3. The Child and Spanish Historical Trauma

Abstract

Chapter Three establishes the cultural context for the late 1990s/early 2000s wave of Spanish horror films featuring uncanny children. The chapter demonstrates how childhood became entangled with a tightly controlled narrative of national progress in post-Civil War Spain through the autocratic Franco regime. In the heavily censored film industry of Franco's 36-year reign (1939-1975), the cinematic child became a conceptual tool of Francoist propaganda, positing a sense of continuity between pre-Republican Imperialist Spain and postwar Franco fascism. Thus, the child came to hold a particularly significant but precarious ideological role in late 20th-century Spanish cinema. This context positions the uncanny child of millennial Spanish cinema as an important tool of collective memory that challenges Spain's previously dominant historical narrative.

Keywords: Childhood, Spanish Civil War, Collective memory, Spanish cinema, Franco, History

In the American films analysed in the previous section, the child is embroiled in the imperilled selfhood of adult protagonists, unmasking an adult-centric preoccupation with childhood as symbolic of the adult's past and unconscious. In turn, the children in these films become bound up with the adult protagonist's own repressed memories, troubling the solid distinctions between present and past, self and other in a process that mirrors Freudian models of trauma. The uncanny child also became a central recurring feature in Spanish horror films of the millennial turn. These gothic supernatural films[1] are similarly fixated with the child's paradoxically constituted other-

1 The Spanish uncanny child films analysed in this book belong to a fertile mode of post-millennial Spanish filmmaking that Xavier Aldana Reyes (2017) defines as part of a continuing 'Spanish Gothic' tradition.

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ness and association with a supernatural, traumatic dimension. Instead of embodying the inner child of the individual adult psyche, however, the uncanny child is often explicitly intertwined with historical trauma in the Spanish films. In these films, signs of the child's Freudian entanglement with the past traumas of adulthood are evident – after all, as the previous section indicates, this mythology has infiltrated popular culture on a broad scale. However, the thematic emphasis in these films is no longer the child's disruptions to the present self-identity of adult protagonists. In these films, the child's spectral empowerment of suppressed traumas allows a reconsideration of entrenched teleological narratives not only of growing up, but of national progress and accepted history.

Thus, rather than disturbing individual selfhood, the children of millennial Spanish horror embody the repressed spectres of the collective cultural memory, and unravel the constrictive ligatures of national identity that previously worked to obscure the cultural wounds of post-Civil War Spanish society. Helen Graham and Jo Labanyi explain that:

> The history of twentieth-century Spanish culture is – as the Civil War made particularly apparent – the history of a struggle between different ways of interpreting the world, and different ways of interpreting Spanish society in particular: a battle of meanings which shaped individual and collective identities, and affected the material conditions of individual and collective existence. (1995, 6)

For reasons discussed throughout this chapter, from the 1940s onwards, Spanish cinema has been bound up with the projection and configuration of the national narrative, and thus tied to the battle of meanings Graham and Labanyi describe in intricate ways. In particular, films in the decades following the war – many of which functioned as fascist propaganda – often anchored their ideological projects to the child.

As this chapter demonstrates, in the postwar period cultural mythologies of the child became deeply entwined with Francoist trajectories of national progress that worked to suppress the cultural traumas of the Civil War (1936-1939) and dictatorship (1939-1975). Yet this overdrawn sociopolitical function positions the child as a site of resistance in dissident horror and art films that emerged towards the end of Franco's regime, a crucible for the unacknowledged cultural tensions that threaten Francoist ideals of smooth national progress. Subsequently, the following chapter consists of a close analysis of The Devil's Backbone (Guillermo del Toro, 2001), The Nameless (Jaume Balageuró, 1999), and The Orphanage (Juan Antonio Bayona, 2007),

metonymic examples of millennial Spanish horror films featuring uncanny children that are particularly precise and forceful in their interweaving of the aesthetics of trauma with the uncanny child. However, these films are by no means the only examples of recent Spanish horror films featuring uncanny children.[2] In each of these films, the uncanny child invokes the (re)emergence of trauma in a particularly powerful manner in a Spanish context, as a result of childhood's tethering to narratives of progress that attempt to cover over or figure a break from unsavoury recent pasts.

In Spain, this relentless looking forward at the expense of adequately assimilating the past has become a defining condition of modernity, both in the period directly following the Civil War and again after the long-anticipated collapse of the Franco dictatorship after his death on 20 November 1975. Particularly in the decades following the Civil War, the child became knotted with Francoist processes of national mythmaking, precisely instituting the function outlined by Edelman in which the child 'remains the perpetual horizon of every acknowledged politics, the fantasmatic beneficiary of every political intervention' (2004, 3). The uncanny child of late 20th- and early 21st-century Spanish horror troubles this overdetermined Francoist function by subverting the child's sociocultural position as incubator for the future, instead exposing the extent to which suppressed pasts coexist with the present in ways that threaten notions of progress or 'moving on'. As will be explored in Chapter Four, through the child, these films play out in sociopolitical terms the dreadful belated recognition at the core of traumatic experience. Enhancing the unsettling affects of this device, the broad trajectories of postwar Spanish cinema are themselves characterized by the same temporal belatedness that suffuses the diegesis of these millennial horror films: the traumas of the Civil War were not played out

2 Other child-centred Spanish horror films of the early 21st century include The Dark Hour (Elio Quiroga, 2006), Shiver (Isidro Ortiz, 2008), and Painless (Juan Carlos Medina, 2012). Another very similar film is Pan's Labyrinth (Guillermo del Toro, 2006), a particularly noticeable omission from this chapter, for it has been one of the most successful Spanish exports of the 21st century, having won three Academy Awards and having grossed $83 million, the highest ever for a Spanish-language film. Yet while this film indeed associates the child with an otherworldly realm with clearly established allegorical links with the turbulent Civil War period, it is a work of fantasy rather than a gothic supernatural film – and in turn it deals with temporality in different ways to the films discussed throughout this book. In addition, the audience is invited to identify in a more unproblematic way with the central child protagonist than in most films of the transnational uncanny child cycle, in which the child is a figure to fear as well as a figure with which to empathize. Yet Pan's Labyrinth does indeed draw on the themes of the uncanny child cycle. In particular, the film engages with The Devil's Backbone, del Toro's earlier film – in fact, he calls these two films his 'brother and sister pieces' (2006, n.p.).

on film until the final years of Franco's regime, and even then in muddied, opaque forms.

Spanish Horror and Collective Memory

Millennial Spanish horror films thus draw on processes of collective memory in complex ways, augmenting the psychically rooted, Freudian mechanisms of the American films previously discussed. French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs established the concept of collective memory, suggesting that:

> it is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize and localize their memories. [...] It is in this sense that there exists a collective memory and social frameworks for memory; it is to the degree that our individual thought places itself in these frameworks and participates in this memory that it is capable of the act of recollection. (1992, 38)

Halbwachs thus suggests that individual memory constantly interfaces with collectively assembled memories and the national identities with which these collective processes interact: 'the individual remembers by placing himself in the perspective of the group, but one may also affirm that the memory of the group realizes and manifests itself in individual memories' (1992, 40). As Rafael F. Narváez elucidates, Halbwachs makes a 'famous distinction between history and collective memory, where history belongs to a dead past and collective memory lives organically in the present' (2013, 11). Collective memory thus suggests that cultural imaginings of national pasts shift according to contemporary context, challenging concepts of a fixed and linear national history and revealing 'that the past is organically connected to the collective order, and thus anchored within the present. It means that the past is thus actualized, acted out and re-*presented* by the individual and by the social group' (emphasis in original, Narváez, 2013, 11).

Unlike official histories, collective memory is a continually developing consideration of the past and its relationship with the present, which can retrospectively reconfigure or deconstruct entrenched historical narratives. Media representations are central to this process of collective memory building – as Alison Landsberg suggests in *Prosthetic Memory* (2004), a text central to my analytical framework in Section Three, cinema has the potential to facilitate a process of collective memory formation even amongst individuals who did not live through the pasts represented. Thus, films – particularly those that self-reflexively engage with their cultural

context – can build upon and recompose the collective memories embedded within concepts of national identity. In turn, particularly affective cinematic representations, like those that populate horror cinema, may become knotted to an individual's identity in the form of potent personal memories. This process illustrates the interplay between individual and collective memories involved in shifting concepts of national identity. As Landsberg suggests, 'the cinema offers spectators from diverse backgrounds and ancestries a shared archive of experience' (2004, 14).

In her book *The Child in Spanish Cinema* (2013) – the first text to broadly chart the child's significant role in Spanish cinema – Sarah Wright links children in Spanish cinema to such processes, suggesting that 'the child has emerged as a central figure in the politics of memory' and is therefore 'symbolic not only of the loss of historical memory and its recuperation after a time-lag but also it is often a site of trauma in contemporary memory wars' (2013, 14). Through the child, Spanish horror films of the millennial period tend to explore how the contemporary reconfiguration of the collective memory, sparked by belated traumatic recollection, works to unsettle established historical narratives – an especially resonant fixation because national identity was carefully manufactured through child characters in post-Civil War films.

Later in this book, in Section Four, I examine another uncanny child film released in the same year as The Devil's Backbone that is also often delineated as Spanish – The Others (Alejandro Amenábar, 2001). As I will show, unlike the films analysed in this section, The Others is placed squarely in-between specific cultural contexts because it is performed in (British) English, was coproduced with the Hollywood production company Cruise/Wagner Productions (which received top-billing over Spanish company Sogecine), and was positioned as a Hollywood product to external markets. As a result, the Spanish origins of this transnational film may not have been acknowledged by the majority of viewers outside of Spain, and, as it is not set in Spain, it does not set out to engage directly with Spain's history and collective memory. By contrast, The Devil's Backbone, The Nameless, and The Orphanage were filmed and are set in Spain, and are performed in Spanish. The Nameless and The Orphanage were developed by Spanish directors and production companies, while Backbone was a Spanish-Mexican coproduction with a Mexican director. Although Backbone and The Orphanage in particular were, like The Others, marketed for and appropriated by global audiences,[3] central to the aesthetic and thematic

3 Antonio Lázaro-Reboll illuminates the transnational properties of Backbone (2007), a point to which I will return in Section Four.

constitution of each of these films is their complex, often allegorical exploration of the national narrative, and the ways that processes of collective memory reconfigured the relations between Spain's past and its present in the late 20th- and early 21st century. Thus, unlike The Others, these films establish a clear relationship with the Spanish cultural context from which they emerge, and their visions of childhood are strongly influenced by – and engage with – 50 years of Spanish film history.

The Horror Genre in a Spanish Context

Despite going through a boom period between 1968 to 1975 – during which exploitation films flourished, many of which were produced, directed, and/or written by schlock auteur Jesús Franco – Spanish horror cinema was a largely marginal genre both locally and abroad until the genre's revival in the late 1990s. In the first and, to date, only comprehensive study of Spanish horror cinema written in English, Antonio Lázaro-Reboll points out that while the horror films of the 1960s and early 1970s were often commercially successful, they were 'reviled by contemporary critics, film historians and scholars, who consigned horror titles to the margins of Spanish film history' (2012, 5). Furthermore, Lázaro-Reboll notes that while horror films of this period were released in both domestic and external markets, due to strict censorship 'Spanish audiences continued to consume the squeaky-clean, censored versions of films whose more explicit originals were exported for international consumption' (2012, 20). In his study of the Spanish Gothic mode, Xavier Aldana Reyes describes the horror films of this period as 'a survivor type of cinema, staying afloat' – in spite of censorship conditions – 'thanks to its moderate success' (2017, 191). In order to work around censorship, these films usually foreground foreign settings and actors, rather than establishing overt or clear links with their local context.[4]

Following this boom in exploitation pictures, the horror genre was largely displaced from the late 1970s to the early 1990s, a result of a complex series of events subsequent to the death of Francisco Franco in 1975: namely, the decline of his despotic regime and subsequent lifting of media censorship in late 1977, and the introduction of a film legislation by the new Socialist Government in 1983 (known as Ley Miró). As Andrew Willis suggests, horror's marginality 'was heightened when democracy was restored and critical

4 Although Lázaro-Reboll points out that, while 'the coding of the source of horror as foreign [...] was a must [...] specific elements did often connect the film with the Spanish landscape, for many locations are recognisably Spanish' (2012, 22).

interest began to focus on how film-makers would negotiate and engage with that historical moment. The horror film and its place in Spanish film history quickly became forgotten. Arguably, that would not change until the end of the twentieth century' (2004, 238). Throughout the transition period and early stages of democracy, the horror genre was antithetical to the national project of rapid modernization, and a boom of prestige historical and political films largely displaced domestic horror output. Lázaro-Reboll explains that this period saw an intense focus on 'the production and distribution of "quality" films – that is, auteurist, middle-brow and high-brow products, which were based mainly on literary and historical sources. The serious art-film [...] was instituted as the new brand of official cultural cinema, bringing to an end a specific type of genre filmmaking' (2012, 176).

Thus, just as The Sixth Sense sparked a new cycle of supernatural horror cinema in America following its release in 1999, the Spanish cycle emerged to revive the horror genre around the millennial turn, and a number of major works in this horror renaissance circulated around the uncanny child. The Devil's Backbone was particularly influential: the film that helped to launch del Toro's career as a horror and fantasy auteur, Backbone has received widespread critical acclaim while being commercially successful in both domestic and global markets. It was nominated for awards at a number of regional and global genre festivals such as the USA Academy of Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror Films, The International Horror Guild, and The American Latino Media Arts Awards, and won the Grand Prize at the Amsterdam Fantastic Film Festival and Special Prize at the Festival international du film fantastique de Gérardmer. Through its global recognition, the film helped to ignite a wave of gothic Spanish horror films. Lázaro-Reboll concurs that 'for decades, horror has been the outcast genre of Spanish cinema' (2012, 5), while the 1990s and 2000s 'have witnessed the commercial, critical and cultural renaissance of the horror genre in Spain' (2012, 6). Throughout the first decade of the 21st century, Spanish horror films dominated the local box office – Lázaro-Reboll points out that Spanish-produced horror films drew the highest box-office earnings in Spain in 2001, 2007, and 2009, beating stiff competition from Hollywood blockbusters such as Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End (Gore Verbinski, 2007, 199).[5] This explosion in the production and popularity of

5 Notably, two of these films, The Others (2001) and The Orphanage (2007) revolve around uncanny children. While the third, Julia's Eyes (Guillem Morales, 2010), does not feature a child, the film deals with repressed pasts and their relationship to the passed developmental stage of 'childhood' in a manner which resonates strongly with the uncanny child films. In fact, the

local horror cinema during the millennial turn and early 21st century suggests that during this period, the genre became an intensely charged locus for expressing the tensions that have moulded contemporary Spain. The cultural significance of this horror revival is illuminated when considering the extent to which film has sculpted the national narrative post Civil War.

Spanish Cinema Under Franco

While concealed beneath a blanket of Francoist and, later, transitional narratives of successful national progress, the course of modernity in Spanish culture has been particularly incongruous and uneven. This can be seen as an effect of the Civil War between the liberal Republicans loyal to the established Spanish republic and the conservative, Franco-led Nationalists, and the subsequent Franco dictatorship. Resulting in approximately 500,000 deaths and exposing an impassable ideological fissure between what has become known as 'the two Spains', the Civil War was, in the words of Peter Besas, 'one of the most violent conflicts of [the 20th] century' (1988, 13) which left Spain 'in ruins, exhausted, depleted' (1988, 15). However, the acute national trauma associated with the war and subsequent dictatorship has almost totally eluded cultural expression up until quite recently.

The articulation of national trauma was actively suppressed by the fascist government throughout Franco's reign. Censorship laws were extremely strict under Franco, who strived to tightly control all cultural production in order to regulate national consciousness and the national narrative. Franco's government carried out such ideological work in order to quash Republican discourse and thus to superficially paste over the cleft that continued to separate the 'two Spains', and to position the Civil War – instigated by a violent coup against the democratically elected Republicans – as a necessary, justifiable act for the good of Spain. Central to this process was the repression of the very recent past, both that of the Republican-governed Spain and the violence of the Civil War, and the subsequent attempt to construct a smooth continuum between the new fascist regime and the Imperial Spain of a bygone era. Tatjana Pavlović et al. explain that during the period directly after the Civil War – known in Spain as the *anos de hambre* (years of hunger) due to a financial crisis and widespread unemployment – Franco set about

film stars Belén Rueda, who also plays the adult protagonist of The Orphanage, and her role as a woman constantly affected by the lingering spectres of repressed childhood trauma echoes the earlier film.

securing the foundations of his oppressive ideology, 'with its exaltation of the fatherland, uncritical celebration of "Spanishness", promotion of the military ethos, and repressive assertion of order and social control' (2009, 55). Franco regarded cinema as a vital tool in propagating his doctrine; Raymond Carr points out that, in the decades following the Civil War, Spain 'was a nation of cinema addicts' (1980, 164), with more cinema chairs per capita than any other European country. Subsequently, as Franco and his government were well aware, the films that Franco sanctioned following the Civil War represented the 'only images most Spaniards had of their country's recent history' (Virginia Higginbotham, 1988, 18), exposing the extent to which cinema in Spain engendered the formation of post-Civil War cultural consciousness and set in place a national metanarrative.

Cinema in the Post-Civil War Period

Spanish cinema in the years directly following the Civil War largely consisted of quasi-propaganda films that legitimized the war and cast the Nationalist cause as heroic, although often in indirect ways that avoided representing the war directly. While the Civil War was rarely explored on film even in its immediate aftermath, Marvin D'Lugo notes that there was a 'tendency toward the aggrandizement of the heroic, militant values of The New Era even in films unrelated to the theme of the war' as a number of films emerged in the postwar years that 'did not deal explicitly with the war but connected with it by exalting the army and militarism directly' (1997, 11).[6] Following the war, Spain's fascist regime faced ostracism from most of Europe and the rest of the world, a segregation that deepened through Franco's enforcement of the politics of autarky. As Pavlović et al aptly assert, 'in this isolated climate the legitimization of the new Nationalist dictatorship was tied to the validation of what was deemed to be the "authentic" Spain' (2009, 61). In an effort to valorize Spain's cultural and economic isolation, Franco aimed to utilize cinema to champion an independent, exalted Spain that should be insulated from the 'sullying' influences of other cultures. As a result, much of Spanish cinema became consumed with projecting a mythologized Spanish cultural unity, constructing a teleological national master narrative as the singular correct one. This cinema is characterized by the celebration of pre-Republican, Imperial Spain in order to express, as

6 Notable examples are The Legion's For Me! (Juan de Orduña, 1942) and Martyrs of the Philippines (Antonio Román, 1945).

articulated by Graham, an 'idealized, highly tendentious image of Spain's imperial past as a model for its present' (1995, 237).[7]

Intertwined with Franco's construction of this national narrative was an emphasis on restoring the overarching power of Catholicism and the fortitude of patriarchal family values. As Marsha Kinder points out, the fascist melodramas that dominated the film industry after the Civil War privilege 'the family as the primary site where ideological issues can be displaced and naturalized', as this genre 'acknowledges and politicizes the connection between the domestic and public realms. [...] it proclaims the family as a legitimate site for effective political action, mobilizing "the people" around universal issues of morality, generation, and gender that cut across class lines' (1993, 72). In this context, the child becomes deeply entangled with Franco's ideological project, figured as a particularly vulnerable and precarious sociopolitical unit that must be carefully moulded for the successful advancement of Spanish society. As Wright suggests, 'in the sense that Francoism was based on conservative family values, bolstered by religious imagery, as a way to sustain patriarchy, the aura surrounding the child fitted perfectly' (2013, 31). As Franco himself stated, cultural solidarity necessitated 'the total education of children in a political creed that is based on eternal truths: the law of God, service to the Fatherland and the general wellbeing of the Spanish people' (cited in Wright, 2013, 31). Subsequently, 'the children of Franco' – a term explored by Marsha Kinder (1983, 57) and explicated in Chapter Four – have become an intensely overdetermined and multidirectional category, reflecting a great deal about the ways the child is enmeshed with considerations of national trauma in contemporary Spanish cultural discourse.

The importance of the child and the nuclear family as microcosms of Spanish society in Francoist ideology is evidenced in the film that Franco himself scripted and produced, released soon after the end of the Civil War: Raza (Race, José Luis Sáenz de Heredia, 1941). Pavlović suggests that, with Raza, Franco 'is simultaneously erasing and rewriting Spanish history, while obsessively recounting his own family story' (2003, 30). The film details the story of a military family across a 50-year time period, focusing on three sons who all traverse differing life paths following the declaration of the Spanish Republic in 1931. One brother grows up to become a priest and is executed by Republicans; another abandons the Nationalist ideals of his family (with disastrous results, as he is shot and killed by his Republican comrades); while

7 Examples include Inês de Castro (José Leitão de Barros, 1944), Eugenia de Montijo (José López Rubio, 1944), and The Madness of Love (Juan de Orduña, 1948).

the third brother, a thinly veiled, fictionalized reconstruction of Franco himself, becomes a Nationalist hero in the Civil War – the climax depicts him marching in a victory parade, which instigates the glorious reunification of the remaining members of his family. Central to this triumphant scene is the war hero's little nephew, who proudly watches his uncle from the crowd and signals the continuation of his grand legacy. Thus, as Pavlović et al articulate, the film 'conflates family unity with national accord. In this way, historical discourse is embodied in the experience of this "exemplary family"' (2009, 71).

To project its didactic message, Raza rather anxiously emphasizes the importance of the correct development of the child under the nuclear family, establishing a comparison between the trajectories of the three brothers to ensure that the most worthy life path is illuminated. Thus, the film constructs the child's growing up as paralleling the progression of a Spanish grand narrative. In rigorous and drawn out detail, Raza sets out a strict linear vector for the progression from childhood to adulthood that consciously parallels the teleological post-Civil War national narrative according to Francoist ideology, a trend that would continue throughout Franco's regime. As Wright suggests, 'if Francoist cinema might be described as an exercise in the "mass mobilisation of affect", then the child rose up as an affective key, twinning culture and politics' (2013, 31-32).

Marisol and the cine con niño

Besides military films, the other variety of films to project idealized visions of childhood in service of the national narrative was the *cine con niño* (child-centred cinema), which became particularly popular throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Spain developed its own autochthonous child star system during this period, which produced huge stars such as Pablito Calvo, Joselito, and Marisol (often known as the 'Spanish Shirley Temple'). The vehicles for these child prodigies – which include The Miracle of Marcelino (Ladislao Vajda, 1955) and An Angel has Appeared (Luis Lucia, 1961) – depict perfect children who embody the exultant national homogeneity central to Francoist constructions of post-Civil War identity. Referring to perhaps the most famous of these child stars, Marisol, Peter Evans explains that 'in her all-singing, all-dancing, all-talking vivacity [Marisol embodies] the hectic expression of a nation's sham illusion of utopian festivity' (2004, 129). In many of these films, the children are orphans, an all-too common reality in post-Civil War Spain. However, as Wright suggests, by the mid 1950s, the child war-orphan was no longer a social reality, yet 'the rhetoric

of the child orphan and child martyr continued to hold sway' (2013, 24). Notably, despite their fixation with orphans, the *cine con niño* does not employ this device to acknowledge the many children orphaned by the Civil War, nor to consider the conceptual threat such children may pose to Francoist models of seamless patriarchal, intergenerational progress. These films instead suppress such tensions by displacing the Civil War: for instance, in An Angel has Appeared Marisol is left an orphan after her father, a fisherman, drowns at sea. Instead, the films tend to position the orphaned child as a martyr of the Nationalist cause who embodies a break with the recent past – the Civil War never being overtly referenced in such films – instead seeming to spawn from a romanticized, often indeterminate folkloric past.

The Civil War itself is thus elided as the precocious child constructs an illusory continuity with a pre-Republican, Imperial Spain and the post-Civil War present. As Wright elucidates, 'if Francoism had to do with a yearning to recover a lost mythical state of grace now brought into the realm of politics, then the child, always caught between nostalgia and the future, encapsulated this longing' (2013, 31). The national significance of this mythic cultural past is succinctly conjured by the popular Spanish folk songs warbled by the child in all of the Marisol films. Marisol's folk performances craft a sense of cultural pride and triumph for Franco's Nationalist present through conjuring an 'authentic' cultural past, and suggesting a smooth continuity between the two temporal realms. It is of course significant that this constructed sense of cultural continuity is mobilized by the figure of the perfect child, who also anticipates the glory of Spain's impending future. Wright points out that the 'implicit narrative encapsulated in Marisol's persona was the move towards modernity' (2013, 71) despite the fact that these films, and in fact Marisol's star persona as a whole, emphasize her roots in traditional, rural Spain. For instance, Celestino Deleyto suggests that by the mid 1960s, Marisol films suggest an imminent new era of tourism and capitalist prosperity after the isolation and economic hardship of the postwar years, heralding 'a golden future in which foreign nations [...] will come to envy [Spain] and recognise the superiority of its ideological doctrine' (1994, 243). Thus, the *cine con niño* projects in extremely narrow, utopian form the process described by Edelman whereby the child embodies 'history as linear narrative [...] in which meaning succeeds in revealing itself – *as itself* – through time' (Edelman, 2004, 4). Evidently, the child in this context expresses an overdetermined relationship to time and the Spanish national narrative, which barely conceals the anxieties surrounding the child's portentous ideological position in Francoist Spain.

Cinema in the Final Years of the Regime

It is exactly this rigid association of the child with linearity and national master narratives that oppositional cinema created towards the end of Franco's regime starts to destabilize. In the early 1970s, Franco's death seemed imminent due to a prolonged battle with Parkinson's disease (among other illnesses). Furthermore, the impending decomposition of his regime was politically marked by his designation of Prince Juan Carlos de Borbón as his heir-apparent in 1969, and his surrender of prime ministerial function in 1973. The gradual disintegration of his regime was heralded by his death in November 1975. Throughout this uncertain period, subtly dissident art films began to emerge, in which the child and childhood become the sites of the as yet unfathomable collective trauma that had been denied in Francoist cinema. The formative and most influential of these art films are The Spirit of the Beehive (Victor Eríce, 1973), Ana and the Wolves (Carlos Saura, 1973), Cousin Angelica (Saura, 1974), and Raise Ravens (Saura, 1976), all of which feature child characters who ambiguously suggest a delayed cultural response to the wounds of the Civil War and oppressive dictatorship.

Horror Film and the New Spanish Cinema

Due to ongoing censorship that prevented filmmakers from overtly examining the Civil War or the Republican cause – and also a lack of resources and political certainty during this precarious period – a fair proportion of the films released throughout this period were these elusive art films and cheaply made, lucrative, B-grade horror films.[8] These horror films were often made possible through international coproduction and tended to be released in Spain in vastly censored, truncated forms (yet distributed internationally with all their blood and gore intact). By contrast, the seminal art films of the early 1970s directed by auteurs Victor Eríce and Carlos Saura were released at the tail end not only of Franco's dictatorship, but also of a politically sanctioned project aimed at raising the perceived quality of Spanish cinema both domestically and abroad. Both types of films were made possible by the loosening of censorship. As Willis explains, 'following a period of arch-conservatism after the nationalist victory in the Civil War, Spanish cinema in the 1960s is marked by a clear liberalization of the

8 Such horror films include Vampyros Lesbos (Jesús Franco, 1971), Tombs of the Blind Dead (Amando de Ossorio, 1972), and Night of the Howling Beast (Miguel Iglesias, 1975).

government's attitude towards films that might be seen as critical of the regime' (2003, 72).[9]

In 1962, the regime created a body led by José María García Escudero aimed at developing a 'New Spanish Cinema' with artistic merit. In an attempt to rescue Spain's failing film industry, Escudero instituted changes including increases in government funding for 'special interest' films, an overhaul of the censorship board, and developments to the *Escuela Oficial de Cine* (Madrid's Official Film School). As has been outlined in the work of John Hopewell (1986), Kinder (1993), and Willis (2003), while The New Spanish Cinema led to the production of films that would have previously been approached with caution, censorship, or even outright banning by the authorities – as was the case with Luis Buñuel's internationally lauded but domestically banned Viridiana (1961) – this institutionalized, carefully monitored art movement sought to facilitate more prestigious, internationally visible cultural products. Eríce attended the Official Film School in the 1960s, while Saura (who attended the school prior to the changes ushered in by Escudero) benefitted from the support of the New Spanish Cinema to release The Hunt (1966) and Peppermint Frappé (1967), both of which fulfilled the project of the New Spanish Cinema by winning Silver Bears for Best Director at the seventeenth and eighteenth Berlin International Film Festivals. However ultimately, the New Spanish Cinema was an economic failure. As Lázaro-Reboll points out:

> between 1968 and 1975 the Spanish film industry – never very healthy – was witness to the closure of one-third of its total number screens [...] and a decrease in the sector's income. By 1968, therefore, the Spanish film industry was in a critical state [...] and the NCE [New Spanish Cinema] was practically defunct. (2012, 19-20)

Yet directors such as Saura and Eríce continued to receive critical acclaim following the initial support of the New Spanish Cinema: The Spirit of The Beehive won the prestigious Golden Seashell at the San Sebastian Film Festival, and Raise Ravens received the Cannes Film Festival Special Jury prize.

9 However, Labanyi suggests that this period was short-lived, as, by 1973 (the year of Spirit of the Beehive's release), 'hard-line, repressive censorship returned' due to the assassination of Franco's prime minister – and suspected planned successor – Luis Carrero Blanco by Basque terrorist group the E.T.A. (2007, 97).

Ultimately, it is important to consider that, throughout the final years of Franco's reign, the two dominant film trends were:

1. Art film attempts to approach the cultural traumas of the Civil War and dictatorship through an elliptical structure that skirted the line between subversiveness and politically sanctioned art, often through the obscure and confused perceptions of a child (as is the case with two of the most successful and culturally significant products to emerge out of the New Spanish Cinema, Beehive and Ravens).
2. Outlandish, often extremely violent horror films that did not have the Civil War on their thematic radar yet nevertheless expressed the wholesale unleashing of repressed tensions following three decades of oppressive censorship. As Lázaro-Reboll suggests, these films were 'a barometer of the decades' contradictorily overt conformism and latent dissent, a time when the repressed was on the verge of making a return, in monstrous form' (2012, 12).

Thus, both types of film respond to the uncertainty of the early 1970s via a still nascent consideration of long-denied cultural trauma. As will be seen in the next chapter, in their similarly eerie and shocking confrontations with cultural trauma, the child-centred horror films of the late 1990s and early 2000s draw together the two prevailing styles of the liminal 1970s.

Who Can Kill a Child?

Of particular note during this period is horror film Who Can Kill a Child? (Narciso Ibáñez Serrador, 1976), which can be seen as a forebear to the horror cycle of the late 1990s and early 2000s. The film depicts the story of an English couple on a visit to a quaint Spanish island, which they discover is inhabited by maniacally violent children. Released only five months after Franco's death, the film erupted at a particularly uncertain sociopolitical moment. Lázaro-Reboll points out that the film sparked controversy, with many commentators dismissing it as a shallow provocation that was low-grade and derivative: 'in many instances, the director himself and his work were the subjects of disapproval and derision' (2012, 121). Yet in fact, the film edges towards the concealed ideological domain of the art films of this period, openly expressing the horrific effects of war and oppression upon the figure of the child, both as concept and as living member of Spanish society.

The film opens with a montage of documentary footage and images depicting children left wounded and starving as a result of various wars

and cataclysmic historical events, with figures indicating the number of children left dead in their wake. In accordance with the lingering bounds of censorship, Spain's own Civil War is not included in this montage, but eerily overarches it through its absence. The children are a monstrous subversion of the perfect orphan martyrs of the *cine con niño*: while the adult protagonists initially assume that the children on the island are innocent orphans, they come to learn that the children killed all the adults on the island out of an apparent impulse for revenge. The terrifying antagonism of the children is enhanced by the fact that they speak Spanish, but the adult protagonists only speak and understand English – in part due to the film's positioning for international markets – sustaining an impenetrable gulf of untranslatability between them. Both protagonists eventually die at the hands of the children: most dramatically, female protagonist Evelyn is murdered from within her own body by her unborn child. The film ends as some of the murderous youngsters journey across the ocean on a motorboat to mainland Spain. In the film's final lines, a little girl asks 'Do you think the other children will start playing the way we do?', to which a young boy – the children's leader – replies, 'Oh yes. There are lots of children in the world. Lots of them.' Thus, the film overtly positions the children as a powerful, monstrous force finally enacting their vengeance against an adult society that has violently oppressed them.

The children's rage is presented in the film as a generalized antipathy towards adulthood, in a conscious effort to prevent the already controversial subject matter from being perceived as an outright political attack. Thus, while a mutation of the innocent, pure children of the *cine con niño* is played out, this occurs in generalized terms that sidestep the specifics of cultural context, as is reinforced by the film's largely English dialogue, and the isolated setting on Almanzora island. Upholding this vague generality, director Serrador stated at the time of the film's release 'I don't like talking about the message of a film but I think [in the case of my film] this is easy to understand. If the children are cruel and they rebel against the adults, they are not to blame; we are to blame' (cited in Lázaro-Reboll, 2012, 119). However, the war and dictatorship are implicated in obfuscated ways: absent from the narrative and opening montage, the war and subsequent Francoist oppression loom over the entire film as probable causes of the children's mutation, in a potent enactment of the 'complex ways that knowing and not knowing are entangled in the language of trauma and in the stories associated with it', a crisis marked by 'the ways it simultaneously demands and defies our witness' (Caruth, 1996, 4-5). Despite its forceful expression of trauma, Who Can Kill A Child? was largely displaced from Spain's

cultural consciousness with the transition to democracy – as was the general tendency with Spanish horror films of this period – and in fact the film was largely unavailable for home viewing until the millennial Spanish horror boom, via a 2007 DVD release by Dark Sky Films.

Child-Centred Art Cinema

Unlike the exploitation horror films that symbolically play out cultural trauma via their gore and violence (plentiful in Who Can Kill a Child?), the art films that emerged in the final years of the dictatorship are permeated by the historical fractures of a postwar context. Yet these art films approach this trauma in such esoteric, uncanny ways that their style has become known as the *esthetica franquista*, the 'Francoist aesthetic' or what Higginbotham describes as the 'aesthetic of repression' (1988, 129). The two seminal art films considered in the next chapter, The Spirit of the Beehive and Raise Ravens, represent the apotheosis of this aesthetic. As will be seen, the use of the child in this framework has particularly compelling resonances with Caruth's description of trauma as an event 'experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known' (1996, 4): the child characters are forced to confront distressing situations that they are not yet equipped to comprehend or contextualize. This process allegorically refracts the deferred processes of recognition inherent in Spain's cultural response to the traumas of Civil War, not explored in popular culture until decades after it occurred. Unlike the largely overlooked Who Can Kill a Child?,[10] The Spirit of the Beehive and Raise Ravens are among Spain's most well-known and culturally revered cinematic releases, and their usage of the child as witness of trauma vastly influences later horror films.[11]

10 The film has gradually amassed cult status following screenings by cult/genre festivals and clubs (for instance, Cinefamily's and Spectrevison's 2014 screening in Los Angeles of the only remaining 35 mm print of the film), and its recent DVD release.

11 Beehive in particular is considered a master text of both Spanish cinema and child-centred cinema. As David Martin-Jones suggests, it has become metonymic of a 'child film format', which uses a child character to consider historical upheaval (2011, 81-82). Furthermore, scholars such as Labanyi (2007), Perriam (2008), and Wright (2013) have examined the ways in which the film explores the politics of memory and cultural trauma through little Ana. As Perriam states in his eloquent description of the film:

> It stages a series of possible reactions to and interpretations of the state of Spain, on the one hand, and a state of mind, on the other hand, connected to horror, nightmare, vicarious remembrance, the loss of innocence [...] In a manner whose obscurity, temporal discontinuity, illogicality, and ungraspability are appropriate to the symptoms of trauma, the film sporadically crossmatches Ana's crisis to a nation's crisis. (2008, 67)

As I chart in detail in the next chapter, the powerful incoherence of the child's trauma in these art films challenges linear narratives of national progression – so bound to childhood's Francoist function – a process self-consciously magnified in temporally complex ways in millennial horror films. Gestating within the children of the art films are as yet unfathomable fissures that threaten to erupt in monstrous and destructive ways in the future – a 'future' that millennial horror films claim, in relation to these art film inter-texts, as their own present. Thus, the uncanny child of millennial horror first stirs in these art films as an arcane and ominous embodiment of national trauma, of which the deep ramifications for Spanish national identity cannot yet be fully articulated but incubate within the child, to erupt in an unknowable future.

Ultimately, both the art and B-grade horror films of the 1970s may seem generically worlds apart, yet they express an intersecting cultural function. While the horror films function as a violent but wilfully indirect acting out of long-simmering national trauma, the horror-tinged art films[12] figure a conscious, but concealed, attempt to work through it. By drawing these 1970s modes together, often self-consciously, millennial horror films accord with Adam Lowenstein's assertion that the horror genre's potent allegorical mediations of historical trauma often challenge 'the binary oppositions that tend to govern the study of trauma and its representation: melancholia/mourning, acting-out/working through' by instead maintaining 'a productive tension between' such responses (2005, 3). As Lowenstein rightly suggests, such binary oppositions tend to sustain hierarchical value distinctions between art and genre films, with the art films considered to elicit historically responsible responses to trauma, while genre films are considered to express conservative, historically irresponsible responses (2005, 7-9). Especially given the complexities of their relationship to their sociopolitical context, all of these cinematic responses to Spain's cultural trauma are too multifaceted to neatly assign into binary categories of 'healthy'/'responsible' or 'unhealthy'/'irresponsible' traumatic representation.

It was not until over 30 years after the Civil War that these initial cinematic expressions of trauma began to emerge; subsequently, they anxiously express the temporal delay in responding to the wounds inflicted by the

Yet Perriam's work also aligns with the general tendency of scholars to suggest that Ana is somehow not *really* a child, but a metaphoric cipher, advocating that we see Ana 'not so much as a child but as a maternal aura' (2008, 73). I suggest instead that Ana's status as a child is central to her subversive function.

12 Wright in fact refers to these films as 'art-house horror'.

war. In her work on trauma and horror films, Linnie Blake suggests that such films productively explore 'trauma by remembering it and repeating it in the form of diagetically mediated symbolisations of loss' (2008, 2). As she outlines, films that dwell on the eerie or disturbing processes of collective trauma – in ways both overt and symbolic – articulate:

> a willingness on behalf of audiences to work through the anxiety engendered by trauma, but a willingness also to undertake a fundamental questioning of those ideologically dominant models of individual, collective and national identity that can be seen to be deployed across post-traumatic cultures, as a means of binding (hence isolating and concealing) the wounds of the past in a manner directly antithetical to their healing. (2008, 2-3)

The horror exploitation pieces and ambiguously subversive art films of the 1970s both construct such diegetic worlds permeated by loss, dread, and fear, and, through these violent or uncanny aesthetics, start to carry out the cultural function outlined by Blake, utilizing expressions of trauma to loosen the oppressively tight post-traumatic bindings of Francoist discourse. Furthermore, their temporal belatedness is inextricable from their indirectness and opacity, in an aesthetic expression of a long unassimilated traumatic experience that finally starts to surface in veiled, oblique forms.

Cinema in the Transition Period

Even after Franco's death and the commencement of the transition to democracy – a liminal period that would last until the 1982 election of the Spanish Socialist Worker's Party – Spanish film expressed a lingering reluctance to confront the traumas of the war. As a number of scholars have pointed out, throughout this period there was a continuing official sensitivy within the governing agencies of the film industry resulting from a reluctance to challenge or stress newly established democratic institutions (Higginbotham [1988, 128], Eloy Merino and Rosi Song (2005, 11-15)]. Such resistance was crystallized by the *pacto del olvido*, or 'pact of forgetting' – enshrined in the 1977 amnesty law that pardoned all political crimes committed during the war and dictatorship – whereby all parties agreed to essentially forget the Civil War in order to break with the conflicts of the past and ensure a smooth transition to democracy. This officially sanctioned sensitivity to the past was also bound up with anxieties surrounding Spain's new-fledged

ideological status as one of the most successful latecomers to democracy: other countries admired and sought to emulate the 'Spanish model', 'the paradigm of a peaceful transition from an authoritarian to a democratic regime' (Paloma Aguilar, 2001, 93). It was not until the mid 1980s – nearly ten years after Franco's death – that films started to emerge with some level of regularity that directly confronted the Civil War.[13]

Even this trend was short-lived: writing in 1988, Spanish film scholar Roman Gubern opines that 'the judgement of the industry was that, now that the initial curiosity was over, the public had decided to forget and close its own unpleasant past [...] therefore, it was necessary to offer the market evasion and euphoria, escapism and optimism' (cited in Higginbotham, 1988, 133). Labanyi adds that the cultural break with the oppressive past delineated by the transition period sparked a frantic process of catching up with the lifestyles and cultural hallmarks of Western modernity. She explains that 'such lifestyles were conceived as requiring the excision of all reference to the past' (2007, 94). This impulse saw the launch of a public relations campaign (1982-1996) aimed at projecting modern, progressive Spanish cultural products abroad – like the films of Pedro Almodóvar – as the 'promotion of an outrageous hypermodernity prevailed' (Labanyi, 2007, 95). The compulsion in Spanish film to express a newly established cultural modernity is thus motivated by anxiety about a return to or repetition of Spain's traumatic past. Aguilar elucidates that 'fear was present throughout the transition largely because of a traumatic memory of the Civil War given renewed impetus by fears of a military or right-wing reaction against emerging democratic forces' (2001, 94). As a result, the post-Franco trends in Spanish cinema continued to sustain the temporal conditions of trauma, in which narratives of successful linear progress perilously cover up a fissure not yet assimilated or synthesized. As Sarah Leggott puts it, 'Spain's transition to democracy [...] was characterised by the silencing of the more painful and polemical aspects of the preceding decades in the interests of national reconciliation' (2010, 120).

In her study of popular culture, class and constructions of national narratives in modern Spain, Valis characterizes the frenzied expressions

13 Such films include Bicycles are for Summer (Jaime Chávarri, 1984), The Death of Mikel (Imanol Uribe, 1984), and The Heifer (Luis Garciá Berlanga, 1985) – which was the first (very black) comedy made about the Civil War. This period also saw the release of In a Glass Cage (Agustí Villarona, 1987), a controversial art film with strong horror elements featuring a monstrous vengeful child. The film, perhaps tellingly, elides any direct reference to Spain's Civil War yet features a sadistic former Nazi doctor, and can be seen to bridge an important gap between child-centred art films of the 1970s and the recent crop of uncanny child films.

of Spain's progressiveness post Franco as the 'relentless insistence on the present as a refusal and inability to come to terms with the past' (2002, 282), which paradoxically points to an underlying cultural rupture between past and present yet to be addressed. Up until the end of the 20th century, Spanish cultural discourse had largely failed to acknowledge the ways that the unacknowledged traumas of the past reverberate in the present, a recognition that would unsettle fixations with rapid national progress. Thus, according to Valis, submerged beneath a cultural obsession with the present and future is 'a displaced, ruptured narrative of identity diffusely structured through complexly ambivalent feelings' (2002, 285). The cultural rupture outlined by Valis (re)emerges in monstrous forms through the millennial uncanny child, in ways that threaten the illusory stability of post-Franco Spanish culture. As will be outlined in Chapter Four, these films thus figure a literal return of the repressed disruptive to national homogeny in their dismantling of narratives of cultural progress and smooth transitions to a post-Franco hypermodernity.

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