therefore could be considered a surrogate mother herself. According to Mark I. Miravalle, Mary's status of mother to all is first proclaimed in John 19: 26-27, when Mary is at the foot of the cross with Jesus and his disciple John. The Gospel According to St. John states "when Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother!" (John 19: 26-27). In Catholic teachings, John is considered a symbol of all humanity, Miravalle quotes Pope Leo XIII who writes "now in John, according to the constant mind of the Church, Christ designated the whole human race, particularly those who were joined with him in faith" (Leo XIII, 1895, as cited in Miravalle, 2006). If we are to consider John as a symbol of all humanity, then we are to consider Mary as the mother to all humanity.

Laura and Mary also have similarities in terms of appearance. During the regression sequence discussed in chapter one, Laura dresses in the blue uniform of her former guardians. The countless artists' depictions of Mary often portray her in iconic blue garments, a shade which has come to be known as Marian blue (figure 32). According to Catholic symbolism “the blue of her cloak has been interpreted to represent the Virgin’s purity, symbolise the skies, and label her as an empress, for blue was associated with Byzantine royalty” (Fuchs, 2015). Further to this, when Laura cradles Simón’s body, he is wrapped in a red blanket, once again mimicking artwork depicting the Virgin Mary and Jesus. In some artist’s portrayals of Mary, she wears a red garment underneath her iconic blue cloak, which according to Julia Fiore “signifies traits connected with motherhood, including love, passion and devotion” (Fiore, 2018). In other artworks, it is Jesus who wears red or pink, especially in his later life, which carries many connotations including martyrdom and sacrifice (Fiore, 2018). The positioning of Laura cradling Simón is also of great significance and mirrors the arrangement of Mary and Jesus in most artworks where Mary is presented as the pietà (figure 31).

Figure 31. Laura cradles Simón’s corpse. The Orphanage/*MEDIA Programme of the European Union*

Figure 32. Virgin and Child in Majesty, Central Panel from the Maestá Altarpie – Duccio. Duccio. Virgin and Child in Majesty, Central Panel from the Maestà Altarpie. Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Siena. (2018) [online image] Available at: <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-jesus-mary-wear-red-blue-art-history>

Aside from appearance, Laura's agonising suffering throughout her desperate search for Simón, culminating in the discovery of his dead body, draws parallels with the concept of Mary as suffering martyr, who is present throughout the crucifixion of her son.

Further to their appearance and suffering, it could be hypothesised that Laura shares affinities with Catholic Marian dogma. Whilst it could be assumed that Laura and Carlos have consummated their marriage, we do not witness this act taking place, and, as Simón is adopted, it could be posited that like Mary, Laura is virginal. In the final moments of the film, Laura's passing is marked by the bowing of her head as she appears to fall asleep, before awakening in the glow from the lighthouse. The audience is never confronted with the sight of Laura's dead body, instead she appears to seamlessly transition into the afterlife where she is greeted by her son and the other long-dead children that inhabit the orphanage. It could be argued then that Laura's

death echoes Mary's assumption into heaven, a strictly Catholic belief that Mary's body and soul was assumed into Heaven after completing her life on earth.

Where Grace denounces Catholicism, Laura, somewhat subconsciously, and through her similarities with the Virgin Mary, embraces it. For Grace, the denouncement of her strict adherence to Catholicism is freeing – and in this reading represents a moving away from the enforcement of Catholicism as the state religion as enforced by Franco. Whereas for Laura, her affinity with Mary enables her not only to be reunited with her son, but to take on a new and prominent role as the mother to all. A doubly powerful role if we are to consider the superior status that Catholicism awards Mary, but also to consider what it means to be the mother to all after the death of Franco, the father to all Spaniards.

Whilst it appears that both women are 'trapped' in their domestic spaces/roles, the ending of each film allows for a hopeful reading. The lifting fog coupled with the disappearance of the curtains in *The Others*, and the lighthouse beam penetrating the darkness in *The Orphanage* both leave the viewer with the promise of light through an uplifting image. As discussed in chapter two, both mothers exist in an other-worldly space beyond patriarchy and uncover and come to terms with the traumatic past. Therefore, whilst they may be physically imprisoned in the domestic space, as per the Gothic tradition, their existence here feels less like imprisonment and more like freedom.

5.8 Architecture as Reabsorbing Womb

5.8.1 The Archaic Mother

Towards the end of chapter two, Barbara Creed's concept of the archaic mother was briefly discussed in relation to the house as reabsorbing womb. The notion of the archaic mother as "a force that threatens to reincorporate what it once gave birth to" (Creed, 2015: 58), lends itself well to the narrative events of both *The Others* and *The Orphanage.* As considered in detail, the children in both films are all destined to reside in the domestic space of the mother for eternity. This, combined with the fact that in one way or another, each of the children met their demise at the hands of a mother, allows for a reading of Creed's archaic mother. In this instance, the house as archaic mother is twofold. As Ann Davies states "houses are, of course, associated with the feminine and the domestic, and are themselves structures of shelter with traditionally the mother at its heart" (Davies, 2011: 89), in this respect the house itself is representative of the mother. Creed's analysis of the archaic mother centres on sci-fi horror film *Alien*, much of her investigation into the presence of the archaic mother in the film is concerned with the spaceship itself and its reproductive *mise en scéne*. Creed speaks of exploratory sequences and long tracking shots down corridors which investigate womb-like chambers, 'vaginal' openings, and dark labyrinthine passages (Creed, 1993: 18). The organic design of *Alien* is echoed, perhaps most significantly in the set design of *Pan's Labyrinth* but can also be found in varying degrees in each case study and will be analysed in the following section.

5.8.2 The Mother's Body

As in *Alien*, Creed's archaic mother is embodied in the architecture of the haunted houses of *The Others* and *The Orphanage*. Both abodes feature long dark corridors and meandering staircases (figures 33 and 34). The children's inability to leave the house and to wander the corridors and staircases for eternity could represent their inability to 'cut the apron strings' as it were and move away from the mother. The staircases and corridors in this context symbolically act as the umbilical cord which attaches the children to their mother. An abundance of arched ceilings, doorways and curved architecture make for womb-like spaces, and further reinforce the concept that the haunted house is aligned with the mother and the children's forever-existence in them is a reabsorbing of sorts.

Figure 33. Meandering staircase in The Others. The Others/*Cruise/Wagner Productions*

Figure 34. Long dark corridor in The Others. The Others/*Cruise/Wagner Productions*

This feminine coding is further present in the set design and props of *The Devil's Backbone* and *Pan's Labyrinth*. Immediately, in *The Devil's Backbone* title sequence, we are confronted with reproductive imagery in the form of a foetus floating in amniotic liquid (figure 36). An image which is repeated and mimicked throughout the film. The deaths of both Santi and Jacinto evoke the image of a baby in the womb; the slow movement of their bodies through the amber liquid in the cistern mirrors the imagery in the title sequence (figure 35). Santi's return as a ghost also allows for his death sequence to perform as a rebirth of sorts, especially given the uterine imagery of the sequence. Similarly, the sea cave in *The Orphanage* takes the life of young Tomás and facilitates his rebirth as a ghost. Ann Davies describes the cave as "uterine…destructive

and devouring" (Davies, 2011: 89), characteristics of Creed's archaic mother. It is

Figure 36. TDB title sequence, foetus floating in aminotic fluid. The Devil's Backbone/*El Deseo*

Figure 35. Santi drowning in the amber liquid in the cistern. The Devil's Backbone/*El Deseo*

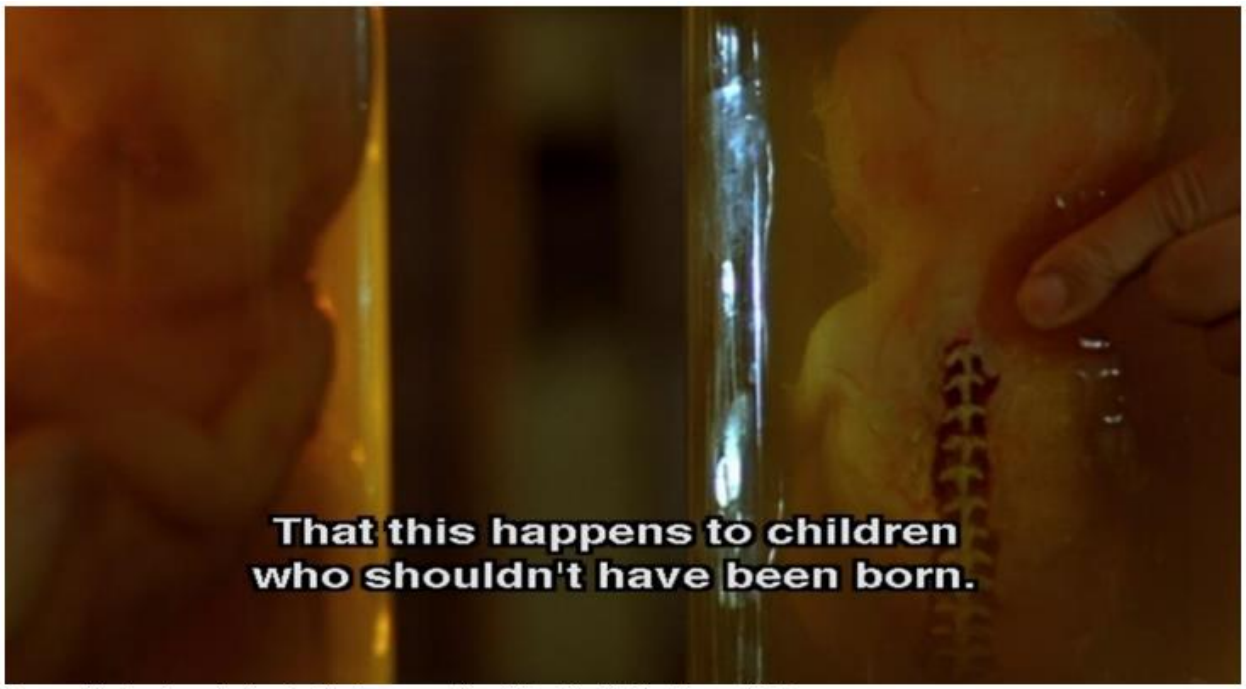

Figure 37. Foetuses in jars in Dr Casares office. The Devil's Backbone/*El Deseo*

Reproductive imagery is most heavily utilised in *Pan's Labyrinth,* a very purposeful decision of director del Toro. The *mise en scène* that surrounds Ofelia during her quest to ultimately return to the womb is uterine in nature. The image of the faun is one that is repeated throughout *Pan's.* It is visible in the shape of the fig tree (figure 40), it is carved into the headboard of the bed where Ofelia and her mother sleep (figure 39), it looms at the entrance to the labyrinth, and the blood that spontaneously forms in Ofelia's Book of Crossroads also imitates the shape of the faun's horns (figure 38). This shape is unmistakably maternal, mimicking the female reproductive system. There are multiple occasions within the film where Ofelia enters womb-like fantasy spaces. In the director's commentary of *Pan's*, del Toro discusses how he is not subtle with the shape and colour palettes of these locations. The fig tree features fallopian tube-shaped branches and a

vaginal opening, the corridor that leads to the pale man's lair is of uterine shape and colour (figure 41). Each time that Ofelia descends into the fantasy world she is essentially returning to the womb. Even in the 'real world' circular shapes are present in places that are associated with Ofelia, or where she feels safe, such as the bathroom and her attic room which both feature circular windows (figure 42). The kingdom to which Ofelia is reborn at the close of the film similarly utilises a large round window, curved lines, and a warm colour palette, reinforcing the idea that Ofelia has been reabsorbed into the womb. To refer back to feminist criticisms of psychoanalysis, this abundance of feminine imagery highlights the importance of female genitalia and the reproductive system. Where traditional psychoanalysis determines the vagina and clitoris to be inferior to the penis, Pan's Labyrinth is a celebration of all things feminine which is juxtaposed against the fascist, patriarchal "real world" in the film, and "the real world" which is Spain during the time that the film is set.

Figure 38. Ofelia's Book of Crossroads bleeds in the shape of a womb. Pan's Labyrinth/*Tequila Gang.*

Figure 39. The faun's horns can be seen carved into the headboard of Ofelia & Carmen's bed. Pan's Labyrinth/*Tequila Gang.*

Figure 40. The fig tree which resembles a womb/the faun's head. Pan's Labyrinth/*Tequila Gang.*

Figure 41. Ofelia enters the Pale Man's lair which is uterine in nature. Pan's Labyrinth/*Tequila Gang.*

Figure 42. Circular windows in Ofelia's bathroom. Pan's Labyrinth/*Tequila Gang.*

5.9 Conclusion

If we are to refer to chapter two and consider how Francoism co-opted the figure of the mother as a symbol of the new and eternal Spain, we must now consider the intention of the tendency of the reabsorbing mother in contemporary Spanish horror cinema. It was suggested in chapter two that María of *Raise Ravens* paved the way for a changing ideology regarding motherhood and femininity in a post-Franco landscape. Perhaps then, the mothers, and symbols of motherhood, analysed in this chapter pick up where María left off. Each of these mothers must redefine the concept of motherhood on their own terms, having reclaimed it from Franco and his restrictive, patriarchal definition. Particularly in *The Others* and *The Orphanage*, the labyrinthine nature of the houses act as a maze of confusion through which each mother must traverse to find their true new identity as powerful women and mothers with agency.

Ordinarily, in the horror film, the child's reabsorption into the 'womb' is viewed as a symbolic castration and the mother as a "cannibalistic parent" (Creed, 1993: 22-23). Ultimately the reincorporation of the child into the womb is synonymous with death, however, I argue that in this case each child's reincorporation is actually a rebirth of sorts. In Creed's analysis of *Alien*, she discusses how the mother's body (the spaceship) becomes hostile from the alien invasion. This is also true of the spaces analysed in this chapter, each space is haunted or infiltrated by a negative force. In each case the ghosts must be exorcised, justice must be awarded, or the truth must be uncovered in order for the mother's body to become hospitable once more. Each of the 'families' are awarded a new beginning beyond patriarchy, in a safe, nurturing space that has been exorcised of its traumas and ghosts.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Transnational films for transgenerational trauma.

This thesis, and the films analysed within, act as a cautionary tale against fascism and the dangers of 'forgetting' the past. In the 2018 documentary *Facing Franco's Crimes: The Silence of Others,* filmmakers Almudena Carracedo and Robert Bahar interviewed a number of people on the streets of Madrid. When asked if they knew what the pact of forgetting was, the younger interviewees said no, they did not know what the pact of forgetting was, nor the Amnesty Law, with one of them replying, "we don't study those things." Within the first few moments of the film, Almudena herself states in voice over:

> ALMUDENA: Those of us raised after Franco don't really know what happened. Schools never taught us about it. Our parents didn't tell us. And we can't tell our children because we ourselves don't know.

This fact in itself highlights the importance of raising awareness of such an important and tragic part of Spain's history before it is too late. As the direct victims of the dictatorship pass away, it becomes all the more imperative that the younger generation learn of, and from, the crimes against humanity committed against their ancestors. Throughout the researching and writing of this thesis, positive steps towards justice have been taken, arguably the most positive seen in many years. Francisco Franco was exhumed from his original resting place in The Valley of the Fallen on the 24th October 2019, and the Democratic Memory Law came into effect on the 21st October 2022,

however, there is still an urgency to educate as time becomes an antagonist against justice.

Each of the films studied in this thesis can be considered examples of transnational cinema. Each film engages with the specifically Spanish context of the Spanish Civil War and Francoism, whilst employing Hollywood horror conventions and enjoying a warm reception at the international box office. The transnational reach of these films renders them all the more valuable as tools of education. It is arguably del Toro's oeuvre that encourages the education of an international audience due to the literal depictions of the Spanish Civil War. Whilst the allegorical nature of *The Others* and *The Orphanage* demand more of an understanding of Spain's past in order to be read as intended, the use of a traditional horror narrative, in this case, a haunting, allows for "a more universal film language" (Acevedo-Muñoz: 2008: 202) which therefore encourages the engagement of an international audience with an explicitly Spanish context.

In a breaking away from the traditional, universal format of the horror film, each film "fails to transition from nightmare to the awakening sense of 'safety'...instead death seems to almost always win out" (Acevedo-Muñoz: 2008: 214). This sense of unfinished business at the close of each film can be considered distinctive of the contemporary Spanish horror film. If we are to refer back to the films which have been termed the 'blueprints' for the films studied in this thesis, they too feature an ambiguous ending of sorts. In *Raise Ravens,* Ana and her sisters head off to school past brightly coloured billboards, the bustle of the city is almost deafening, and a pop song plays over the noise. The bright and noisy city is a great contrast to the quiet life inside the walls of the

house we have experienced alongside Ana up until this point. Outside of the repressive walls of the family home, the city offers modernity and a bright, but unsure future post-Franco. Whilst not as vibrant an ending as *Raise Ravens, The Spirit of the Beehive,* offers a similar outlook on a future beyond Franco. At the close of the film young Ana looks out of her window and repeats the words she believes will summon the monster. Even after her terrifying experience she is defiant in her beliefs. As we are confronted with Ana's dark-eyed gaze for the final time, framed by the bars of the balconette to reinforce her entrapment, the distant rumbling of the train on the tracks and its whistle can be heard, once again bringing about thoughts of modernity and a promise of a future for little Ana outside of the confines of her repressive family home.

Each of these endings offer a glimmer of hope for a future beyond patriarchal repression, which is due to the time the films were made, two years before Franco's death, and one year after. If we are to refer to the very beginning of this research, where I proposed the concept of the grandchildren of Franco to represent the generation of filmmakers who are able to outwardly express what their forefathers could not, then perhaps these endings are not stereotypically 'happy', as these filmmakers witnessed what came after Franco. Spain has not healed from its trauma, and it is unable to do so until justice has been realised, as is the case with each of the films studied in this thesis. The absence of a wholly 'happy ending' in each case study emphasises the position of each of the films as a cautionary tale.

In her article 'Memory and Modernity in Democratic Spain: The Difficulty of Coming to Terms with the Spanish Civil War' (2007), Jo Labanyi discusses what she terms the 'memory boom' in Spain since the late 1990s, where a number of films and

novels attempted to represent and deal with Spain's traumatic past. Within this article, Labanyi applies Elizabeth Jelin's observation on the Argentinian dictatorship, whereby Jelin states that:

> In order to work through political trauma, distance is necessary…this requires a younger generation to come on the scene which, unencumbered by the previous generation's internalisation of terror, is willing and able to engage with the difficult stories of past violence. (Jelin, 2003, as cited in Labanyi, 2007)

Here, Jelin supports my assertion that it becomes the duty of a younger generation of Spaniards, somewhat removed from the initial trauma, to bring about justice and change.

6.2 The agentic child

Whilst some academic attention has been paid to the role of the child in Spanish cinema (Sarah Wright, 2013), this thesis has brought further attention to this underdeveloped field of study with a specific focus on the contemporary Spanish horror film. It has provided a brief history of the tradition of the child facing horror in cinema, first established during the transition period, before going on to focus on examples of contemporary Spanish horror. Whilst these films have been subject to critical attention in the past, this thesis provides an in-depth exploration of the child as an active agent of change, at a time when change is happening.

Chapter one challenged the dominant reading of the child as a cipher for victimhood in contemporary Spanish horror, repositioning the child as powerful seer and active agent. The close reading of *The Devil's Backbone* demonstrated how the

children's collective agency allowed for the defeat of the fascist force that had infiltrated the orphanage. The analysis of *Pan's Labyrinth* established Ofelia's status as female trickster (as defined by Maria Tatar) and highlighted the power of her disobedience and childish innocence, contrary to the prevalent representation of the female child in contemporary horror cinema as weak victim. The examination of *The Orphanage* offered a slightly different perspective, as the study was mainly concerned with the adult Laura's regression to childhood as the key to unlocking both the secrets of the traumatic past, and the *recent* traumatic past. In each case, it was successfully demonstrated that the child, with their all-seeing abilities, uncorrupted innocent minds, and curiosity, are far from passive victims, but instead are active agents of change that operate mainly autonomously, in separation from adults and it is their status as child that allows for justice, acceptance, and a moving on.

6.3 The Dysfunctional Family

This rupture between adult and child was at the forefront of chapter two which focussed on the dysfunctional family, and in particular the monstrous mother. Tracing the representation of the mother in Spanish cinema from insignia for a new and eternal Spain (Zamora, 2009: 5), to dangerous castrator (Kinder, 1993), chapter two offered a close reading of each family unit.

Pan's Labyrinth presents us with a traditional depiction of the family, as favoured by the Franco regime. The passive, docile Carmen is depicted as merely a vessel for the birth of Captain Vidal's son. Whilst Vidal is the militant, oppressive, domineering patriarch. As noted in the chapter, it is significant that each parent meets their demise in

the film, supporting one of the main arguments of the chapter, that through their portrayal of non-conforming family units, each film highlights how a moving away from the fascist, Catholic definition of family is a source of power and hope. Carmen's lack allows for other female characters (Ofelia and Mercedes) to flourish. As illustrated in chapter two, both Ofelia and Mercedes take on duties associated with motherhood. Carmen's lack of attention towards Ofelia, at first due to illness, and later in her death, allows Ofelia to freely explore the fantasy world and operate without intrusion from adults (apart from the one occasion where Vidal discovers the mandrake root). Ofelia's innocence and imagination (as stated above, sources of great power) are afforded the space to thrive. As in *Pan's Labyrinth, The Devil's Backbone* presents us with adult caregivers who are inadequate, once again, allowing the children the space to nurture their own independence and agency, solving the injustices of the past and forming their own family unit far removed from the ideals of the Franco regime.

The Others utilises a domineering mother whose beliefs align directly with those of the Franco regime to repress her two children to the point where she physically and permanently silences them. The repression of her children causes Anne, the eldest, to rebel against her mother. Anne constantly questions and undermines her mother's ideologies, establishing herself as an active agent through her disobedience (much like Ofelia in *Pan's*). Anne's refusal to blindly accept the teachings of her mother reinforces the concept of a generation who is willing to question the crimes committed by previous generations. It is with Anne's help that Grace is able to renounce Catholicism and her rigid beliefs and begin a new existence beyond patriarchy that the family can freely explore.

The Orphanage presents us with a doting mother and an uninterested father. Simón's disappearance further highlights the differences between the two parents. Rational patriarchy clashes with the realm of the supernatural female. Carlos eventually abandons the search for his son, leaving Laura to operate freely. Laura's exclusively female capacity to embrace the supernatural is ultimately what allows her to uncover the truth of what happened both to her missing son, and her childhood friends, without the interference of the rational patriarch. Here then, as with the majority of the other case studies, the lack of patriarchal influence is a source of empowerment for our female protagonist. Carlos is not a militant tyrant like Vidal, instead his repression of his wife is more subtle and manifests in the form of disbelieving her and forcing her to question her reality.

The analysis of motherhood in this chapter considered Ann Davies' notion that the castrating mother, as defined by Kinder in 1993, has re-emerged in the contemporary era in Spanish horror cinema (2011). Drawing on the concept of the Good Mother and the Bad Mother (Sarah Arnold, 2013), chapter two discussed instances of abuse at the hands of the mother which ultimately act as a catalyst for the horror of each film and supports the theory that the castrating mother has in fact re-emerged in this new output.

6.4 Production Design

The third and final chapter of this thesis was concerned with the home, and more specifically how the production design for each film acted as a facilitator of transcendence and closure. It became apparent throughout the writing of chapter two that in each case the child was reabsorbed into the maternal realm, recalling Barbara Creed's concept of the archaic mother (1993). Traditionally in the study of the horror film, reabsorption into the womb is considered to be a negative - resulting in death. Whilst it is true that the children are dead, they go on to live in an afterlife beyond patriarchy which I argue is a positive and a representation of the nation of Spain learning to live in a new existence beyond the death of their patriarch Francisco Franco.

The majority of the case studies feature a haunted house, which as discussed at length, lend themselves naturally to the discovery of hidden secrets and the overcoming of a past trauma. I propose that the haunted house serves many functions, from microcosm representative of Spain, to uncanny double, and domestic prison. The features of each Gothic mansion are also of great significance, and particular attention was paid to the function of the staircase as an apparatus for change and transcendence in each film. This line of enquiry led to an in-depth study of the similarities between Laura of *The Orphanage* and the Virgin Mary and brought the focus back to the important role that Catholicism and motherhood play in Spanish society.

6.5 Coda: *Parallel Mothers*

Whilst not an example of contemporary Spanish horror cinema, Almodóvar's *Parallel Mothers* is an important text in the context of this research. Almodóvar has a rich history of films with a political undercurrent, but none have been so outspoken and direct as *Parallel Mothers*. Released in 2021 and set between 2016 and 2019, *Parallel Mothers* is a melodrama which not only examines motherhood as a fluid concept, but also outwardly addresses the issue of mass graves in Spain.

The film follows two mothers, Janis and Ana who give birth on the same day in the same hospital. Unbeknownst to the mothers, their babies have accidentally been swapped. The parentage of Cecilia (originally thought to be Janis's baby) is in question throughout the first half of the film. Through DNA testing, Janis discovers that Cecilia is Ana's biological child and eventually comes clean to Ana. By the close of the film, Janis and Ana have forged a new family structure.

Within the first few moments of the film, the conversation turns to the excavation of mass graves and the limitations of the Historical Memory Law. The excavation of Janis's great-grandfather's grave runs parallel to the story of Cecilia's parentage. Forensic anthropologist Arturo outwardly critiques Mariano Rajoy, who was the Prime Minister during the time that the film is set, for his lack of financial support for the Historical Memory Law, something that feels courageous even 48 years after the end of the dictatorship. Other notable sequences include the conflict between Janis and the young Ana regarding the excavation of graves. Each woman is representative of different generations and opposing points of view. Ana repeats her father's thoughts on the matter: "You have to look to the future, otherwise you will just open old wounds."

The fact that Ana parrots the words of her father reinforces the urgency of educating the youth of the truth of the Civil War and the Franco regime. Janis's reply perfectly epitomises the intentions of this research:

> JANIS: It's time you knew what country you're living in! Noone in your family has told you the truth about your country. There are over 100,000 people missing, buried in ditches or close to cemeteries. Their grandchildren and great-grandchildren would like to disinter them and give them a decent burial because they promised that to their mothers and grandmothers. And until we do that, the war won't have ended. You're very young, but it's time you knew where your father and his family were during the war. You need to know, so you can decide where you want to be.

The final 15 minutes of the film takes on the form of a documentary, which Almodóvar states in an interview with Sight & Sound magazine is based on reality. Almodóvar conducted extensive research on the excavation of mass graves to inform this final section (Delgado, 2022). We are presented with the skeletons of the lost loved ones whilst their families look on. The documentary aesthetic reinforces the fact that what we are presented with here is still very much real in Spain. The camera lingers on the face of young Cecilia, whose dark gaze recalls that of the child protagonists in each of the films studied in this thesis (figures 44 and 45). As Carla Marcantonio states "for Almodóvar, hers is the gaze of the future. Cecilia is destined to remember that moment and the barbarity that those mass graves signify for Spanish society" (Marcantonio, 2022).

Figure 44. Cecilia gazes into the mass grave. Parallel Mothers/*El Deseo*

Figure 45. Whilst Cecilia doesn't yet understand what she is witnessing she looks down into the grave and is visibly upset. Parallel Mothers/*El Deseo*

Almodóvar does with *Parallel Mothers*, what Guillermo del Toro, Alejandro Amenábar, and J.A Bayona have done with the films studied in this thesis but much more blatantly. Spain is no longer afraid; it no longer requires the horror film to come to terms with its traumatic past. Instead Almodóvar utilises the melodrama, and a strong, progressive feminist outlook to critique the regime and the Spanish government's attempts at justice, and to send a message to the Spanish youth. Now more than ever, it is time that the great-grandchildren of Franco fight for the rights of their ancestors. As Almodóvar states “[the excavation of mass graves] is important for every generation in Spain, but especially the younger ones who are not haunted by the phantoms of the past” (Almodóvar in Delgado, 2022).

7. Reference List

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7. 2 Filmography

*Alba de América (*Dawn of America*, Spain, 1951, Dir. Juan de Orduña)*

Alien (UK/USA, 1979, Dir. Ridley Scott)

The Bad Seed (USA, 1956, Dir. Mervyn LeRoy)

The Brood (Canada, 1979, Dir. David Cronenberg)

Carrie (USA, 1976, Dir. Brian De Palma)

Un chien andalou (An Andalusian Dog, France, 1929, Dir. Luis Buñuel)

Cría cuervos (Raise Ravens, Spain, 1975, Dir. Carlos Saura)

Dracula (USA, 1931, Dir. Tod Browning)

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El espíritu de la colmena (The Spirit of the Beehive, Spain, 1973, Dir. Víctor Erice)

The Exorcist (USA, 1973, Dir. William Friedkin)

El extraño viaje (The Strange Journey, Spain, 1963, Dir. Fernando Fernán-Gómez)

Frankenstein (USA, 1931, Dir. James Whale)

Firestarter (USA, 1984, Dir. Mark L. Lester)

Gritos en la noche (The Awful Dr. Orlof, Spain/France, 1962, Dir. Jesús Franco)

El laberinto del fauno (Pan's Labyrinth*,* Spain/Mexico, 2006, Dir. Guillermo del Toro)

Los sin nombre (The Nameless*,* Spain, 1999, Dir. Jaume Balagueró)

Madres paralelas (Parallel Mothers, Spain, Dir. Pedro Almodóvar, 2021)

La morte rouge (The Red Death, Spain, 2006, Dir. Víctor Erice)

La noche del terror ciego (Tombs of the Blind Dead, Spain/Portugal, 1972, Dir. Amando de Ossorio)

No-Do (The Haunting*,* Spain, Dir. Elio Quiroga, 2009)

Nosferatu, euine symphonie des grauens (Germany, 1922, Dir. F.W. Murnau)

The Omen (UK/USA, 1976, Dir. Richard Donner)

The Others (Spain/USA/France/Italy, 2001, Dir. Alejandro Amenábar)

El orfanato (The Orphanage, Spain, 2007, Dir. J.A. Bayona)

Psycho (USA, 1960, Dir. Alfred Hitchcock)

Rosemary's Baby (USA, 1968, Dir. Roman Polanski)

The Scarlet Claw (USA, 1944, Dir. Roy William Neill)

The Shining (UK/USA, 1980, Dir. Stanley Kubrick)

El silencio de otros (The Silence of Others, Spain, Dir. Robert Bahar & Almudena Carracedo, 2018)

*Surcos (*Furrows*, Spain, 1951, Dir. José Antonio Nieves Conde)*

Tristana (Spain/Italy/France, 1970, Dir. Luis Buñuel)

¿Quién puede matar a un niño? (Who Can Kill a Child? Spain, 1976, Dir. Narciso Ibáñez Serrador)