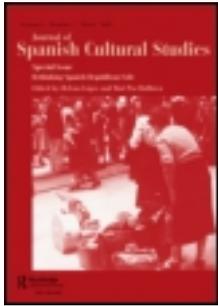


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### Lullabies and postmemory: hearing the ghosts of Spanish history in Guillermo del Toro's Pan's Labyrinth (El laberinto del fauno 2006)

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## Lullabies and postmemory: hearing the ghosts of Spanish history in Guillermo del Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth* (*El laberinto del fauno* 2006)

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This essay frames a close reading of how the lullaby (“Mercedes’ Lullaby”) self-consciously shapes *Pan’s Labyrinth* from a transnational, transhistorical perspective that searches for precedents in the political use of the lullaby genre. It will review several literary examples of how the lullaby format was used by political prisoners during the Spanish Civil War and its aftermath of repression (José Hierro, Miguel Hernández), and it will also connect the uses of the lullaby, a “motherly” genre, with the “silent” political strategies employed successfully by the “Madres de la Plaza de Mayo” during Argentina’s period of guerra sucia from the 1977s onward to “voice” dissent on a public space. It will analyze the role of the children’s song “El país de Nomeacuerdo” in a film that also portrays this period in Argentine history, Luis Puenzo’s *La historia oficial* (1985). I will argue that all these cultural manifestations are intertwined with the beautiful and brutal form of the lullaby, whose inherent characteristics allow for a soothing but also haunting regression to the ghosts of our historical past.

**Keywords:** *Pan’s Labyrinth* (*El laberinto del Fauno*); Guillermo del Toro; lullabies; postmemory; ghosts; Madres de la Plaza de Mayo; Miguel Hernández; José Hierro; Luis Puenzo; *La historia oficial*

... the ghost is primarily a symptom of what is missing. It gives notice not only to itself but also to what it represents. What it represents is usually a loss, sometimes of life, sometimes of a path not taken.

–Avery F. Gordon (63–4)

Duérmete niño,  
duérmete ya,  
que viene el Coco  
y te comerá.

(Popular Spanish lullaby)

Lullabies are known for their calm rhythm and gentle sweetness, but most contain the seed of hidden, repressed violence that is repeated as a reminder of what lies behind the walls of the nursery or the mother’s arms. The Anglo-American *Rock-a-bye Baby* embodies this combination, and it has been interpreted by some anthropologists as having a political, subversive meaning that contrasts with its soothing sound.<sup>1</sup> The equally popular Spanish lullaby “Duérmete niño, duérmete ya, que viene el Coco / el lobo y te comerá” embeds a cannibalistic menace in an invitation to sleep, and muffles the threat in

a sweet melody.<sup>2</sup> Lullabies are an intimate, sometimes unconsciously therapeutic way of confronting the ghosts, the haunting state of the maternal experience, but they have other important social functions:

They may commence inculturation of the infant in musical as well as conceptual terms, and simultaneously, they may provide the mother or other [...] custodian [...] an outlet for the expression of emotions, anxieties, desires, and generally her world view. (Del Giudice 270)<sup>3</sup>

According to Ann de Vries, “Lullabies are the beginning of all poetry, in the life of each individual and probably also in the history of mankind” (159). “La nana de Mercedes” (“Mercedes’ Lullaby”) is literally and symbolically the beginning of Guillermo del Toro’s *Pan’s Labyrinth* (*El laberinto del fauno*) and my point of departure into my interpretation of this film.<sup>4</sup> Like del Toro’s previous film on the Spanish Civil War – *The Devil’s Backbone* (*El espinazo del diablo*) – *Pan’s Labyrinth* recurs to fantasy and sometimes to horror in order to portray a traumatic moment in the history of Spain.<sup>5</sup> Both films also have children as protagonists and both films illustrate different ways of dealing with trauma and loss, but while *The Devil’s Backbone*’s ghosts are the marks of a memory that refuses to be hidden, the fantasy world of *Pan’s Labyrinth* offers a more complex and original treatment of historical memory and its intersection with subjective memory. Haunting and therapeutic, remembered but also forgotten, the lullaby that is the central motif of the film opens ambiguous spaces for meaning and subversion.<sup>6</sup>

In *Pan’s Labyrinth*, “Mercedes’ Lullaby” serves as a structuring *leitmotiv* of the whole film and as an allegorical device that subtly extends the meaning of Ofelia’s individual story to a national realm: that of the Spanish history of the twentieth century, its traumatic past and its historical process of forgetting and remembering its origins. Ofelia’s simple story lends itself perfectly to a national allegoric interpretation of this story that, for Guillermo del Toro, is a tale “about choice and disobedience.” The conceptual label “leitmotiv,” whose primary meaning is musical and that can be defined as “leading motive, (a) recurring musical theme (...) used to reinforce the dramatic action, to provide psychological insight into the characters, and to recall or suggest to the listener extramusical ideas relevant to the dramatic event” (*Britannica Online*), illustrates how the repetition and variation of “Mercedes’ Lullaby” in *Pan’s Labyrinth* enriches the meaning of the fairy tale while serving the structural function of framing and organizing the story of Ofelia, its protagonist.

This essay frames a close reading of how the lullaby self-consciously shapes *Pan’s Labyrinth* from a transnational, transhistorical perspective that searches for precedents in the political use of the lullaby genre. It will review several literary examples of how the lullaby format was used by political prisoners during the Spanish Civil War and its aftermath of repression (José Hierro, Miguel Hernández), and it will also connect the uses of the lullaby, a “motherly” genre, with the “silent” political strategies employed successfully by the “Madres de la Plaza de Mayo” during Argentina’s period of *guerra sucia* from the 1977s onward to “voice” dissent on a public space. It will analyze the role of the children’s song “El país de Nomeacuerdo” in a film that also portrays this period in Argentine history, Luis Puenzo’s *La historia oficial* (1985). I will argue that all these cultural manifestations are intertwined with the beautiful and brutal form of the lullaby, whose inherent characteristics allow for a soothing but also haunting regression to the ghosts of our historical past.

Javier Navarrete, the composer of the award-winning musical score for the film, acknowledged the importance of “Mercedes’s Lullaby,” as all the music in *Pan’s Labyrinth* is structured and has been composed around this musical piece. Guillermo del Toro gave Navarrete clear instructions on the role of music in the movie to ensure that “the melody echoe(d) the fairy tale”: “We should find a lullaby to be the central motif of the movie, and have everything come out of that melody” (“The Melody Echoes the Fairy Tale”). Not only all the musical scores but the film itself can be read as having been designed around the archetypal form of the lullaby, and the way Guillermo del Toro explains the genesis of the soundtrack for this film acknowledges the pivotal role of the lullaby for a nuanced exegesis of the film itself. “Mercedes’ Lullaby” is one of the main keys to the meaning of the film because the lullaby not only frames and “echoes the fairy tale,” but also makes *Pan’s Labyrinth’s* meaning broader and more complex: mainly, it offers an alternative way of communication and remembrance akin to that provided traditionally to mothers in the lullaby format.

Jo Labanyi, in a series of articles (2000, 2002, 2007, 2008) has developed a highly persuasive and cohesive theory on haunting related to the ghosts of the historical past of Spain derived from Derrida’s *Specters of Marx* (1994) and his notion of “hauntology” and Avery Gordon’s *Ghostly Matters*. Labanyi has identified two basic tendencies in the filmic and literary texts of the post-Franco period, stating that “the haunting trope becomes explicit with the Mexican filmmaker Guillermo del Toro’s choice of a literal ghost story as the narrative format of his Spanish/Mexican co-production about the Spanish civil war, *The Devil’s Backbone*” (101). Labanyi interprets this “allegorical ghost story” as containing “a serious message about the need for a kind of modernity (...) that engages with the past” (102). Labanyi opposes this positive engagement with the ghosts of the past through the trope of haunting to “the vast majority of the cinematic and fictional re-creations of the civil war and its aftermath which have appeared since 1990” and which “by definition adopt a documentary stance” (103). Of all the works that Labanyi has used as inspiration for her theory on Spanish “hauntology” (Nora, Freud, Halbwachs, Benjamin, Bakhtin, Derrida, Avery, and Hirsch), I find Gordon’s and Hirsch’s theorizations to be especially enlightening for my analysis because of these author’s insistence on the subjective and the traumatic in the “remembering” process. In *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, Avery F. Gordon illustrates the sociological dimension of historical “ghosts”, but she also emphasizes the centrality of “affection” and “subjectivity” long before the affect theories of literary interpretation which are now in vogue were theorized. Gordon emphasizes the fluidity between the historical and intimate, the “political dimensions of the familial and domestic,” or the connections between the realms of the personal and the public, the present and the past (Hirsch 206):

If haunting describes how that which appears to be there is often a seething presence, acting on and often meddling with taken-for-granted realities, the ghost is just the sign, or the empirical evidence if you like, that tells you a haunting is taking place. The ghost is not simply a dead or a missing person, but a social figure, and investigating it can lead to that dense site where history and subjectivity make social life. The ghost or the apparition is one form by which something lost, or barely visible, or seemingly not there to our supposedly well-trained eyes, makes itself known or apparent to us, in its own way, of course. The way of the ghost is haunting, and haunting is a very particular way of knowing what has happened or is happening. Being haunted draws us affectively, sometimes against our will

and always a bit magically, into the structure of feeling of a reality we come to experience, not as old knowledge, but as a transformative recognition. (8)

Although *Pan's Labyrinth* is not literally a ghost story, I would like to use Gordon's words to frame my analysis of the political uses of the lullaby genre by Guillermo del Toro, especially in light of recent developments in the study of historical memory in Spanish culture (Labanyi, Hardcastle, Colmeiro). The haunting taking place in Ofelia's story (and by extension, in Spanish history) makes itself visible (and audible) to viewers through a ghostly presence embodied musically in the film in the hummed voice of Mercedes singing her lullaby, a lullaby that, appropriately, has no words.

Spaniards are not yet ready, even keeping in mind the brave attempts by the *Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica*, to completely reopen past wounds and to see the skeletons in our historical closet. But the wound exists, the ghosts are there in every *piso*, we can hear them clamouring for justice and remembrance from that closet where we keep them, and Mexican director Guillermo del Toro has managed to slightly open the doors of that closet for an intimate discussion of how our public history has shaped our private selves, allowing us to hear the humming of their voices. His film, in a different way from the patronizing and unsophisticated narratives represented in state-sponsored TV series such as *Cuéntame*, *Amar en tiempos revueltos* or in classical "Republican" propagandistic works such as *¡Ay, Carmela!*, has a dialogic quality and uses a combination of soothing and violence that is based on the lullaby format and its associations.<sup>7</sup>

Lullabies are a particular embodiment of memory that has the ability to recall, revive, and soothe our historical aches, even though they do not require historical accuracy or even history to survive and spread their message. A lullaby draws us "affectively," even a bit "magically" to the world of the ghosts of the past. Because of that affection, lullabies are able to carry subversion even to its most unsympathetic listeners, partly because they return us to our own infancy. In that sense, lullabies are an ideal way of accessing our historical traumatic "postmemory." But, as happens with the "fluid and volatile" genre of fairy tales (as defined by Zipes; 22) or in traditional lullabies (Del Giudice), del Toro's film (and, at its core, the lullaby that embodies its dualities without reconciling them) does not sanitize the past (like the Disney corporation does with its adaptation of classical narratives according to Zipes) but makes this traumatic past more complex and, above all, does not beautify its violence but acts as a personal reminder of its presence and the difficulty of accessing it, of encountering this ghost. That is why, I will argue, lullabies, and as such, the artificially composed lullaby that is the core of the uterine world in *Pan's Labyrinth*, are a perfect embodiment of the inescapable, almost unconscious impulse to remember a traumatic past. They are, like ghosts and orphans and hummed words and missing limbs, uncanny vehicles of postmemory as Marianne Hirsch defines it:

"Postmemory" describes the relationship that the "generation after" bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before –to experiences they "remember" only by means of the stories, images and behaviors among which they grew up. But these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to seem to constitute memories in their own right. Postmemory's connection to the past is thus actually mediated not by recall but by imaginative investment, projection and creation. (...) These events happened in the past, but their effects continue in the present. (5)

Intertwined in my close reading of how the lullaby shapes, embodies, and transforms the meaning of *Pan's Labyrinth* there is an attempt to understand how the past is transmitted and transformed into memory (or postmemory), the secret workings that go from trauma, war, and silence to violence that explodes in the most unexpected and familiar places: our dreams, our songs, our lullabies, mirroring, and transforming our souls, our ghosts, and our access to the past.

During the Spanish Postwar Period of Franco repression, several poet-prisoners masterfully used the format of a lullaby addressed to a fellow prisoner or to a baby outside the prison in order to emphasize, by the contrast between the assumed innocence of the genre of the lullaby and the violence of the prison, the lack of hope of political prisoners and their families in the 1940s and 1950s in Spain. José Hierro's "Canción de cuna para dormir a un preso" (*Tierra sin nosotros*, 1947) is an almost surreal attempt to soothe a fellow prisoner with a song that, being a lullaby, contains alternate promises of rest, death, and pain:

La gaviota sobre el pinar.  
(La mar resuena.)  
Se acerca el sueño. Dormirás,  
soñarás, aunque no lo quieras.  
La gaviota sobre el pinar  
goteado todo de estrellas.

Duerme. Ya tienes en tus manos  
el azul de la noche inmensa.  
No hay más que sombra. Arriba, luna.  
Peter Pan por las alamedas.  
Sobre ciervos de lomo verde la niña ciega.  
Ya ni eres hombre, ya te duermes,  
mi amigo, ea ...

Duerme, mi amigo. Vuela un cuervo  
sobre la luna, y la degüella.  
La mar está cerca de ti,  
muerde tus piernas.  
(vs. 1–16)

The hidden menace in the repeated imperative form "Duerme" and "dormirás, aunque no lo quieras" contrasts with the friendly way to address his friend ("ya te duermes, mi amigo, ea ..."). José Hierro combines elements of the world of fantasy associated with childhood with horrific images. After Peter Pan comes the blind girl riding a green deer, and the dripping of the stars has something bloody under it. The third stanza is more specific with its images of cannibalistic nature. The rest of the poem seems to self-consciously continue prolonging this combination. The repetition of the same rhythm has a hypnotic, eerie quality to it, and reminds us of the way new truths are "created": by pain and repetition. Several reminders of underlying pain are "erased" by the voice of the poem, that nonetheless gives voice to them: throughout the poem, "no es verdad" is repeated many times, as if to negate the pain felt by the prisoner who has to sleep, to die, and to forget: "No es verdad que tú hayas sufrido," "No es verdad que te pese el alma" ... "Duerme." The lullaby is more a menace, a vehicle for the words of an interrogator or a torturer, than a way to calm the imprisoned friend, yet it is at the same time a vehicle to acknowledge the prisoner's pain and to feel empathy towards him. But traditional lullabies, as we have

noted, are not devoid of these violent undertones. In fact, they are the very essence of the genre where images of death, disaster, falling, and above all, hunger abound (Del Giudice 273). Hierro also seems to play with the way images are organized in a typical lullaby fashion in a poem that mimics the “free association of ideas and images typical of the oneiric process” (273) and that recurs to “metonymic displacement (...) through the concatenation of images” that has no apparent order but that flows together in a composition that is soothing and terrifying: “frequently, the language of the *ninna nanna* is far from pampering. The death-wish may be as frequent, if oblique, as the fear of death” (274).

The ambiguous format of the lullaby can be manipulated in order to express political dissent and to forge familiar ties and relationships between prisoners and friends. The popular “Nanas de la cebolla” by Miguel Hernández adds the ironic cheerful tone of a *seguidilla* to the format to provide an imaginary escape for the poet, his son, and his wife, who only have onions and bread to eat. It combines love and pain and ends with these last words for his hungry son: “No te derrumbes./No sepas lo que pasa/ni lo que ocurre.” A “*nana*”, then, is a superb vehicle of denial (because it induces sleep) but also of protest (because it voices terrors and fosters communication that would otherwise be censored).

This strategy of “subaltern” communication associated with the “motherly” and the “uterine”, with the feminine realm, has been historically used to voice political protest. During the infamous period of “*guerra sucia*” in Argentina, when torture and disappearances made any dissent a suicidal, ultimately impossible act, only the mothers (and then the *abuelas*) of the *Plaza de Mayo* were able to express their protest, to reclaim their disappeared sons and daughters to the military power: “The most significant Argentine human rights movement, the first *Madres* group, spontaneously formed in 1977 when the mothers of 14 *desaparecidos* began *silently* marching every Thursday afternoon. By 1984, the organization had 2500 members, all of whom identified themselves as mothers by wearing a white scarf evoking babies’ nappies and by carrying posters showing their children’s photographs” (Burucúa 116, emphasis added). Note that they were able to “voice” their political dissent by being silent, and by surrounding themselves with visual signs that emphasized their role as mothers. Several authors have commented on this political strategy, that Gordon studies as a case of historical haunting in the novels of Luisa Valenzuela:

That the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo created a powerful political movement by appropriating and transforming conventional and Christian notions of motherhood has been well documented. The transformation of relatively apolitical middle-aged mothers into the inheritors and guardians of “their” children’s political aspirations for social justice was a trenchant refutation of the usual conservatism of motherhood. And indeed, the social maternity and radical right-to-life philosophy their political strategies and actions reflected was a model for women organizing against state repression throughout Latin and Central America. Motherhood was without doubt the originating identity that drove the Mothers and that continued to sustain their always dangerous political work. But the truly unique contribution of the Mothers was their extraordinary understanding of haunting and its crucial place in a society fraught with state-sponsored disappearance. (Gordon 111–12)

Now, it is not a coincidence that one of the only films that were able to voice this historical haunting also uses the same strategies and is organized around the form, not of a lullaby, but of a children’s song that sounds like one: Luis Puenzo’s 1985 Argentine film *La historia oficial*.

The film opens with little Gaby singing María Elena Walsh' children's song "El país de Nomeacuerdo" (1967):

En el país de Nomeacuerdo  
doy tres pasitos y me pierdo.

Un pasito para allí  
no recuerdo si lo di.  
Un pasito para allá,  
ay, qué miedo que me da.  
Un pasito para atrás,  
y no doy ninguno más  
porque ya, ya me olvidé  
dónde puse el otro pie.

Several scholars have emphasized the importance of this song for an understanding of the film. According to Foster, *La historia oficial* "closes with Gaby attempting to sing along with María Elena Walsh's 'En el país de Nomeacuerdo,' which is, of course, militarized Argentina" (Foster 1992, quoted in Burucúa, 134). Emily Tomlison, in her article entitled "Mapping the Land of 'I don't remember': For a Re-evaluation of *La historia oficial*" contests and expands the role of this song in the interpretation of the film. Tomlison's revisionist reading of *La historia oficial* is further developed by Constanza Burucúa in her recent monograph *Confronting the "Dirty War" in Argentine Cinema, 1983–1993*.<sup>8</sup> In the chapter that Burucúa devotes to the analysis of *La historia oficial*, Burucúa turns inside out one of the most traditional criticisms of the film: its melodramatic nature. Yes – Burucúa argues – *La historia oficial* is, indeed, a melodrama, but it is precisely due to its melodramatic nature and the feminine associations of the populist genre that the film, with its unequivocal success, was able to open a space not only for debate but also for denunciation, earlier than any other movie.

As a frame to her analysis of *La historia oficial* as melodrama, a genre that for Burucúa is not at all Manichean but that allows for the complex representation of several and fluid perspectives in the film that represent, in turn, diverging positions or sectors in Argentine society and its moral involvement in the film, Burucúa offers a parallel social reading of the political silent activism of *Las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo*: "Fueron por eso las Madres, más que los padres o los hermanos según el modelo de *Antígona*, quienes asumieron casi desde lo biológico privado aquello que una sociedad no pudo procesar desde el espacio público de la política" (Teran, qtd. in Burucúa 134).

Burucúa connects both the subject of melodramatic *La historia*, where *las Madres* play a central role, with the female strategies employed by this activist group to evade censorship: the film uses the familiar, feminine, and generally despised genre of melodrama in order to open the way to a political debate that may not have been otherwise possible. In the same way, the *Madres*, who characterized themselves as mothers with several symbols (the white handkerchief, the pictures of their abducted children, and especially, their silence) decided as their main strategy to emphasize their role as mothers to present the possibility of political dissent as early as 1977.

An embodiment of this type of "intimate politics" is the song that permeates the most important moments of the film with its apparent innocence and childish, nonthreatening political commentary. "El país de Nomeacuerdo," although not properly a lullaby, has a similar function to the wordless melody of "Mercedes' Lullaby" in the film of del Toro,

who self-consciously draws from this filmic and social tradition of mixing innocence and violence and finding alternate ways of communicating what cannot be said or what does not want to be heard. Guillermo del Toro also recurs to a “motherly”, outwardly innocent mode of expression, the lullaby, in order to connect the different levels on his film and to propose an alternative way of remembering historical trauma from the present that does not directly threaten the viewer with one meaning but that helps to make visible the historical haunting taking place, that allows us to hear a silence plagued with ghosts.<sup>9</sup>

As Marsha Kinder argued in *Blood Cinema: The Reconstruction of National Identity in Spain*, violence is the trait most frequently associated with Spanish national cinema. Kinder situates this violence in the films from the 1960s and 1970s in a tradition that she traces back to Goya’s *Saturn Devouring His Son*, a tradition fascinated with the idea of sacrifice that does not glorify violence but exploits its power to shock audiences and to exert a political critique at a time of censorship. As Kinder explains:

Within the Spanish context, the graphic depiction of violence is primarily associated with an anti-Francoist perspective (...) During the Francoist era, the depiction of violence was repressed, as was the depiction of sex, sacrilege, and politics; this repression helps explain why eroticized violence could be used so effectively by anti-Francoist opposition to speak a political discourse, that is, to expose the legacy of brutality and torture that lay hidden behind the surface beauty of the Fascist and neo-Catholic aesthetics. (138)

*Pan’s Labyrinth* is not a product of the same context of the films analyzed by Kinder, but it does play with violence in a very unusual and effective manner. Mexican director Guillermo del Toro appears to be very conscious of this tradition of representation in anti-Francoist Spanish cinema and alludes to it (with many scenes of hunting that are reminiscent of *La caza*, for example). More explicitly, one of the most original and terrifying scenes of *Pan’s Labyrinth* is constructed precisely around the ghost of Goya’s *Saturno*, with the “hombre pálido” that has eyes on his hands, persecutes Ofelia, and devours the fairies.

The combination between a naturalistic depiction of violence both in the real and the fantastic realms in *Pan’s Labyrinth* is further linked to the recurrent cinematic quoting of the lullaby, a form that tends to present an ambiguous combination of sweetness and violence (that can be compared to the aesthetics of the whole film itself) by constantly alternating between lulling and menacing. In *Pan’s Labyrinth*, we can delight in wonder when we contemplate the exquisite golden world of fantasy recreated in the film and then we have to close our eyes in horror when very explicit depictions of torture are also shown with surgical precision throughout the entire film, even penetrating the magical realm itself.

As Paul Julian Smith claims, “the film’s achievement is to reinforce, not reduce historical horrors” through “its reimagin(ing) [of] the bloodshed and tyranny of the period immediately after the Spanish Civil War in terms of a fairy tale” (“Pan’s Labyrinth”). Smith’s analysis insinuates that *Pan’s Labyrinth’s* emphasis on historical violence can be seen as belonging to a series of “current trends in Spain, where a ‘Law of Memory’ on the legacy of the Civil War has been bitterly debated.” According to Smith, the violent imagery of del Toro’s film contrasts deeply with the “trivialization” seen in movies like José Luis Cuerda’s *Butterfly (La lengua de las mariposas)* or Fernando Trueba’s *Belle Époque*. Smith is right to suggest that *Pan’s Labyrinth*, with its emphasis on using violence as a way of “reinforcing historical horrors” can be seen as belonging to a new

moment in the history of the Spanish treatment of historical memory: with this film del Toro unearths the Spanish traumatic past, as the members of the *Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica* are right now unearthing the corpses lying in the mass graves left untouched since the end of the Civil War. But why does del Toro perform this digging into Spain's traumatic youth while asking us to listen to lullabies? While this paper does not propose that there is only one interpretation of this allegory or that this film is an explicit response against "The Pact of Forgetting" or the current debates in Spain, it does suggest that del Toro offers Spaniards and his protagonist, Ofelia, the consolation and subversion of an alternative way of expression and remembrance: the one represented by the lullaby, and by extension, the film itself.<sup>10</sup>

Lullabies are a form of communication associated traditionally with the female gender, and this cultural association is exploited during the film because "La nana de Mercedes" is always sung from Mercedes to Ofelia, even when we, as spectators, can participate in the illusion that we are the recipients of this hummed song intended to calm both the singer and the child from the fear that they both live in constantly, and also to make more firm the bond between them – a bond that is clearly not biological because Mercedes is not the mother of Ofelia. Both female protagonists are in deep need of consolation and lullabies: Mercedes, because she is at the same time the housekeeper of Captain Vidal and the fascist soldiers that follow his orders, and the helper of the rebels or the Spanish *maquis*, the enemies of her boss. Ofelia, because she lives in constant fear that her mother, pregnant with a son from Captain Vidal, her evil stepfather, will die and leave her alone with him, which happens by the end of the film when Ofelia's mother dies in childbirth.

Lullabies, then, are also associated traditionally and in this film with the figure of the subaltern, and they have been perceived by many artists (such as Federico García Lorca and Gabriela Mistral) as "un lugar propicio para la disconformidad" (Brenes García and Horan 221), "un espacio indefinido o utópico" (223), "un discurso que nace a los márgenes del discurso patriarcal dominante" (226). Although this film does not picture a Manichean world where male forces are evil and females are the recipients of virtues, del Toro, who prides himself in using types as characters and yet maintaining an emotional realism ("The Power of Myth") establishes symbolic connections between the two women bond by the lullaby and the plea of the rebels against the Francoist regime. The good characters (Ofelia, Mercedes, the doctor, the *maquis*) have to fight and communicate themselves using weapons traditionally associated with the female realm: the *maquis*, like Ofelia and Mercedes, have to live hidden in the fortress of an enemy and destroy that enemy in his own territory with subtle tactics: stealing food, communicating in secret, and without words (stuttering is yet another form of communication associated with the *maquis* in the movie, as we can see in one of the most violent scenes of the film when a *maqui* is tortured and asked by Captain Vidal not to stutter to avoid more pain), and fighting in a *guerrilla* style what would not qualify by military standards as heroic or grand. Also by pure resistance and instinct of survival, something akin to the prosthetic leg that Marisa Paredes' character wears in *The Devil's Backbone* and that hides a weapon inside it, acting as a simultaneous reminder of suffering and power generated by it.<sup>11</sup>

The film also plays with the idea of self-sacrifice that is culturally associated with women, motherhood, and with the very connotations of the name Ophelia drawn from the tragic heroine of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (c. 1559). The spaces where the rebels hide – the caves – are also linked to the space of the kitchen where Mercedes rules, and throughout the whole film we see in desperation how the Fascists kill and inflict pain while the rebels

are seen tortured, wounded, and killed in scenes so violent that they have granted this seemingly childish film an R rating. Even when at the end of the movie we see a temporary triumph of the rebels and the death of Captain Vidal, we also see Ofelia dying in the very final scene and we know that, eventually, those rebels will also die and they will have to succumb to Franco's government. Even if this happens, we can count on the power of the lullaby to repeat this story without words and to secretly change and comfort those who sing or sleep listening to this musical form that "is enacted in a familiar, intimate and confidential manner" (Ostasz 13), like the small acts of rebellion of the *maquis*.

Like the tale of Ofelia, the protagonist of del Toro's film, Spain's recent past can be retold as the tale of a fallen princess that runs the risk of forgetting her true identity if she keeps avoiding a traumatic encounter with her past. Ofelia must embark in a dangerous journey of self-discovery and of remembrance not dissimilar to the way many Spaniards are fighting nowadays – as Smith notes – to recover the memory of the victims of the Civil War to counteract the so-called "Pact of forgetting" that was supposedly agreed on by Spaniards for the sake of the immediate recovery of democracy during the Spanish Transition. According to Madeleine Davis, who has recently studied this historical phenomena in the light of the history of human rights and the new field of memory politics:

Spain's way of dealing (or not dealing) with its repressive legacy has been most often characterized as a deliberate, but largely tacit, agreement to 'forget' the past – a pact of oblivion based upon an 'erasure of memory' or a 'collective amnesia'. (863–4)

This amnesia is revealed in the most salient characteristic of "La nana de Mercedes": its absence of words. But the fact that this wordless lullaby is a place outside of language and thus, outside of the symbolic power of the father (Brenes García and Horan 231) redefines the meaning of this act of forgetting on an individual and on a collective level.

The first few moments of *Pan's Labyrinth* are crucial to the understanding of this allegory and need to be described in detail. *Pan's Labyrinth* starts with a dark screen and with what the screenplay describes as "A female voice hum(ming) a sweet lullaby." Then, always with the sound of the lullaby in the background, we are informed about the time and place where the film takes place: "Spain, 1944. The Civil War is over. Hidden in the mountains, armed men fight the new fascist regime. Military posts are established to exterminate the resistance". "Then" – the screenplay continues – "the raw, raspy sound of a child struggling to breathe." The first image of the film is a shot of dead Ofelia on the border of an old labyrinth, with "a thick ribbon of blood run(ning) from her nose." But soon we perceive that "the blood is flowing backward into her nostril" until it disappears. The lullaby is then followed by the voice of the narrator of the film telling us a fairy tale:

Long ago in the Underground Realm ... where there are no lies or pain, there lived a Princess who dreamt of the human world. She dreamt of blue skies, the soft breeze and sunshine ... One day, eluding her keepers, the princess escaped ... Once outside, the brightness blinded her and erased her memory ... She forgot who she was and where she came from.

In a narration that seems to have been designed as an inverted rewriting of the universe displayed in Plato's Myth of the Cave, this Princess-Philosopher – who lives underground, is symbolically blinded by sunlight in her ascent, and forgets her past –

is full of references not only to memory, but also to forgetting and to dreaming, references to Spain's recent struggle with her memory. The fact that this initial narration is supported by the sound of a beautiful lullaby underlines a series of recurring motifs in the film: those that are clustered around the archetypal musical form of the lullaby: dream, sleep, memory, origins, and mother.

The first aim of a lullaby is that of persuading a child to go to sleep, and this is why they are believed to be "a pragmatic genre" (de Vries 161). Osborn defines the lullaby as "an ancient, universal form, a genre of folk song, whose obvious function is to calm a child and put it to sleep" (qtd. in Weisner 11). But lullabies, whose words are not understood by the babies that are supposed to be its main recipients, also serve an important function that affects the singer more: that of calming the stress and frustration of the mother who sings. This, usually, accounts for the violence and melancholy that is characteristic of many lullabies and that has made them a staple of horror movie soundtracks such as Roman Polanski's *Rosemary's Baby*.

Apart from their repetitive and simple pattern rhythms (these tunes are easier to remember than to forget), lullabies also are characterized by their "echoing (of) the intake and exhalation of the breath" (Warner 94). It is not a coincidence, then, that del Toro self-consciously underlines this characteristic when he unites as part of the same opening soundtrack two levels of sound: that of the heavy breathing of Ofelia running and that of Mercedes's lullaby, a lullaby that soon acquires a yearning tone as the recipient of the tune, Ofelia, is not asleep but fatally wounded and about to be dead. This initial double rhythm serves to reinforce the distinct presence of two worlds in the film, two worlds that are also self-consciously differentiated in shape and color ("The Color and the Shape"): the level of "history" or the level of the "father", where we contemplate how the villain, Captain Vidal, strangles the efforts of the rebels and the lives of all those who come in contact with him, and the level of "fantasy," where a clear journey divided in three archetypal stages is presented.

The historical quest of the *maquis* against the already established Francoist regime and the quest of Princess Ofelia to return to the Underworld and to recover her identity have something in common: both are heroic but tragic enterprises, bound to end up with death and self-sacrifice. But that the real is reinforced by the level of the mythical or fantastic proves Paul Julian Smith's assertion that "*Pan's Labyrinth* has wider implications for the key questions of nationality, gender, and identity" and fits in Guillermo del Toro's invitation to read *Pan's Labyrinth* not only as a companion piece to his films *Chronos* and *The Devil's Backbone* ("Pan's Labyrinth"), but as a text with "carefully built (...) layers of meaning" ("The Power of Myth").

In contraposition to the level of "history" – a level that I have just associated with the figure of the father, or with the symbolic representation of evil patriarchy represented by the ruler of this world, Captain Vidal – the level of fantasy is associated in *Pan's Labyrinth* with the feminine, and Mercedes and Ofelia are the symbolic queens of this realm. Ofelia's imagination, imbued with thoughts derived from her constant reading of fairy tales, is the source of the magical world in the film, and although magic is purposefully left unexplained ("The Power of Myth"), the film hints at the possibility that the fantasy world is a product of Ofelia's childish imagination or her ability to see what others are not able to see. One of the final invitations of the film is made by the voice of the narrator of the fairy tale, whose voice returns to inform us that "Y se dice que la princesa descendió al reino de su padre (...) y dejó tras de sí pequeñas huellas de su paso por el mundo, visibles sólo para aquel que sepa dónde mirar." While these words are said,

we see an image of a white flower being born from the seemingly dead branch of a dead tree and we as viewers are comforted with an illusion of resurrection that is constantly alluded to in the film. In any case, the film invites the viewers to search for meaning that is above chronological time and that stems from history but also negates its power by presenting alternative ways to deal with traumatic events.

On the one hand, *Pan's Labyrinth* creates the illusion and escapism that is portrayed in the universe of fairy tales that Ofelia lives into and offers this escape as a valid way to deal with trauma. It also reasserts traditional notions that associate the feminine with silence and self-sacrifice. On the other hand, this film also constantly shocks the viewer and confronts her with constant reminders of that trauma that break the world of illusion and fantasy created by the film itself. In this superimposition of escapism and shock, *Pan's Labyrinth* achieves its true, complex meaning, and it is also by means of this combination of calming and disturbing energies that the film approaches and alludes to the uncanny power of lullabies in their “constant alternation of threat and appeasement” (Vahman and Asatrian, qtd. in de Vries 164).

This characteristic alternation of dream and nightmare, of fantasy and naturalism present in many lullabies and nursery rhymes is also reflected in the two levels that organize and structure this film, the level of history and the level of fantasy discussed earlier. Del Toro does not, however, propose a Manichean world where fantasy is good and reality is bad; he designs instead a world where fantasy is “contaminated” by violence and thus does not constitute a perfect dream or solution, but rather constitutes a reminder of what happens in reality that uses a different kind of language to transmit its meaning – music,<sup>12</sup> visual symbols, humming. This kind of pseudo-language also reminds Spaniards of the moral complexity of this fairy tale. If we interpret Ofelia's story as a national allegory where Ofelia stands for Spain, the orphan who lost her republican father in the war and who has to live in the house of her own enemy, Franco or Vidal, then this story tells us that disobedience leads not only to self-sacrifice but also to future redemption.<sup>13</sup> That it is better to die and live in myth or oblivion than to “obedecer por obedecer.” The truth is that Ofelia dies, and that the heroic and stubborn *maquis* will not win, but their disobedience and their power is fueled by fantasy and utopia and will eventually bloom in the most unexpected places, only for those who, like Ofelia – or the *maquis* – know how to transcend history by means of myth and fantasy.

At the core of this movie, as in the core of *The Devil's Backbone*, lies the issue of historical memory and the traumatic youth of democratic Spain, and this is where the lullaby returns. *Pan's Labyrinth*, framed and haunted by the archetypal reference to the lullaby, contains a voice of resistance that is portrayed as anonymous and collective and at the same intimate and subjective. The lullaby, an anonymous genre per excellence, speaks without words about desperate strategies of communication and of hidden stories, and exemplifies one of the many ways through which history can turn personal, subjective, nameless, wordless, and powerful and subversive at the same time. Humming reminds us of those whose mouths are covered and whose words are silenced by those in power. The singers–hummers in the film have internalized the necessity to be silent and yet, they cannot be so. The lullaby is a testimony of both the internalization of repression and its avoidance. Like one of the ghosts that permeates recent cultural productions related to Spain's past, *Pan's Labyrinth* and its central lullaby help to make visible the “historical haunting” that Jo Labanyi has studied in several articles that follow Derrida's formulations in *Spectres of Marx* and his concept of “hauntology” (a new way of understanding the traditional notion of “ontology” that emphasizes what is ghostly and spectral in history).

In the same way *Pan's Labyrinth* proposes two worlds, one supposedly real and the other fantastic, it also proposes two kinds of memory: one related to chronological time and history, the other related to myth and the erasure of chronological time. The first level is symbolized by the pocket watch of Captain Vidal, the same watch that Vidal's father left his son when he died in battle in *Morocco* to remind his son of his task to accomplish a Fascist Spain – a telling image that communicates the Fascist's obsession with stopping history and smashing it like the *golpistas* did to the regular flow of history of Spain by smashing its legitimate government in 1936. This is also the same watch that Vidal intends to leave his son when he dies and that we see constantly being fixed by the villain of the movie, the same watch that Vidal will try to leave his son and the same watch that he will hold in his hand when he dies. The other level of memory in *Pan's Labyrinth* is dramatically disconnected from the realm of the chronological and it is related to myth: the Faun, the labyrinth, the Underworld, and Princess Ofelia all belong to this time, and at several moments throughout the film we find allusions to the “promise of immortality,” a promise that is only possible at the level of myth and in the fantasy world and that is symbolized by the final white flower that replicates the golden rose with poisonous thorns that gives immortality and that appears in the fairy tale that Ofelia tells to her yet-unborn brother.

Instead of avoiding the visualization of historical trauma, del Toro approaches this trauma by a double procedure: by his almost documentary impulse to narrate violence in the real world and by distancing himself and the spectators from this traumatic episode and seeing it as if it was as ancient and as embedded in our psyches as myths, archetypes, fairy tales, and lullabies. This estrangement can help Spaniards find their own ways of fighting their past and their personal ways of breaking the “Pact of Forgetting,” but this same estrangement serves to make this trauma collective and Ofelia and Spain's story, universal.

At the end of the movie, the baby boy of Captain Vidal ends up in Mercedes' arms, and when Vidal is about to die, he asks for his son to be reminded of his father's death, thus trying to repeat once again the gesture of his own father, who left him a pocket watch for his son to remember the exact hour of his death and his mission. But Mercedes denies Vidal the right to perpetuate his memory, thus breaking the powerful male inheritance associated with brute force, with an obsession with fame, male lineage, and chronological time, but also closing the door to remembrance. Mercedes's last words to Captain Vidal: “He won't even know your name” have the power to break the fascist lineage, even when we know that Franco has already firmly established his dictatorship when the film takes place. If Vidal's son does not remember his father, he will not have to perpetuate his memory and his violent legacy, although we imagine that his life will be embedded in it nonetheless. But this ending also illustrates the curse or the blessing of Spaniards born after the Civil War: they were born from the conflict and yet they have been denied the right to access memory. Or maybe they have chosen the path of silence to cure their historical wounds. Or maybe, they are just lost in a labyrinth, trying to find a way out.

The central motif that organizes the film, “La nana de Mercedes” is also deeply connected with alternate ways of transmitting history and of remembering. Del Toro's own definition of what a lullaby is – “the simplest, most melodic, beautiful thing to remember, easy to remember, easy to hum” (“The Melody”) – insists almost unconsciously on this fact. If we compare the ways of transmission of a fairy tale with those of a lullaby (Zipes 22), we can see that in the case of a lullaby really almost nothing bound to the originator or the initial circumstances of its creation remains, sometimes

only the humming of the melody, the shadow of a text that may not have even existed: the ghostly sounds, a humming pregnant with meaning. The singing of a lullaby is thus at the same time a remembrance of what persists in abstract form and a constant remembrance of what has been forgotten, of the shadow itself, the words that lack into what now is wordless – they are a reminder of an absence that cannot be reached but by indirect, affective means. They are a perfect embodiment of Hirsch’s notion of “postmemory.”<sup>14</sup>

Del Toro acknowledges in this circular final scene, once again, the power of memory and the impulse to repeat the past with this baby boy who was born precisely from what we figure out as the fusion between a Republican mother (Ofelia’s mother, who died at childbirth) and a Falangist Captain killed by his own stepdaughter, Ofelia. The child, we are compelled to imagine, will grow up with only the memory of his mother, and he would never be reminded of who his father was. The memory of his father will be erased. But for him to have this kind of future without memory, a troubling sacrifice must be made: Ofelia, the protagonist of the film, has symbolically sacrificed herself in order to protect her baby brother. Her heroic journey, parallel to the also heroic journey of the *maquis*, finishes when she refuses to pour even one drop of her brother’s blood even when the Faun asks her to do so. This ultimate sacrifice confirms her true identity as a princess of the Underground realm and the end of her journey, but also causes her real death. The end of the film comforts us with a fantasy image where Ofelia, now dead on the border of the labyrinth and the real world, on the liminal space that visually unites both worlds, returns to her kingdom and to her family. But, as the script reminds us, this golden image is yet again a product of dying Ofelia’s imagination:

Mercedes kneels next to the dying girl. Crying, Mercedes hums a sweet Galician lullaby. Ofelia’s pupils dilate. Her blood runs into the well, into the puddle at the bottom. The moon’s reflection simmers. In the book, an image takes shape: Ofelia at a Royal Court ...<sup>15</sup>

This paper has already analyzed in detail the first and final scenes where the lullaby and Ofelia’s breath are superimposed. The second time that we hear “Mercedes’s Lullaby” is after a moment of *anagnorisis* by the ending of the exposition of the main plot of the film: after we discover that Ofelia knows that Mercedes is helping the enemies of her boss, Captain Vidal. Ofelia and Mercedes embrace and Ofelia asks Mercedes: “Do you know a lullaby?” to which Mercedes’s answer is: “Only one, but I don’t remember the words.” The lullaby is then hummed by Mercedes, and again, it is sung by her again to the almost-dead Ofelia. It links the two female protagonists in a wordless pact of rebellion symbolized by the lullaby and by its association with Mercedes, its singer, and we wonder if those words, the lyrics of the lullaby, were forgotten, or repressed, or both things at the same time.

When Captain Vidal discovers Mercedes’s treason – she is his housekeeper and yet she has been helping the *maquis* with material resources and privileged information – it is Mercedes herself who explains to Captain Vidal that her power came from the fact that she was not perceived as strong or dangerous by others, because she was just a woman. And it is by using her female weapons – her hidden kitchen knife, the same knife she used to prepare food for her enemies – that she liberates herself from Captain Vidal. It is also with this kitchen knife that Mercedes wounds Vidal, reversing a gesture that is typical of male aggressions of female victims: by cutting his face.

Like a weapon of the subaltern, like a kitchen knife that can cut both potatoes and villains, the musical form of the lullaby and its wordless power escapes symbolically the

negative control of patriarchy and serves as a bond between the two heroines of the film: Mercedes and Ofelia. “La nana de Mercedes” is a testimony of what is remembered without words and transmitted from generation to generation, what is forgotten and yet reenacted by being hummed, escaping the world of reason, and of language itself, haunting us with ghosts of our past, reviving them. One distinctive feature of “La nana de Mercedes” is the fact that it is hummed and so, wordless. The film reminds us several times of why the lullaby has no lyrics: the words were forgotten and only the simple tune remains. Like the old labyrinth, another nodal point of the story. Like Ofelia’s true identity. Like the memories of the Civil War and the dictatorship, maybe not uttered but present, like a lullaby, at the most intimate level of the consciousness of Spain, who has forgotten its words but not its sweet and violent tune.

### Notes

1. About this lullaby, Del Giudice states that: The falling of objects is likely a cross-cultural, widely used technique, to designate the end of the lullaby (...) The *breaking* and *falling* (of the tower, of the cradle) in lullabies metaphorically replicates the ‘falling’ from consciousness into unconsciousness, that is, literally the falling asleep” (283). Del Giudice also mentions that the repetitive melody of these lullabies has been designed to “induce partial ‘hypnosis’” (283). This fact will be important when we discuss “La nana de Mercedes” in *Pan’s Labyrinth* as inducing in its listeners / viewers a state of unconscious reverie akin to hypnosis that will facilitate a personal access to the hidden ghosts of our personal history.
2. This is not an exception but the rule in most traditional lullabies from Italy and Spain (Del Giudice).
3. For a classic feminist analysis of the maternal experience as a form of “exquisite suffering,” see Adrienne Rich’s *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (1986). I want to thank Encarnación Cruz Jiménez for a highly productive discussion in this matter.
4. The centrality of the lullaby is not mentioned by Jack Zipes in his 2008 review of the film, which reads the film both as a vehicle of political commentary on the Spanish civil war (236) but also as a manifesto against the use of torture (240). According to Zipes, *Pan’s Labyrinth* is “a chilling film that does not mince words nor delude us about the cruelty in our world. Del Toro wants to penetrate the spectacle of society that glorifies and conceals the pathology and corruption of people in power” (236). Thus, *Pan’s Labyrinth* can be read as a perfect embodiment of Zipes’ own notion of what a fairy tale is and how it is transmitted through generations and that he summarized in his recent *The Irresistible Fairy Tale: The Cultural and Social History of a Genre*: “Fairy tales (...) were born out of conflict (...) they continue to be irresistible and breathe mementically through us, offering hope that we can change ourselves while changing the world” (20).
5. Guillermo del Toro has directed *Chronos*, *Mimic* (1997), *The Devil’s Backbone*, *Blade II* (2002), *Hellboy* (2004) and *Pan’s Labyrinth*. Both *The Devil’s Backbone* and *Pan’s Labyrinth* are Mexican-Spanish co-productions. For a study of the transnational credentials of Del Toro’s filmography and his articulation of the horror genre in the tradition of Spanish Civil War films, see Lázaro-Reboll.
6. Cecilia Enjuto Rangel has recently published an enlightening comparison between the reappropriation of magic and fantasy in *Pan’s Labyrinth* and *The Devil’s Backbone*. She makes a very interesting point regarding the gendering of the symbolism related to magic in both films: “Una diferencia clave de los filmes de del Toro, además de que en *El espinazo* sobresalen los símbolos fálicos y en *El laberinto* los símbolos uterinos, es que en *El laberinto* vemos la lucha de un individuo, una niña, cuyo heroísmo reside en su capacidad de decidir y sacrificarse. Por su parte, en *El espinazo*, aunque encontremos los mismos valores éticos, y aunque Carlos y Jaime protagonicen la acción, es el colectivo de los niños el que logra matar al anti-héroe” (s.p.). It is coherent that in *Pan’s Labyrinth*, a film that proposes a more individualistic and subjective (i.e. more “feminine,” more “lullaby-like”) response to the ghosts of the historical past, the symbols (and the soundtrack) are marked as inherently “uterine.” In an interview with Guillermo del Toro, Mark Kermode also stresses this point in a more

- simplistic manner: “*The Devil’s Backbone* ... is the brother movie. But *Pan’s Labyrinth* is the sister movie, the female energy to that other one” (s.p.).
7. José Colmeiro eloquently describes the “dangers” posed by these “costumbrista” narratives of the past; “It is interesting that the predominant mode of Spanish cultural narratives about the past produced in recent years, particularly in the mass media of television and cinema, has followed a traditional realistic and costumbrista naturalistic style. Even the screen adaptations of nonrealistic works of literature repeatedly recur to long-established realistic, linear modes of representations, often against the grain of the original literary work. (...) in spite of their noble goals of making the traumatic past of repression and resistance accessible and understandable to contemporary Spanish audiences, mostly without direct access or personal recollection of those events, they have made it perhaps too palatable and too comfortable, thus neutralizing their potential as instruments for social intervention. (...)” (29).
  8. The author wishes to thank Constanza Burucúa for her bibliographical suggestions on this topic.
  9. In “History and Hauntology; or, What Does One Do with the Ghosts of the Past? Reflections on Spanish Film and Fiction of the Post-Franco Period”, Labanyi uses the notion of postmodern simulacra (using Barthes’s 1984 classic study *Camera Lucida* as a starting point) and explores the “many kinds of ghosts” (65) and the “various ways of dealing with them” (id.) that appear in Spanish films and novels of the post-Franco era that actively engage with the process of remembering a silenced past through the trope of haunting: Erice’s *El espíritu de la colmena* (1973), *El sur* (1983), *Luna de lobos* (1985) and Muñoz Molina’s *El jinete polaco* (1991).
  10. My interpretation supports Labanyi, Colmeiro, Harcastle and Lázaro-Reboll’s view of the political engagement of this film. For an alternative (and also interesting) reading of *Pan’s Labyrinth* as a nostalgic, essentialist film that offers a “sacred” and “mythic” view of history through the allegory of the Republic as the infant period of Spain, see Antonio Gómez López-Quiñones’ article on the romantization of infancy (and of historical conflict) in *Pan’s Labyrinth*: “El hecho de que, en recientes films sobre la Guerra Civil, la infancia se solape con un determinado pasado nacional acarrea varias consecuencias. En primer lugar, sugiere una evolución antropomórfica para un periodo específico de una comunidad política. Si a la historia de una nación le adjudicamos la estructura temporal de una vida humana, un determinado pasado es susceptible de funcionar como una suerte de infancia colectiva. La expulsión de esa infancia conlleva necesariamente la pérdida de un tiempo idealizado, de posibilidades ilimitadas, crecimiento expansivo y candidez moral” (s.p.).
  11. Guillermo del Toro has an interesting symbolic view of the power that comes from “disability” (amputation, stuttering, sexual impotence) in his filmography that remains to be studied in his complexity.
  12. Music has been perceived as a more effective vehicle for historical memory than documentaries. Labanyi makes an interesting reading (following Bakhtin and Benjamin) of Patino’s documentary *Canciones para después de una guerra* and in Marsé’s *Si te dicen que caí* (74).
  13. The trope of orphanhood is almost as recurrent as the trope of haunting and both are connected, notes Colmeiro: “the trope of orphanhood, like the trope of ghosts, has a well established connection in post civil war Spanish culture, by referring elliptically to the unspeakable horrors of the past and the traumatized identity of its victims (*Nada, Primera memoria, Cría Cuervos, El desencanto, El Sur, Los niños de Rusia, El espinazo del diablo*, just to name a few)” (31).
  14. In “Memory and Modernity in Democratic Spain: The Difficulty of Coming to Terms with the Spanish Civil War”, Labanyi questions the applicability of trauma theory to the Spanish case. She suggests that “the pact of oblivion” has become such a commonplace because it allows the transition to be seen as a break with the past, masking –conveniently for both political Right and Left – the fact that it was effected by politicians from within the former Francoist state apparatus” (94). Labanyi sees two tendencies in the representation of the traumatic past (Civil War and Franco period) starting in the Spanish transition: she is critical with the iconoclasm of the Socialist government that “promoted a view of Spain as a young, brash, ultramodern nation” (94) because this contributed to the current crisis of memory. Labanyi notes that “since the late 1990s, escalating after 2001, there has been a flood of novels and collections of testimonies on the wartime and postwar repression as well as a significant number of fiction films and documentaries” (95). Labanyi identifies “a strand of cinematic and literary texts which strike me as specially effective in their treatment of the war through the motif of haunting, which

- operates through suggestion rather than statement" (97) and relates this impulse to Marianne Hirsch's notion of "postmemory," "the experience of those who grew up overshadowed by their parents' memories of traumatic events" (99). *Pan's Labyrinth* no doubt belongs to this group of texts that Labanyi interprets as being effective in their treatment of historical memory.
15. The use of this pool-well where Ofelia's blood drips and where the moon is reflected acts as a threshold to the world of fantasy and death, but also can be interpreted as a dystopic version of the myth of Narcissus applied to a national realm. It can also be seen as a companion symbolic piece to other water pools that may be seen as peculiar embodiments of Nora's *lieux de mémoire* (such as those tanks of water that recurrently appear in *The Devil's Backbone* and the empty pools in Saura's iconic *Cria Cuervos*).

### Notes on contributor

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