The Fantastic Manifesto: Monstrosity of Memory and Epiphany of Selfhood in The Spirit of the Beehive (1973)

Layla Blodgett Carrillo

The Graduate Center, City University of New York

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by

LAYLA BLODGETT CARRILLO

A master’s thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New York

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The Fantastic Manifesto: Monstrosity of Memory & Epiphany of Selfhood in *The Spirit of the Beehive* (1973)

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Layla Blodgett Carrillo

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in satisfaction of the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Abstract


by

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Advisor: Edward D. Miller

The Spanish culture of storytelling suffered under the nearly forty-year dictatorship of Francisco Franco. The government-regulated cinema welcomed propaganda and melodrama, and denied the fantastic, the legendary, and the magical. These carefully manipulated histories, which served to romanticize the ideologies of the regime, also served to eulogize the delinquent and the depraved. In the early 1970s, at the heels of the collapse of Franco’s reign, the people of Spain bore witness to a new national cinema. The Spirit of the Beehive (1973), the feature debut from Victor Erice, exists at the threshold between a storied history of Spanish dictatorship and an impending democratic new history. This thesis contemplates the ways in which The Spirit of the Beehive celebrates difference through examining a child’s relationship with the magical and the monstrous in two dichotomous landscapes: popular culture and endemic Spanish traditions. Erice’s film uses myth and fantasy to inquire what it means to be human, specifically a child, during this social transition. For Erice’s young protagonist, James Whale’s Frankenstein (1931) conjures more than a simple celluloid terror. Ana’s emotional kinship with the wretch remolds the framework of her perception of selfhood; the bond awakens an awareness, of both self and other, and independence, as an individual and as a nation. My writing is inspired by the notion of rhizome developed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in A Thousand Plateaus, the second half of their seminal project Capitalism and Schizophrenia. Appropriated itself from the botanical
term for a subterranean system of roots, the rhizome is a philosophical theory pertaining to multiplicities. Turning to Spanish Civil War history, D.W. Winnicott’s studies of true self and false self, Lois Parkinson Zamora’s work on Magical Realism, and Marsha Kinder’s *Blood Cinema: the reconstruction of national identity in Spain*, this thesis employs a rhizomatic exploration of oral folklore, Spanish Catholic rituals, and cinema of resistance as represented by the nation, the auteur, the child, and the monster — rooted here at the tree that is Victor Erice’s *The Spirit of the Beehive*. 
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| FIGURE 1 | Image source: Italian propaganda postcard, circa late-1930s. Source unknown. |
INTRODUCTION: THE CONSTRUCTION OF A LEGEND

A madman’s manifesto

On July 18, 1936, while stationed in the Canary Islands, General Francisco Franco penned his imperious “Manifiesto de las Palmas,” a splenetic cry against an envisioned anarchic Spain. Fearing revolution among populists — among laborers and intellectuals, the humble masses and the left-leaning government factions — Franco importuned Spaniards to acquiesce to his narrative of peace, brotherhood, and justice. Great violence emerged from the dissemination of this dogmatic bulletin. With assumed command of the Army of Africa, Franco immediately initiated a successful coup against the Second Spanish Republic in Barcelona. Laborers across the country led passionate, desperate, and violent strikes as they were called to war. Once Franco established headquarters in Seville, he adopted the monarchist flag as his own, and at the same time, with each city his men took, Nazi flags were hung at border checkpoints (de Meneses 36).

Why mention these minor details from the opening scenes of a four-decade-long tale? I read these cultural appropriations, one a historic symbol of Spanish regal opulence, and another of a steadily growing ideological movement borrowed from a neighboring nation, as objects that inform a unique understanding of the birth of Franco’s reign. These flags are a bricolage of sorts which allow insight into this future dictator’s mercurial imperial impulses.

Apart from his self-promotion to total leader and the creation of a singular political party, Franco’s desire when inaugurating this fascistic dynasty was not to incite any dramatic transformation within Spanish society. In fact, he coveted a Spain without change, wishing to “return it to a mythical time when there was no regionalist feeling, when the Catholic Church dictated both social norms and the pace of intellectual progress, when the army was respected”
While the war only officially spanned three years, the preponderate Francoist national ideology, this violently and forcibly constructed mythology of peace, brotherhood and justice, reigned over those left in the wake of the devastating war for the nearly forty-year dictatorship.

**The mythos of magic and monsters**

When a singular ideology takes control, the cultural institution of storytelling (ranging from ancient folklore to popular entertainment mediums, Biblical teachings to literary texts) likewise undergo a salient transformation. Relegated to producing government-regulated genre pieces, the landscape of Spanish cinema primarily served to romanticize the ideologies of the regime, and at the same time, to eulogize the delinquent and the depraved. The system welcomed carefully manipulated histories, excelling in propaganda and melodrama, and denied inclusion of the fantastic and the magical.

The question to ask, however, is not how did storytelling suffer under the rule of Franco, but how did the imagination of Spain thrive? In the early 1970s, at the foot of Franco’s deathbed, the people of Spain bore witness to a new national cinema. *The Spirit of the Beehive (El espíritu de la colmena)* 1973), the feature debut from Victor Erice, exists at the threshold between a storied history of Spanish dictatorship, and an impending democratic new history. Erice’s film uses myth and fantasy to inquire what it means to be human, specifically a child, during this social transition. Within this thesis, the terms mythology and myth are purposefully employed as heterogeneous concepts. Mythology is used in reference to a system of beliefs conscripted, administered, and managed by the official government led by Franco and the Catholic Church.
Myth invokes fables and tales, legends and allegories. Myths are atemporal; they both celebrate and reject the past, present, and future. The myth is the imagination of the people jeopardized by the mythology conceived by a fascist regime.

The story begins in a rural village in the early days of new Falange regime. Ana (six-year-old Ana Torrent, in her first film role) and her sister Isabel gather in the town center. Their small village has just received a big gift — a traveling print of a new film. James Whale’s Frankenstein (1931) flickers across an off-white screen hanging in a communal building. Ana is captivated and confounded by the images of the film, most specifically the culminating witch hunt for the grotesque creature portrayed by Boris Karloff. Ana is enchanted by the monster and his tale. The story of Frankenstein’s monster is soon a bygone pleasure for Isabel and other attendees, and Erice’s film focuses on the minor adventures of the sisters as they forage mushrooms, attend grade school, play games throughout each room of their home, and explore the barren landscapes, empty buildings, and expansive train tracks surrounding the village. Ana, however, is always seeking the spirit of the monster. Habitually returning to the same abandoned farmhouse distinguished by a well in its yard, she pursues a deeper understanding of the mysteries of humanity and monstrosity, until one day she encounters a wounded deserter.

Wordlessly charting a curious new friendship, Ana gives the soldier gifts of friendship: food filched from her mother’s kitchen, a coat belonging to her father, her own unflinching goodwill.

1 Antonio Cazorla Sánchez prefaced his book Fear and Progress with a useful glossary of terms and movements. He defines Falange as such: “Spanish fascist party founded in 1933, and then fused by Franco with other right-wing groups during the war. It was Spain’s only political party for the whole period of the dictatorship. Falange’s official name (from April 1937) was Falange Española Tradicionalista de las Juntas de Ofensivas Nacional-Sindicalistas” (xi). This thesis will briefly touch on the founding of the original Falange movement, and will employ the term throughout as a synonym to the Franco regime.

2 While, in 1940, this version Frankenstein would be almost nine years old, for Ana, and everyone residing in a small village such as Hoyuelos, the film is a brand new release.
When the man is discovered and executed by local authorities, Ana flees. Vanishing deeper and deeper into the forest, and into her own solitude, the spirit manifests. The film concludes with our young heroine outwardly numbed and muted. To the adults who surround her, this absence of speech is the product of a perceived trauma of running away, but for Ana, quiescence is a choice. It is a rebellion against those who misunderstand and murder. She speaks again in the umbrance of nightfall only to announce her existence, to call to her spirit.

The first chapter of this thesis embarks on a brief exploration of Francisco Franco’s rise to power. The movements that culminated in the Civil War (and quite frankly, the events of the war itself) are cyclical, contradictory and complex, and nearly impossible to pen in this short piece. I will, however, examine the social and political landscapes of both Ana’s narrative timeline and Erice’s artistic career, using the Francoist national anthem as the backbone to the chapter. The second chapter reviews the latter of these landscapes intimately: the filmmaker as cinephile and dreamer. In addition to pondering Erice’s relationship to cinema, I will also turn to his theoretical, critical, and memoiristic writings on the subject, as well as the institutional context in which he begins his career. Returning to Ana (though never truly leaving her), the third chapter lauds the vigor of the child. Without fully recognizing the state of trauma in which she grows up (particularly because the adults who lived through the war now populate a world built on silence and secrecy), Ana must acquire her own knowledge, enact her own explorations, and forge her own friendships. Ana must uncover both the secrets of her people and the root of her true self. The discovery of her selfhood manifests in recognizing the Other, in identifying with those who dissent and revolt, with those who are presumed monstrous by a repressive regime. The final chapter celebrates that grotesquely human creature.
“Once upon a time…somewhere on the Castilian plain, around 1940,” begins the fantastic tale told by The Spirit of the Beehive. While our young heroine’s story may appear to begin sometime around the year 1940, we should remember that six years prior, in the year of Ana’s birth, the entire nation of Spain was turned upside-down by a violent internal war. We know Ana’s current world is one ruled by a ruthless dictator. We also know that, with those four simple introductory words, a phrase which inherently plays upon our own memories of the fairy tale, The Spirit of the Beehive is a performance of the world’s magic as viewed through the eyes of a child. For Erice’s young protagonist, the sensational Hollywood production of Frankenstein conjures more than a simple celluloid terror. Ana’s emotional kinship with the monster remolds the framework of her perception of selfhood and kinship. The bond awakens an awareness, of self and other, and a desire for independence, as an individual and a nation. This thesis surveys the ways in which The Spirit of the Beehive celebrates self-discovery and nonconformity through examining a child’s relationship with the magical and the monstrous in two dichotomous landscapes: endemic Spanish traditions and popular culture.

In my exploration of the impact of The Spirit of the Beehive in relationship to other cultural artifacts, I draw many comparisons to other cinematic works (films both Hollywood and European; pictures that both precede and inspire it, and succeed and are inspired by it), the songs and poems of the Falangist regime, the enigmatic etchings of Francisco de Goya, the quest for knowledge found in the stories of Genesis, and the monster (and monster-maker) mythos crafted by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in A Thousand Plateaus, the second half of their seminal project Capitalism and Schizophrenia, admire and examine the process of writing. The assemblage of a literary work is no different (and thus no less important)
than the content of the finished product. Furthermore, according to the two philosophers, the appreciation of literary process, of its mechanization, reveals truths regarding ideology: it is absent, and perhaps it never existed (4). “Writing has nothing to do with signifying. It has everything to do with surveying, mapping, even realms that are yet to come” (4-5), elucidate Deleuze and Guattari, themselves exhibiting the prophetic quality of constructing literary topographies as they grapple with unveiling an unforeseen interconnectedness in the processes of writing and reading (creating and absorbing; imagining and adventuring). Deleuze and Guattari employ the term rhizome to reject “the binary logic of dichotomy…replaced [instead] by biunivocal relationships between successive circles” (5). Appropriated itself from the botanical term for a subterranean system of roots, the rhizome is a philosophical theory contingent upon the existence of multiplicities. Turning to Spanish Civil War history, the early writings of New Spanish Cinema, critical studies in developmental psychology, the gothic traditions of decadence and decay, and the revolutionary significance of the Othered body, this thesis engages in a rhizomatic exploration of oral folklore, Spanish Catholic traditions, and cinema of resistance as represented by the nation, the auteur, the child, and the monster — rooted here in Victor Erice’s *The Spirit of the Beehive.*
CHAPTER ONE: THE NATIONAL ANTHEM

¡Que vuelve a resurgir! / Let us rise again!
The elliptical rebirth of Spain

The political history of modern Spain is marked by cyclical metamorphoses. With each shift in authority emerges a forcible repudiation of the preceding regime. And eventually, with the termination of a governing power, there is often a reclamation of the past. In exceedingly simplistic terms: when monarchies entangled with the Catholic Church are overthrown, republics are born. An eventual revolution against this republic and the frightful nature of a potential anarchic state calls for the return to faith and crown. This chapter examines briefly the rise of Generalissimo Francisco Franco through an exploration of the oscillation and reincarnation of powers in Spain. As the concept of rebirth is rife with allegory, we must examine this history of Spain through its cultural output, ranging from folklore to religion to high art, from literature to music to cinema. The ways in which the Franco regime managed and subsequently oppressed the populace can be inspected through a reading of the relationship between both endemic and popular culture, between venerable traditions and modern inventions. A metaphoric thread weaves this relationship together throughout this chapter: the new national anthem lyrics adopted by Franco at the start of his reign.

“¡Viva España! Alzad los brazos, hijos del pueblo español. ¡Que vuelve a resurgir!”
(“Long live Spain! Lift up your arms, sons of the Spanish people. Let us rise again!”), begins José María Pemán’s “La Marcha Real.” As a poet, playwright, and intellectual (and inadvertent songwriter), Pemán was lauded by the Nationalist right-wing. A regaled member of the “official” theatre for his portrayals of a heroic and glorious Spain (and her strong, virtuous people), harking
back to the melodramatic themes of Golden Age literature, Pemán’s work reflected the ideology of the Franco regime: the desire to return to an age of perceived splendor (Halsey 659; Parker 127). Designed to exalt the monarchy, the original 1846 rendition of “La Marcha Real” was most frequently played without lyrical accompaniment. The 1928 version penned by Pemán, however, was decreed by Franco as Spain’s anthem in 1939, where it remained in popular canon (though unofficially so) until 1978, three years following the general’s death (Neustadt 16). In 2008, Spain’s government issued a contest for lyrics which evoke a new Spain (and for Spanish athletes to sing at the Olympics as Madrid was a contending location for the 2016 games), but the winning submission was discovered, disseminated, and destroyed, and thus, currently, the song is one of four official anthems performed without words (Neustadt 14-16). The historical chronology of a national anthem of Spain echoes the fluctuation and mutability exhibited in the cyclical reigns of political parties: what began as a hymn for the crown was eventually refashioned by a right-wing poet, adopted by a fascist regime, only to be disowned by democracy in the late-1970s.

Why is the state’s manipulation of this song important? Firstly, its existence in this Pemán-penned variation demonstrated the power of a regime over popular culture. The restructuring of a traditional hymn not only showcased manipulation and appropriation, but was a palpable theft of an existing notable cultural artifact. Secondly, the fascist lyrics of the Francoist National Anthem are exemplary of the regime’s ideological themes, and therefore Franco’s mythological world. It is a challenge for any writer to aptly illustrate the nuances,

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3 From roughly 1590-1681; authors and artists Lope de Vega, Miguel de Cervantes, Francisco de Zurbarán, and Diego Velázquez are among the most famous.
4 The title itself translates to “The Royal March.”
5 Addressed in news articles around the world, especially in 2008, including Mark Elkington’s piece for Reuters’ “Oddly Enough” series.
inconsistencies, and injuries in war histories. Thematically structured by these lyrics, the paragraphs that make up this chapter are a simplified condensation of the historical origins of the Spanish Civil War, and serve as the initial layer to the palimpsest I aspire to interpret. The historical context of the tangible trauma depicted in the 1940 narrative of The Spirit of the Beehive is where we begin.

_Gloria a la patria / Glory to the Fatherland_
_Patriotism and the rise of Generalissimo Franco_

Francisco Franco Bahamonde epitomized the career militarist. When the Naval Cadet School reached capacity the year he was to enter, Franco enrolled in the Infantry Academy in Toledo. Upon completion, Franco began a post in Morocco, where he quickly progressed through the ranks; he was the youngest Captain, then Major, Colonel, and finally, General in the Spanish Army (Thomas 82). He served as the commanding officer of the Foreign Legion, the same organization he was called upon in 1934 by the Ministry of War to circumvent a rising anarchist revolution supported by an Asturian miners’ strike — his first collaboration Army of Africa, lead by General Eduardo López Ochoa. In an insurrection authorized by López Ochoa, acting outside command from the Ministry of War, over 1,300 civilians died, 3,000 were wounded, and upwards of 30,000 were captured as political prisoners (Thomas 83-85). In February 1936, dismissed from his position at the War Ministry, Franco was dispatched to the Canary Islands to serve as commander of the island’s small infantry, a demotion to a more superficial, and thus harmless, position (Thomas 97 and 100). The second verse of Pemán’s anthem continues, “*Gloria a la patria que supo seguir sobre el azul de mar el caminar del sol*”

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6 From 1923-1927
(“Glory to the Fatherland that knew to follow the blue sea on the path of the sun”). Exiled to the luminously sunlit island territory off the coast of Africa, a man emotionally disfigured by a perceived betrayal by his government, but a man fervidly loyal to a particular vision of his homeland, began his crusade. He sought a Spain both traditional and mythological, and he was to be the man to deliver such glory.

Before we can understand Franco’s maddened plot, we first must explore the political landscape in which his holy war unravels. The temperamental history of Spain’s government comes to a head with the fleeting establishment of the Second Spanish Republic, which ran its course from the ratification of the Constitución de la República Española on December 9, 1931 until the end of the Civil War on April 1, 1939. Following the collapse of the monarchy ruled by King Alfonso XIII (and Miguel Primo de Rivera as Prime Minister), the Second Spanish Republic was established as a center-left government, headed by Niceto Alcalá Zamora and Manuel Azaña (Payne 632). Although the official end of the Second Spanish Republic is remembered as the first day of April when Franco delivered his radio broadcast victory address, the Republic’s deteriorating power began much earlier: with the swift retaliation of the conservative right. In the months leading up to the elections of November 1933, leaders of the Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas (Spanish Confederation of the Autonomous Right, or CEDA), a philistine Catholic organization, joined forces with the Falange, benefactors of the Bourbon Monarchy, powerful Carlists, and many agrarian communities to form a “Nationalist Front” (Thomas 86-90). Increasing national debt, and wavering government

7 The Constitution famously lessened the Catholic Church’s role in the public sphere, notably in education.
coalitions led to violence and attempted coups by both the right and left. In 1933 CEDA won power, and the Church retained their potent presence in state affairs.

Concurrent to the zealous early career of Franco, mainland Spain saw the rise of the Falange Española de las JONS, a Fascist and National-Syndicalist Party, organized by José Antonio Primo de Rivera, the son of former Prime Minister Primo de Rivera. The younger Primo de Rivera published on March 16, 1933 the first and only edition of a magazine named *El Fascio*, in which he decreed:

> We are Fascists, because we find our origins in Mussolinian principles; we are Nazis, because in National Socialist doctrines vibrate our faith and doctrine. But we are, above all, Spaniards. The National-Syndicalist State, corporative and totalitarian, is of Spanish type. It is not a block from the Italian or German quarry. It is a Spanish creation. (quoted in Hamilton 60)

This provocative phrasing both aligns this early materialization of the Falangist Party with the two most notorious European dictators, and calls for a unification of a new Spain. Primo de Rivera, only thirty years old, and endowed with his father’s name and fortune, instilled confidence in the maturing fascist movement (Hamilton 61). In October 1934, an armed rising of workers (largely from Asturias and Catalonia), was forcefully put down by CEDA (Hamilton 53). This event resulted in a violent energy of elephantine proportions, animating three major movements across Spain: nationalists, republicans, and anarchists. Nationalist Front remained grounded both in conservative Catholicism and the tenets of fascism, and adhered the Falangist ideology established by Primo de Rivera and popularized by General Franco. Groups of secular and modernizing Republicans and a revived anarchist movement eventually helped to form the Popular Front — the adversaries to Franco’s regime.
On November 8, 1939 the *New York Times* ran a profile on the dictator titled “Franco wages war with a light heart,” a piece which revealed to the outside world — those nations uninvolved in the Civil War, but otherwise engaged in a world war — initial insight into the regime of this new and unpredictable national leader. “When the Popular Front won the elections in February [1936], Franco was sent to the supposed oblivion of a command in the Canary Islands. But the seeds of revolt had been sown. It was only a question of when they would flower,” writes Frank L. Kluckhohn (5). Plans for the eventual Nationalist coup began to crystallize. When Rightist leader José Calvo Sotelo was assassinated in July 1936 in Madrid, Franco immediately enacted his plan, flying from the Canary Islands to Morocco that very day, hurriedly gathering a rebel army, and advancing upon the mainland (Kluckhohn 5 & 20). And with that, the revolution was underway. Working as a foreign correspondent during World War II, Kluckhohn found himself stationed at the Spanish Front following the Falangist coup of 1936. Though he writes the piece post ascension to power, Kluckhohn has a prophetic quality, no doubt mirroring the sentiment felt by many of Spain’s self-exiled intellectuals, a particular group to which I will return.

With the advent of war, the political landscape of Spain broke apart. Joel Olson, in an article for *Polity* on the influence of Hannah Arendt’s *On Revolution* within the anarchist movement in Spain, calls the Civil War “a three-cornered fight in which the Republican government… and working class revolutionaries on the Left simultaneously fought against Franco and each other (emphasis added) for nearly three years” (466). Factions of the Popular Front, namely the state-based Republican government reeling from the dissolution of the Second Spanish Republic, and the more radical movements — socialist parties, anarchist leaders, and
independent militias — too often battled against one another rather than unifying their efforts to combat a totalitarian threat. “The end of revolutionary Spain,” Olson writes, climaxed with the 1937 battle for Barcelona waged upon the Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista (Workers’ Party for Marxist Unification, or POUM⁸) by Republican forces. The disharmony within the Republican revolution left the party weak, and Franco’s men, armed with Mussolini- and Hitler-supplied munitions, commandeered complete control (Olson 466); the Nationalists took Spain.

Figure 1. Italian propaganda postcard circa late-1930s, reading “The three great leaders, defenders of peace and civilization.”

Thinking back to Kluckhohn’s New York Times article, I am haunted by the way this American correspondent illustrates the effervescent, almost effortless, way in which Franco

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⁸ Interestingly, British author George Orwell travelled to Spain to fight for the Republican cause, joining POUM. In June of 1937, POUM was declared illegal. Orwell, facing charges of treason, fled Spain. These events are chronicled in his book, Homage to Catalonia (1938).
seized control of Madrid. Kluckhohn writes of the man as just that — a man. The Franco who
won the Spanish Civil War was complicated and deceitful, blithesome and confident. An angry
and ousted general no more, this Franco was a traditionalist tycoon, and was now the
conservative commander of the prized Fatherland. While the transition may exude an air of
effortlessness, it certainly was not painless.

*Cantan al compás del himno de la fe / Sing to the rhythm of the hymn of the faith*
*The power of the Church*

The seemingly uncomplicated lifestyle afforded by a return to a “traditional Spain” is one
of the tragically towering Francoist mythologies. This was a world collaboratively fabricated
through the partnership of regime and religion and was critical in the meticulous manipulation of
the past, present, and future of Spain. The concluding two sections of this chapter are dedicated
to a brief examination of the lives of ordinary Spanish people in the years following Franco’s
acquisition of power. It is a small outline of the ways in which this dictatorship exhausted a
hitherto intellectual, artistic, and modernizing nation into a forty-year submission to censorship
and isolation.

Audrey Brassloff argues that while little data directly links the Church to Franco’s July
1936 military coup, one can trace a longstanding partnership with between the Papacy and
Spain’s socio-economic elite (6). This political betrothal, which Brassloff christens the “Throne
and Altar alliance,” worked to fortify “the ideological climate of the uprising,” and legitimized
the analogy of Franco’s revolt as a ‘Crusade,’ as it was marketed by Nationalist and religious
publications (6). In the onset of the Civil War, the greatest early supporters of the Nationalist
coup were a provocative coalition of the petit bourgeoisie, conservative rural landowners, and the Catholic public, including much of Spain’s peasant class. The Church itself abstained from any official patronage until mid-1937, when a collective pastoral letter of Spanish bishops declared Nationalist obscurantism a crusade against the depravity of the liberal left (Payne 653). With rampant jingoist and religious fervor, and an official blessing from the Church, Franco won the war. Resuming the fascist anthem, the Spanish choir announces, “¡Triunfa España! Los yunques y las rueda cantan al compás del himno de la fe” (“Triumphant Spain! The wheels and anvils and sing to the rhythm of the hymn of the faith”). The Church joined the regime in a victorious march, and the people of Spain had no choice but to sing along.

In his exhaustive account of the social and political environment in the decades leading to the great Civil War, Gerald Brenan addresses, as I have in the first section of this chapter, wavering regimes throughout the two hundred years of modern Spain, and endeavors to understand the public ritual of complacency. Published in 1943, Brenan’s The Spanish Labyrinth is a remarkable document for its ability to collect information, testimony, and theory regarding a recent trauma, and to ponder the war with such lucidity. Through reading The Spanish Labyrinth a clear chronicle of the war’s quietly violent evolution can be traced. The chapter titled “The Agrarian Question” enlightens readers on the lives of the middle- and lower-class, Spain’s ordinary people. According to Brenan, hundreds of years of Spanish history is outlined by limited popular engagement with the government — votes were cast when men feared termination of employment, or perhaps when a local political boss bribed them with a few pesetas — simply because their own government rarely gave reason for the ordinary person to feel heard or protected (88-89). Brenan goes on to mention, perhaps in an attempt to placate
readers who may find his claim too polarizing, the historical moments the Spanish pueblo\(^9\) fought for their motherland — when they banned together to expel the Austrian Archduke during the War of Spanish Succession (1701-1714), or defeated Napoleon’s army (1809) — but nevertheless, he reminds this skeptical reader that many of these campaigns were motivated religiously rather than politically, and were often indisputably *initiated* by the Church (89). The question Brenan aims to answer, and the question which became increasingly important in my research, is just why Spain’s common people would act with such complacency? What about General Franco and his unholy matrimony with the Church silenced both the working class and the creative class?

The agrarian question Brenan poses showcases a severe distinction between rural and urban Spain. These two contrasting landscapes beg another fundamental question: which region best represents the Fatherland, the countryside or the cityscape? For a new autocrat of an old nation, this decision is of utmost importance. With all eyes on Franco, the dictator selects the rural landscape as exemplary of the old Spain to which he will return the nation. In their study of what they classify as the “moral crusade” enacted upon the barrios of Grenada in the early years of Francoist Spain, Richard Cleminson and Claudio Hernández Burgos write, “although other dictatorships…idealized the rural world, they were…modernistic in their political outlook and they praised the…possibilities for renovation provided by the city…The Spanish peasant was recuperated [by Franco] as the manifestation of the historic rootedness of noble Castilian identity, Catholic values, and a simple but ordered life” (98). This characterization of Spain is complicated, and ostensibly unattainable. The Spaniard hallowed by Francoist ideals was the

\(^9\) Common people, or town/village.
same Spaniard whose vision for their own world — whether something as indispensable as bread on the table to ensure the family’s survival or something as profound as art and music and literature to allow a culture to flourish — was torn apart by poverty, violence, and censorship.

“La vida nueva y fuerte del trabajo y paz” / “The new powerful life of labor and peace”  
Ordinary lives in extraordinary times

In November of 1940 the Foreign Ministry, under the direct control of Ramón Serrano Suñer, brother-in-law to General Franco, established the Council of Hispanidad, an organization which “only wishes to restore Hispanidad its feeling of unity,” and proclaimed to be the “father of just laws, governor of nations, creator of culture” (quoted in Hamilton 261). Thirty years later, the Education Law of 1970 encouraged the collaboration of parents in the education of their children through implementing parent associations, which undermined the codependent relationship between Church and State during the Franco years. Although the following chapter of this thesis will discuss censorship in greater detail, these two specific government ordinances grounded in these two definitive moments in time — one situated near Erice’s birthdate, and within the narrative timeline in which Ana resides, and the other at the decline of Franco’s power, and in the conception years of The Spirit of the Beehive — are powerful bookends to the climate of cultural and educational control enacted by this dictatorship. Spaniards, at first quietly, then restlessly, resisted.

José María Pemán, the thematic, rhizomatic lifeblood beating throughout this chapter, the author of the Francoist song of national glory, served as a goodwill emissary for the Council of Hispanidad, traveling to other Spanish-speaking nations to promote the mission of the council,

10 A generalized term often referencing Spanish-speaking communities. It was reemployed by Francoists and the Catholic Church in anti-liberal rhetoric.
which was to showcase a vision of life in the mother country as depicted by a carefully curated selection of Spanish language literature, films, radio broadcast, and other methods of pure propaganda (Hamilton, 261). The final stanza of Pemán’s poem-turned-anthem encourages solidarity, peace, and hard work: “Juntos con ellos cantemos de pie la vida nueva y fuerte del trabajo y paz” (“Together we stand and sing of the new powerful life of labor and peace”). For many, this feigned unity comes at a high price.

Unique from the preeminent dictators of the Second World War, Franco established Spain as an autarky with a closed economy. However, Spain was hardly self-sufficient: “Hunger and misery were the twin products of corruption, but they were also caused by economic inefficiency rooted in Franco’s cherished policy of autarky. In macro-economic terms, this meant that Spain missed more than a decade of economic growth” (Cazorla Sánchez 62). While much of Europe ushered in an economic golden age in the aftermath of the Second World War, many engaging the new concept of mixed markets, Spain remained isolated until the latter half of the Francoist regime (de la Torre 163-164). Beginning in the early 1960s, Spain rapidly modernized the economy, opened trade, and encouraged tourism. Regarded as “the Spanish economic miracle” during the conference “Spain in the Seventies: Problems of Change and Transition” held in Washington D.C. in June 1973, the transpiration of these new economic success due in part to major shifts in policies influenced by the 1957 establishment of the European Economic Community — forward-thinking politicians advocated the liberalization of currency and an unexpected growth in tourism propelled Spain’s competitive status in the European market (Wipplinger 1-4). These strategies exercised in the late-1960s and early-1970s are imperative to an insurrectionary reading of The Spirit of the Beehive. We are at the threshold of a new world,
for while *The Spirit of the Beehive* is Erice’s first feature length adventure, it also represents the grand finale of filmic forbiddance. It was 1973, and Franco was dying.

Franco was a complicated contradiction — he fervently valued tradition, and yet the path journeyed was wholly unconventional. Kluckhohn writes, “he links all the old prejudices of the upper class with the progressive spirit of a man who has risen to high position younger than most, and who is not bound by tradition” (20). Where does a man like Franco reside in both the preexisting and the recently reconstructed social hierarchies? Could he champion the everyman? Furthermore, would a man like Franco ever truly embody, and honorably govern, his Fatherland?

Considering the present (1939) Spanish social structures, Kluckhohn continues, “his association with the powerful military clique before the republic, his religious training and his association with men of money and position, incline him to look upon any Liberal movement of the other classes with antipathy and alarm,” assessing that while Franco may casually promulgate a certain cadence of respect and empathy for the middle- and lower-classes, the man remained cautiously skeptical toward these “other classes,” and unsurprisingly better aligned with the moneyed caste (20). The Others, the marginalized peoples quieted by this dictator’s four-decade tenure — the dissenters, the anarchists, the artists, the intellectuals, the peasants — gave birth to legends, dreams, and myths. They also gave birth to the children who would preserve the legacy of the magical.
CHAPTER TWO: THE FILMMAKER’S DREAM

*Although they do not have maps or weapons, they always will battle against materialistic men*

*Restriction and resistance*

From the start of his revolution, Franco harnessed the power of mass mediated messages. On July 17, 1936 Francisco Franco wrote and distributed his “Manifiesto de las Palmas.” The piece is a reflection of the general’s synchronous tenacity and dread. He enthusiastically, almost deliriously, called for all Spaniards to swear by his cause, to suspect wrongdoings of a fearsome, but nameless enemy. This, however, was a common evil selected by one powerful man. In this mad manifesto Franco trumpeted:

> Revolutionary strikes of all kinds paralyze the life of the nation, destroying its sources of wealth and creating hunger, forcing working men to the point of desperation. The most savage attacks are made upon national monuments and artistic treasures by revolutionary hordes who obey the orders of foreign governments, with the complicity and negligence of local authorities. (quoted in Kenwood 56)

The above statement plays upon a two-fold function of the creative arts and popular media in a time of war. Franco exploited sentimentality of a culture in flux by pointing fingers at those beasts who dare destroy “national monuments and artistic treasures,” while simultaneously employing print media and radio broadcasts to circulate Nationalist propaganda. The manifesto stood as a frank pro-military summon for Spaniards to recognize the dangerous crimes committed by both city and country, and the ways in which armed forces would protect the their brotherhood, faith, and economy (Kenwood 56). On July 18, Franco made it very clear that it would be *his* armed forces to carry out this grand plan when he declared war against the Republic, and again on July 19, when his nationwide radio broadcast not only defended his Nationalist viewpoint, but called for fighters to join his ranks (Esenwein 25 & 29). These three
early utilizations of mass media exemplify the propagandistic promulgations, regulated themes, and outright censorship fiercely practiced in the years to follow.

While Europe’s other fascist unions during the Second World War administered control over their respective film industries, Franco’s Spain had no explicit policy regarding the production and distribution of cinema (Smith “Cinema of Resistance” 11). András Lénárt argues that although government-supported documentary films produced by totalitarian nations indulge, often excessively, in propagandistic messages, it is feature films which reveal the most about the times, for they are riddled with complex subtleties and hidden meanings (323). In Behind the Spanish Lens, Peter Besas clarifies the existence of censorship by reminding the reader of its familiar place in societies worldwide; Francoism did not conceive censorship in Spain (17). Besas turns to examples of cinematic censorship from the 1913-1921 when regional mayors controlled content impulsively, or partitioned theaters to separate single men, single women, and married couples, until November 18, 1937 when official censorship documents were drafted at Franco’s headquarters in Salamanca, and July 15, 1939 when the government required that all screenplays pass censorship tests prior to filming (17). Censorship aimed predominantly to wash film products clean of moral ills through erasing actions such as kissing or redubbing improper language and innuendos (Cazorla Sánchez 156).

In many ways, however, in pondering governmental control of the Spanish film industry, the role of rigorous censorship took the backseat. Isolationist in nature, Francoist ideology, and, as I argue, mythology, took the reigns. Although adherence to strict Catholic standards proved important to the Franco film industry, more than anything, the regime employed cinema as a way to further mythologize a traditional Spain, and Franco’s impulse for structure and stature reveals
itself in his enthusiasm for conservative representations of family and gender (Feenstra 22). January 1937 saw the creation of the Ministry of Propaganda, a government bureau under which all media, including publicity, advertising, newsreels, and cinema, were maintained and controlled both at home and abroad (Crusells 160). The battles fought between good and evil, and the ultimate pardoning of those who sinned against the nation and the Church were among the most prominent themes in the early post-war years (Gubern 103). According to Lénárt, there are seven ideological ingredients which make up Francoist cinema: the glorious and heroic past; the dominance of Hispanidad (of a Spanish master race); the strict practice of the Castilian language; the allegiance to Catholicism; the pro-military adaptation of peace; the protection of the family, including the recognition of woman as Mother of the nation; the perpetual threat of the nation’s foe (324). The villain was synonymously catalogued as Communist, Bolshevist and Freemason (Lénárt 331) and, as always, rebel and monster.

Content was rigorously controlled in filmic adaptations of the war itself. Representations of combat and its consequence were sculpted into a singular vision from the point of the view of the victor, rather than the multitudinous experiences and stories of the entire population. Despite the absence of an enforced national cinema, Franco did take a hands-on interest in filmmaking. In 1942, under the nom de plume Jaime de Andrade, Franco published Raza, a semi-autobiographical novela cinematográfica\(^\text{11}\) (Lénárt 326). The story sentimentalized Franco’s imagining of both personal and national history, and before the end of the year this cinematic vision materialized in an sensational adaptation directed by José Luis Sáenz de Heredia (Smith “Cinema of Resistance” 11). As the government’s first direct filmmaking

\(^{11}\) “Film novel,” or as Franco/Andrade notes in his work’s subtitle: “Collection of anecdotes for a film script.” (quoted in Lénárt 326).
endeavor, *Raza* occupies a distinguished space in the cinematic and cultural history of Spain. On the impact of the film’s title, Besas writes that even well after the fall of Franco’s empire, and regardless of political point-of-view, Spaniards often discuss themselves in terms of a Spanish “race,” an expression which allegorizes the nation as “one blood, with one ideal and one noble purpose” (19). This characterization of a people appears throughout much of Spanish filmmaking, and is exemplified most sonorously in *Raza*. The idealized Spaniard speaks loudly and clearly. The conversations, traditions, and ideals of the family are indicative of those of the nation.

*Raza* follows the Churrucas, a family created by Franco to represent his Spain. The earnest father and supportive mother are manifestations of an evanescent historical past. Their children are the future, both the virtuous who shall lead the nation, and the few misbegotten who threaten destruction: Isabel is soft and feminine, Jaime is pious and prudent, José is ambitious and patriotic, Pedro is strange and traitorous. Lénárt points to José as Franco’s alter ego, penned by the man himself as the reverential “second child of a Galician dynasty whose family tree abounds in heroes and martyrs” (327). José is Franco’s own mythology. When José faces a Republican firing squad, he miraculously survives, and henceforth dedicates his life to the Nationalist cause. In an incredible moment of cinematic and historical doubling, José joins General Francisco Franco’s army. The elder brother, the original inheritor of the father’s name, is also an integral part of this mythology. Pedro is the foil to the Christ-like figure of José. Covetous and deceptive, in act against God, family, and nation, Pedro joins the Republican army. Pedro is eventually vanquished, and repents for his sins against the Fatherland. As he withdraws from his mistaken allies, he delivers a monologue in which he laments, “Although [the devout
people of Spain] do not have maps or weapons, they always will battle against materialistic men. The people who feel the greatness of the race in the depths of their souls are chosen for the great task of returning Spain to its destination. They, not all of you deaf materialists, will take their flags to the altar of victory.” Pride for the Spanish race is the heart of this tale. With this film Franco invites all down this path of glory where redemption for lost souls can be attained. Pedro’s words, despite the patronizing intent of the author, are nonetheless indicative of the real Spanish people. Although they may not have traditional maps and weapons they will form communities, and they will find a way to battle against materialistic man. The irony of these words? That man was Franco.

Have you never wanted to do anything that was dangerous? Where should we be if no one tried to find out what lies beyond?
Poetry and passion

Pietsie Feenstra, guiding her readers in how to interpret Spanish cinema, places a great deal of importance on understanding context. There is first the context within the narrative, and the stereotypes constructed within this version of the truth. Secondly, there exists a context outside the film that profoundly reflects the current communal, political, and historical space in which the film is produced (59). The events that transpire in The Spirit of the Beehive occur within two unmistakable contexts: the film is both a cinematic representation of a small village psychologically scarred by a brutal Civil War and largely complacent with the new fascist regime, and is an early example of a new wave of confident filmmaking rapidly modernizing in the midst of the slow decay of dictatorial decadence. To elaborate, according to Robin Fiddian, the “series of narrative events set in rural Castille in 1940 do ‘double duty’ in relation to the early
1970s in Spain, when *The Spirit of the Beehive* captures the ambience of the Franco dictatorship in terminal decline” (31).

Venerated as one of the great filmmakers to emerge from the New Spanish Cinema movement of the 1960s and 1970s, Victor Erice is a quiet poet. His passion for cinema is historicized by both his national history reeling from an internal war, and the history of cinema most notably characterized by a Golden Age in Hollywood, as well as the neorealist filmmaking movements burgeoning across Europe. Born in 1940 in Carranza, a small Basque province, Erice keeps much of his childhood shrouded in secrecy, with the great exception of his early experiences with cinema. Erice recalls watching in 1952, at twelve years old, Vittorio De Sica’s *Ladri di biciclette* (*Bicycle Thieves* 1948), a film released throughout the rest of Europe nearly five years earlier. This experience moved the future director so profoundly that he transformed into what he calls “a desperate cinephile” (Andrew 1). Not simply content with the consumption of cinema, Erice grew infatuated with film criticism and creation, an obsession that quickly metamorphosed into his own creative output in the form of reviews, essays, and films.

Erice is the author of three feature-length films spaced almost exactly ten years apart: *El Espíritu de la Colmena* (*The Spirit of the Beehive* 1973), the quiet film about a small child and her great imagination; *El Sur* (*The South* 1983), a coming-of-age tale following Estrella’s fascination with the magical secrets belonging to her father who hails from the mysterious South; and *El Sol del Membrillo* (*The Quince Tree Sun / The Dream of Light* 1992), a hybrid documentary-narrative which follows painter Antonio López García as he awaits a fleeting moment of perfect light cast upon the eponymous tree grounded in his front yard. Erice’s

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12 As with any cultural movement, timelines are fluid. The evolution of Spain’s film industry can be traced through historical moments ranging from the first San Sebastian International Film Festival in 1953 to the creation of Escuela Oficial de Cine (Official Cinema School) in 1962 to the lifting of censorship in the mid-1970s.
cinematic approach is deliberate and lyrical. Each film represents a journey toward self-discovery, whether it is a very young Ana coming to terms with magic and monsters, a teenaged Estrella pushing her familial roots to the edge, or an elderly Antonio facing the overwhelming desire to leave a lasting impression upon the world.

Eschewing the impulse to delineate “a kind of secret genealogy” of an auteur’s vision and the existing works which influence and inspire this creativity, Spanish film historian Santos Zunzunegui discusses Erice’s cinephilia by recalling Ludwig Wittgenstein’s notion of “perspicuous representation” (52). Wittgenstein’s political philosophy is intrinsically tied to both grammar and picture, and his methodology of perspicuous representation encourages one to see beyond the understood meaning of an image; we are not simply to seek alternatives, but to completely liberate ourselves from the captivity that is the given (Owen 88). For Zunzunegui, there is no desire to unearth some undiscovered linear almanac of growth that can be perceived as intrinsic to understanding the filmmaker’s later work. To understand Erice’s filmography, a pansophic outlook should be employed in an analysis of Erice’s cinephilic passion expressed in his work as not only a film critic and filmmaker, but a film lover (53). In many ways Zunzunegui invokes a rhizomatic reading of the director’s inspired work and the work which inspires. Into this synthesis I would like to unite the impact of Erice’s childhood experiences (his cinephilia, or the myths created by the imagination), and the given (the censorship, or the mythologies enforced by the regime).

Erice’s youthful passion for film history shines throughout his cinematic endeavors. An early scene in The Spirit of the Beehive shows matriarch Teresa standing on the platform of the

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13 A phrase borrowed directly from the title of Zunzunegui’s article title (“Writing Cinema. Cinephilic Passion in the Work of Victor Erice”)
local locomotive station. The shot composition is deliberate and meaningful; the train enters from the top right corner, arriving across the screen in a diagonal angle, as if speeding toward the audience, ending its journey at the bottom left corner. Erice pays subtle homage to early cinema in order to showcase a rebirth of an innovative and fearless new national cinema through referencing the Lumière Brothers’ *L'Arrivée d'un Train en Gare de la Ciotat* (*Arrival of the Train at La Ciotat Station*, 1896), and thus invoking the young cinephile in himself.

![Frame-by-frame of the Lumière Brothers’ short film](image)

As with a number of political and social spaces in 1950s Spain, the film industry found itself in flux. These are the years when young dreamers such as Erice began to recognize and ratify a
magical world outside their own. These are the years when the men, women, and children who bore witness to a national trauma stage a dramatic emergence. While it is unfair to remark upon entire decades as if these years can be neatly pulled from the sum of a nation’s history, the societal shifts in Spain between the 1950s-1970s are utterly entrancing. A cultural revolution of sorts was underway. In *Performing Spanishness* Michael Thompson epitomizes this transition through theatre: “dissident dramatists played an important role…in challenging [Francoism’s] hijacking of ideas of national identity and in reasserting the problematic, constructed nature of history.” (61). In 1955 the cinema industry too underwent an explosive reformation. The Conversations of Salamanca, a film conference organized by university students regarding the state of the industry, culminated in a damning lecture from director Juan Antonio Bardem who argued the state of popular Spanish cinema as: “1. politically futile; 2. socially false; 3. intellectually worthless; 4. aesthetically valueless; 5. industrially paralytic” (reprinted in Faulkner 8). This condemnation of popular film (especially those resembling Hollywood productions) is compelling, and certainly struck a chord with the young creative intellectuals in the industry. Drawing on influences from other European cinemas, the small semblance of a national cinema in Spain, and Hollywood pictures, the “new wave” of Spanish directors imagined a world of their own.

As a young adult, Erice enrolled in the National Film School in Madrid, and following his 1968 graduation he worked as critic for *Nuestro Cine* and *Cuadernos de Arte y Pensamiento* (Schwartz 88). Taking inspiration from French cinema journals — left-leaning *Nuestro Cine*\(^\text{15}\)
from the Marxist-Leninist *Positif*, and Hollywood-intrigued *Film Ideal* from *Cahiers du Cinema*, both of which payed further tribute to their European predecessors by reprinting their original articles in Spanish translation — Spanish journals began to flourish in the late 1960s (Faulkner 19). Linda C. Ehrlich, in her introduction to *An Open Window*, a collection of interviews with and musings on Erice’s oeuvre, writes of the director’s fascination with the vertiginous ascent and descent of directors like Orson Welles, Nicholas Ray, and Josef von Sternberg, citing the role of the outsider who strives to “achieve their dreams through a mixture of talent and sheer perseverance” as crucial to the young filmmaker’s development (7). Writing often on the films of von Sternberg, Erice candidly admires the spaces of “spiritual emptiness” constructed by the Austrian-American director (Schwartz 92). This is not an emptiness of spirituality. Perhaps it is even the opposite. The burden one carries when isolated from the world is a spiritless existence. The spiritual, the illusory, the ethereal are the escape. For a cinephile like Erice, the romantic heart of cinema originates with the marginalization of the dreamer, and the eroticism of the dream.

In the version of *Frankenstein* by director James Whale, Henry Frankenstein turns to his mentor Dr. Waldman and asks, “Have you never wanted to do anything that was dangerous? Where should we be if no one tried to find out what lies beyond? Have you never wanted to look beyond the clouds and the stars, or to know what causes the trees to bud? And what changes the darkness into light?” The intellectuals, the curious participants of the world, grow anxious to

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Goya’s *Saturn Devouring His Son* — it was a grotesque display in which the forefathers of an early wave of revitalized cinema denounce the cinema of the past (216).

16 Named Victor Frankenstein in the novel.
create. Can we not describe the desires of young artists in similar terms? In *The Spirit of the Beehive* Erice illustrates this interlaced notion of repression and romanticism within the magical world of adolescent loneliness. The film ponders: how does popular culture influence the consciousness of a child? Each of Erice’s films resist constructed *mythologies* of national values, familial ethics, and personal decency though the use of popular culture. Using Whale’s *Frankenstein* as the major point of reference, *The Spirit of the Beehive* contemplates the poetics of the integral *myths* of communal culture. Summoning the memory of his own first encounter with the film, Erice acknowledges:

> As a child, I watched a lot of Hollywood movies; that was what we could see. So even before I knew *Frankenstein* was the product of the imagination of Mary Shelley, I saw the film: for me, Boris Karloff is Frankenstein. In other words, the myths we absorb in childhood remain with us forever. (Andrew, “The Quiet Genius”)

The *myth*, as previously ascertained, is imaginative and transcendental. It belongs both to the individual, and to the public. The Frankenstein myth belongs to all. No doubt informed by his own intimate experience in the movie theater as a child, Erice establishes the viewing of *Frankenstein* as having a profound intellectual impact on Ana in her development of identity.

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*I didn’t think such a place existed except in my own imagination. It has a ghastly familiarity like a half-remembered dream*

*Memory and magic*

> “One Sunday afternoon in the winter of 1950, in a provincial city near the sea, two ten-year-old lads decided to slip into a movie hall situated within the precincts of an old amusement park… Our small protagonists know two things: the movie to be shown is called *The*…

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17 In this moment I am asking the reader to put aside characterizations of Dr. Frankenstein as a madman playing God, for we will return to a discussion of the irreversible creation he brings into the world. Here I would like to think of him simply: as a young professional on a quest for knowledge.
Shanghai Gesture, and minors are not allowed,” begins Erice’s highly personal essay “Al cine, in memoriam.” Erice paints a vivid picture of these two boys sneaking through the cracked window in the rear of the building, laying low as the lights grow dim. When the sounds of the Francoist short news films cease, it is safe to enter the theater. Once the badly damaged print begins to roll through the projector, and the images flicker upon the screen, the boys are in for a memorable journey. As the final Hollywood picture directed by expat auteur Josef von Sternberg, The Shanghai Gesture (1941) symbolizes the importance of remembering. To the young boys in the audience that winter evening, the film resonates as a profound memory; it is their first impression. This film is about a spoiled young woman named Victoria Charteris who, under the pseudonym Poppy Smith, flees her European past to Shanghai where she frequents the casino owned by Gin Sling, a mysterious and domineering businesswoman. The rest of the plot is a webbed melodrama in the film noir style, into which we will not go. Young Erice is initially taken by the beauty of lead actress Gene Tierney, but it is her ethereal radiance that follows him away from the theater. He writes, “from head to toe, everything about her seems to be in incarnation of a dream” (61). The theater is the space for dreaming, a sentiment mirrored within von Sternberg’s film when Poppy comments on the magical quality of the new world she occupies: “This place is special. Compared to it, other places are kindergartens. I didn’t think such a place existed except in my own imagination. It has a ghastly familiarity like a half-remembered dream. Anything can happen here, anything...” When the end credits roll, the young boys emerge from their reverie, but they are changed. Erice’s memory of watching this

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18 First published in the journal Archipiélago, no. 22, Autumn 1995; the translation to which this section refers is found in Linda C. Ehrlich’s An Open Window, pp. 60-62.
film at ten-years-old is significant. He returns home that evening with a stowaway secret: he travelled to dreamland.

In 1950, the same year as Erice’s boyhood adventure, Raza was revived, revised, and rebranded as Espíritu de una Raza (The Spirit of a Race), in an attempt to reinvigorate nationalist sentimentality. The film was restructured in a way that overtly symbolizes children as the new nation’s founders, and as Feenstra elicits, “models for the Spanish race and as the gatekeepers of Eternal Spain” (56). The children in Espíritu de una Raza, both the young siblings we meet at the start of the film, and the new generation of children they bear by the conclusion, are to represent the archetypal Spaniard (Feenstra 29), and yet they do not speak for the true myths of Spain, of the fine compilation of humanist tales and grand legends. In reality, “children become to the loci of vulnerable memory, and, according to organic ‘growth’ theories, determinants of the future of…the nation” (Gomez 57). For the children of the Civil War, including those born into its lasting consequences, the trauma was just remote enough to romanticize. Moreover, it was just present enough to fear. With the transporting winds of transition in motion, the children gathered to thunderously dispel Franco’s mythological Spain.

Erice was thirty-three when he completed The Spirit of the Beehive, and yet, that child who once tiptoed into the movie hall lives on within his art. Marsha Kinder’s Blood Cinema is an illustrious chronicle of Spain’s national identity as explored through cinema, and is an important point of departure in a discussion of the creative world Erice inhabits. Kinder cites the enlistment of Manuel Fraga Iribarne (by Franco, nonetheless) as minister of information and tourism from 1962-1969 as the “cultural opening,” or apertura, period required to usher in the New Spanish Cinema movement (3). Even more important to the style of filmmaking exemplified by this
movement, she references the half-decade leading up to Franco’s 1975 death as a “soft dictatorship,” or dictablanda, as the first chapter in both the eradication of censorship, and the creation of a new language of self-expression (87). The Spirit of the Beehive is the first of seven cinematic productions from 1973-1980 to utilize children or childhood memories as a major focal point, and the directors of these pictures are often referred to as “children of Franco,” acting in resistance in the moments leading up to and immediately following Franco’s death (Rocha and Seminet 8). Many of directors associated with New Spanish Cinema who made films about the Civil War were too young to have personal memories of the bloodshed, and thus their films are both an attempt to reconcile a communal memory, and to engage in their own battle against the official Franquismo thought: the urge to pervert the truth, or to forget entirely (Gubern 104). In the case of The Spirit of the Beehive, Erice references a social transition through the examination of Ana’s personal transformation. It is a dissolution of a (perceived) pure and simple time. The child and the delinquent unite: Ana and her monster are the heroes of a new folk legend.

When Deleuze and Guattari write of assemblages as territorial, they indicate these processes and creations are of the earth (or terra). To understand the subterranean system amassed in erudite processes, “the first concrete rule…is to discover what territory they envelop, for there is always one” (503). To understand the territory, or at the very least, the presence of a unique domain, allows one to witness to how this space evolves over time. Is the practice of discovering the territories in which cultural texts reside akin to codifying? In many ways, yes. Perhaps to be territorial also implies a generic tradition. According to Robert Scholes, both
writers and readers of “imaginative literature”\(^1\) understand their work in terms they know and/or prefer (103). For this particular thesis, to distinguish *The Spirit of the Beehive* as operating under a singular genre code is inconsequential. The implication and influence of genre coding as an action, however, is noteworthy. Scholes indicates that, even at a young age, readers are enticed by genres: “Even a little child must come to learn what stories *are* before he likes listening to them. He has, in fact, to develop a rudimentary poetics of fiction before he learns to respond” (103). Here Scholes suggests we develop an interest in genre(s) during childhood, and we participate in the choosing a particular path of imagination best suited to our needs. Although I refuse to classify *The Spirit of the Beehive*, two dynamic genres operate both around and within the narrative: magical realism and horror.

*Around* Erice’s film flutters the influences of magical realism. As a genre, magical realism reconciles unusual spaces and systems. According to Lois Parkinson Zamora, the genre is perhaps both an extension of realism, and a criticism of blind rationality (6). Excessive in nature (which *The Spirit of the Beehive* is certainly not), “magical realist texts are subversive: their in-betweenness, their all-all-at-onceness encourages resistance to monologic political and cultural structures” (Zamora 6). These texts stand between the reality which informs our existence, and other worlds far from understood. In many magical realist stories, ghosts straddle this threshold, and “because ghosts make absence present, they foreground magical realism’s most basic concern — the nature and limits of the knowable” (Zamora 498). The liminal boundary between childhood and adulthood is veiled in uncertainty. Although Ana believes her monster to be a spirit, this particular ghost is grounded in another world; he originated in another

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\(^1\) Scholes is referencing written texts that are not lyric poetry or nonfiction.
genre. Looking within the narrative of *The Spirit of the Beehive*, the 1931 film *Frankenstein* shocks and thrills the Spanish audience. Susan Tyler Hitchcock relates the boom in horror cinema (or perhaps the creation of a Hollywood Horror as a genre itself) to the bust of the economic depression, revealing that in 1931 alone, filmgoers embarked on the terrific fantasies depicted in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *Freaks*, *Dracula*, and *Frankenstein* (142). These films reach a similarly injured Spain nearly a decade later, and provide the same escape through the spectacle of dread. Remarking upon the pleasure which stems from fear, Michele Aaron contemplates the ways in which the horror genre implicates the spectator. Not only is the viewer made aware of their position as spectator (that they are, indeed, watching a film), but they create for themselves a sense of security — what happens on screen is watchable simply because it is not really happening. The horror film creates space where the spectator is always implicated. It is a mutual decision or a “contractual alliance [of] perverse intimacy” (219). This mutual alliance is the cornerstone of Ana’s relationship with the monster. Despite her age-bound innocence, Ana confidently undertakes the poetics of horror.

Using the visual prologue to Whale’s *Frankenstein* delivered by actor Edward Van Sloan (who, in the main narrative of the film, plays Dr. Waldman, Frankenstein’s mentor), Rhona J. Berenstein discusses the role of the audience in the horror genre. When Van Sloan announces, “It will thrill you. It may shock you. It might even horrify you,” ending his monologue with, “well, we warned you,” he is speaking to a non-specific, ungendered mass. The unspecificity of the audience’s gender seems to contradict notions of horror cinema as a male-dominated genre characterized by the victimization of women (Berenstein 118). If all men and women are invited

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20 Tod Browning’s *Freaks* was actually released on February 20, 1932, with test screenings in January of 1932.
to be active members of the community, whether to watch this horrifying film, or sit on a neighborhood council, how then does this impact the structure of family, specifically the relationship between adult and child? Although the children within *The Spirit of the Beehive* view the same prologue as the genderless mass of adults, this advisory information is veiled by their innocence. Ana and Isabel watch this film without the presence of their parents, and thus are thrilled, shocked, and horrified without explanation. These children experience community and culture without warning. Ultimately, however, the Spanish-dubbed Van Sloan monologue warns no one; this preface introduces the terrific and terrifying picture, but “advise[s] you to not take it too seriously.”
CHAPTER THREE: THE CHILD AND HER IMAGINATION

Young ones fool you — the older ones are a different story
The Children of Franco, represented

The opening credits of The Spirit of the Beehive evoke a sense of simultaneous sadness and sympathy. Soft woodwind music reminiscent of a Renaissance-era carnival plays over a series of child’s drawings, slowly emerging and disappearing like a magic lantern presentation of marvelous moving images. In this primary visual statement we are presented with a child’s interpretation of the world, of everyday objects, machines, creatures, and spaces (a pocket watch, a train, a dog, and a theater), each production credit marking the transition from one drawing to another. The bright crayon-drawn images of this title sequence segues into the barren reality of a bucolic village named Hoyuelos, where a strangely festive chatter surrounds the arrival of a truck: “The movie is coming!” the children shout, as they assemble for the anticipated event of the afternoon. The children who clamor around the truck participate in the poetics of fiction, in the choices of genre predilection, discussed by Scholes, and likely without any consciousness. The young boys in particular take turns asking the questions: “Is it a horror movie?” or “A cowboy picture?” Despite this carnivalesque meeting in town, the somber undertone reigns supreme. This place is damaged. An elderly woman grumbles, “It better be good this time,” as she pays her fare. Genre is not important to the adults — the worn and weary simply crave an escape. The screening so anticipated by the village children is James Whale’s 1931 Universal horror picture Frankenstein. The film flickers on the makeshift screen in the town hall, and it is in this location where we meet Ana. The six-year-old girl sits beside her sister Isabel, carefully watching what unfolds on the screen before her.
The first act of *The Spirit of the Beehive* is set to the backdrop of *Frankenstein*. The film’s sonic presence is felt immediately. We hear the dialogue of Whale’s characters over the images of Erice’s: closeups on the faces of the young and the elderly illuminated by the film, peculiar activities of spiritless adults in the world outside the movie hall, and swarms of bees astir in their hive. The first scene we see of *Frankenstein* is iconic. The monster wanders lakeside where he stumbles upon young Maria with her kitten. Approached by the monster, the girl does not necessarily take sympathy on him, but knows no wrong in any living creature, and invites the stranger to sit. The Spanish children of *The Spirit of the Beehive* watch this scene with great anticipation, and the film cuts to a new scene just as the monster runs out of daisies to float upon the lake. The next time we return to the screen exhibiting *Frankenstein*, Maria’s father carries her drowned body into town. Afraid she has just witnessed the death of a child comrade, Ana turns to her sister and asks: “Why did he kill her?” Isabel shushes her younger sister, but assures Ana she will reveal the answer later. Deeper into the screening Ana is again bewildered by violence when the townspeople launch a fatal hunt for the monster. Here Kinder discusses a dual horror created through reinscription — in that Ana fathoms both the monster and Maria as doubles of herself, and that she emotionally eclipses a romantic gothic allegory upon her own Spanish melodrama — and how this structures her understanding of fidelity, cruelty, and patriarchy (128). Ultimately, Kinder proclaims *The Spirit of the Beehive* testifies to the people of Spain, and to the world, that “the children of Franco would turn out to be the children of

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21 In Whale’s *Frankenstein*, the monster, rejected by his creator and pushed into the world, happens upon a young girl who tosses “boats” in the water to watch them float. When the two fast friends run out flowers, the monster picks up the girl, and believing she too will float, he tosses her in the water. Maria does not survive.
Frankenstein” (129). Perhaps it is through reinscription that the homogenized mythology evolves into the magical and humanizing myth.  

Erice uses the cultural myth of Whale’s Frankenstein to exemplify a child’s recognition of their personal isolation, and from this cognizance comes a sense of healing cultivated as the child moves closer to this piece of popular art. The question of how popular culture shapes the consciousness of the child is especially paramount in determining reality versus make-believe, and how children make that judgement. That night, tucked into the sheets of their adjoining twin beds, the elder sister finally divulges, only now Ana finds herself most concerned with the death of the monster. Isabel informs Ana the movie is a product of the imagination, and everything depicted in cinema is fictitious. For a moment Isabel asks Ana to comply with the contractual alliance between spectator and film conceptualized by Aaron; she asks her sister to enlist the securities warranted by the falsities of cinema. The death of the monster was a trick. And yet, there is an aspect of the film grounded in reality, according to Isabel. The elder sister continues her bedtime story by reporting that she has seen the monster in a place near the village, and he is neither dead nor alive, but exists as a spirit, and although spirits do not normally occupy bodies,

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22 I return to this theory in the fourth chapter, which is dedicated to the monster.
they may don one as a disguise. Ana can conjure this spirit if she so wishes, as long as it is nightfall, and if she approaches with the gentle announcement, “Soy Ana” (“It’s me, Ana”). Here Isabel creates a myth which Ana comprehends with an unforeseen poignancy. However, also here, Isabel lies to her younger sister.

An important piece of literature on Spanish cinema aside, Peter Besas’ *Behind the Spanish Lens* is particularly interesting to this thesis for his illustrative profile on Erice’s own experience while filming on *The Spirit of the Beehive*. Besas’ final two pages of his chapter on the new wave of Spanish cinema are a transcript of Erice’s own words. This prose is an intimate exploration of the director’s experience working with his young leading ladies. Because Ana Torrent and Isabel Tellería were only six and seven years old, rehearsal time was limited, partially to ease the frustration of line learning, but mostly to allow clearance for the girls’ whimsy and spontaneity (Besas 131). Discovered on a school playground near the production office, Torrent was not an actress. Himself absorbed by the wonder she displayed on set, Erice comments: “she did not distinguish between reality and fiction…Frankenstein’s monster was someone who really existed, and she believed in him so wholeheartedly that I felt myself to be an imposter” (Besas 131). Adults, rather than children themselves, are the manufacturers of representations of childhood. The once-children (the adults) redefine what it means to be a child, including when childhood begins and ends. Though an adult constructing a tale of childhood, in making this film, Erice has unraveled the legend of his own childhood. He combats and resists the mysteries and mythologies put into place by the adults who surrounded the children of his personal narrative, himself included.
The social transformation of Spain in the final decade of Franco’s reign occurs on a symbolic level in *The Spirit of the Beehive* when the sisters spend one afternoon with their father gathering mushrooms at the edge of the forest that borders their estate. A simple exchange reveals tension between the old and new. Evoking regional folklore, their father directs the girls’ attention to an enigmatic Mushroom Garden situated somewhere in the distant mountain range. “Why don’t we go there?” asks Ana. Sheltered by her hollow estate and her innoxious school, she longs for a place of adventure and great learning. When they find malignant mushroom along their ostensibly safe route, Ana expresses desire for the poisonous fungus. She lustfully tells her father, “it smells so good,” to which he retorts, “*the young ones fool you, the older ones are a different story.*” This correspondence alludes to two levels of distrust: that which the youth hold for their adult counterparts, and the early rebellious challenges against a regime dependent on the preservation of Church and military. The new generation, a generation born into this manufactured history, as exemplified by Ana in *The Spirit of the Beehive*, can begin to discredit the false mythologies they have been trained to recognize as truth. Particularly interested the methods of coming to terms with one’s true self beginning in childhood, the theoretical writings of pediatrician and psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott provide a meaningful lens through which we can examine Ana’s transformative relationship with her monster. The concluding sentiment of his 1941 essay “On Influencing and Being Influenced,” reads:

> In our consideration of influence and its proper place in education, we have come to see that the prostitution of education lies in the misuse of what could almost be called the child’s most sacred attribute: *doubts about self*. The dictator knows all about this, and wields power through offering a life free from doubt. How dull! (*The Child and the Outside World* 28)
Inspired by this reading, by these three simple sentences that at once point to our greatest fears and the people who exploit them, but also cheekily discredits the durability totalitarian thinking, I desire to draw a further weaving rhizome not only in artifact, but in affect. In other words, popular culture, while it can be manipulated and controlled, is moored in history. It can be absorbed and appropriated. The process of understanding selfhood, however, is deeply influenced by relationships and encounters (including the sharing of popular culture artifacts). Regardless of the nature, these connections are rooted in affectual transactions. In the case of *The Spirit of the Beehive*, and perhaps much of post-Civil War Spain, despotic rulers, unenthusiastic educators, and complacent partisans preside over the nation. For Ana, adults are the greatest manufacturers of self-doubt.

*Los ojos*

*Where are the adults?*

With the exception of the daytime screening of *Frankenstein* in town and a brief adventure to gather mushrooms at the edge of the forest, Ana is routinely depicted either inside the home or exploring the arid and neglected landscape, almost always in the company of her sister. In several scenes Ana and Isabel are shown in the outskirts of town, precariously pressing their ears against the train tracks, traversing barren fields that likely once yielded grapes for wine or beautiful sunflowers, and investigating a dilapidated farmhouse distinguished by a deep well in its yard. Although initially fearful, Ana ventures back alone. This return is significant because it shows both the solidarity between the two sisters, as well as the negligence of their parents.

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23 The town of Hoyuelos is situated near Tierra de Campos (Land of Fields), the expansive plains of fertile compact clay known first as “Gothic Plains” (as the area was settled by the Visigoths around 500 AD). For more information, I recommend turning to Justo González Garrido’s *La Tierra de Campos: Región Natural*; the book is interesting both as a geographical study of this land, and as a historical document published in 1941, the time in which Ana resides.
Isabel knows Ana revisited the farmhouse on her own, and lies for her, telling their mother she is still at school.

If we are to penetrate the nuances of the child’s development, we must first ask the question: where are the adults? To find our answer, we must return to the beginning, to Erice’s cautious presentation of the mother and father. In *The Spirit of the Beehive*, each character introduction serves to confuse the audience during the crucial process of determining a protagonist. We are twice tricked to believe an adult is our hero/ine: once as we hear the voice of a woman reading a mournful letter, who we then watch pedal a creaking old bicycle to post the message aboard a mail train arriving in the station; and again, when we meet a tall, silent man intimidatingly cloaked in protective beekeeping gear as he tends to the buzzing creatures housed outside his grand, but empty estate. Spaced between these moments of adult solitude are interludes of the two young girls and *Frankenstein*. While the bond between the sisters is instantly discernible, we are not so immediately certain about the relationship between the two adult figures, who we later learn are Teresa and Fernando, the married parents of Ana and Isabel. This confusion is significant because it articulates the segmentation of the family, specifically Teresa and Fernando from each other, and showcases the ways in which Ana and Isabel are isolated from their parents. Ultimately, it renders adults either untrustworthy, as in the case of Teresa mailing a letter to who we can presume is a lover lost at war, or boringly buffoonish, as we may perceive Fernando when he mills about aimlessly.

The war left Spain in pieces, and Franco strove to keep the memory of trauma alive, forcing the burdens of taxation and the slow reparation of the country on the impoverished. At the same time over 400,000 citizens left their native land in a mass exile, many of whom were
intellectuals, politicians, and artists (de Meneses 121). Without the resistance of powerful thinkers and activists, Franco’s reign only flourished with more voracity. Parochial family structures, sexual relationships, and national histories were idealized under Franco’s careful watch, and as a consequence, representations of delinquency were suppressed (Feenstra 40-42). To cope with the normalization of these communal structures, thousands of men across Spain joined neighborhood associations to organize assemblies, hold elections, and appeal to higher government officials for greater investment in local affairs, acts later deemed by scholars as schools of democracy (Radcliff 272). A male-constructed standardization of “the family” places a special burden on women, often relying on the mother to maintain a respectable home, and to raise her children as proper citizens, all while denying women equal access to the public sphere. Furthermore, the aggrandized encryption of decency remained rooted in the Catholic Church. Antonio Cazorla Sánchez writes, “the messages from the pulpit were chiefly, if not only, about sex and gender relations, and their main subject was the group considered to be the most at risk from potential breaches of morality: women” (140). Perhaps Erice depicts Teresa distantly — meaning, she has significantly less screen time than her male counterpart, and she is somber and quiet, emotionally detached from her surroundings — because she reels from the pressure to be a particular brand of woman and mother. One afternoon Fernando exits through the manor’s front door, and pauses as if to contemplate his next movement. In the only moment when both parents as full-body (and perhaps fully embodied) figures appear together onscreen, Teresa steps out on the balcony and calls out Fernando’s name. It seems he has carelessly forgotten his hat. Without the niceties of “goodbyes” or “I love yous,” he turns to leave town for the weekend. During her husband’s absence, though home, Teresa seems to leave the girls in the hands of the housekeeper
Milagros. Where each of the parents go is a question to which we can only conspire guesses. When it comes time to ready for school, Teresa reappears, and at last engages in a meaningful conversation with her daughter. As Teresa combs Ana’s hair, the young girl asks her mother if she knows anything about spirits. “Are they good or bad?” wonders Ana, to which Teresa responds, “with good little girls they are very good, but with bad girls they are very bad.” Perpetuating the mythology of anti-delinquency, and the myth of the spirit, Teresa then asks Ana if she is good. She sheepishly nods; the mother and daughter giggle and snuggle, and then Ana is rushed off to school. In an interview with Rikki Morgan of Sight and Sound, Erice confided the adults he recalled from childhood were somber, quiet people who, while they survived the War, had nothing left to say (27). The adults of The Spirit of the Beehive typify this overwhelming melancholy. It is a sadness that governs helplessness, and a helplessness that breeds aloneness. Teresa and Fernando both quietly (though not quite silently, as they both narrate their written work in extradiegetic voiceovers) pen confessions of their despair, and they do so in solitude, or perhaps even secrecy. “We try to survive…so much destruction and sadness…The news we get from the outside is so scant and confusing,” writes Teresa in the letter which she concludes by admitting she cannot be certain will ever reach its intended recipient. Of his beehive, Fernando chronicles the movements as similar to “gears on a clock, the [worker bees] invading spirals of the queen,” the chaotic repetition lending itself to a feeling of “indescribable sadness and horror,” a statement he then crosses out with several severe pen strokes.

Jane Kroger cites Erik Erikson’s theory of childhood identity formation as a “generational issue,” contending it is the responsibility of the parents to provide an intellectual and ideological constitution for their young, and even though this groundwork may only serve to
stimulate rebellion as the child matures, it nonetheless works to shape their identities (17). In Erice’s world, adults either do not reside in reality, or do not speak truthfully. With Teresa and Fernando, this adult disillusionment simultaneously lends itself to and contradicts the family structure largely mythologized by Franco’s government: they neither pose a threat to the status quo, nor do they exemplify the consummate conservative nationalist family envisioned by the regime. When Teresa and Fernando refuse to construct a sound ideological structure, they are disowning their responsibility. The parents therefore lack the ability to thoroughly assist in their daughters’ identity formation. While the parents in The Spirit of the Beehive reside together, and both instill lessons upon their daughters, they are separated. The more animated of the parents, at one point Fernando hovers knowingly over poisonous mushrooms, and at another stands ominously tall over his disobedient daughter. And yet, he consistently gives greater consideration to his caged insects than he does his family. A former intellectual who did not self-exile, Fernando fills his time with chronicling his observations in a leather-bound journal.

Juxtaposition achieved through editing exemplifies this obsequious distance: in one scene we are given late night access to Fernando’s study where we see tight shots of a beehive buzzing with furious motion. As their master narrates his journal entry over this scene, we are made aware of fragility of these tiny creatures’ lives. Immediately cutting to Fernando’s sleeping daughters who are diminutive, dormant humans, we can almost feel them breath. They are quiet and still, but not for long; we know they are in the early stages of their long lives.

There are only four major adult figures in The Spirit of the Beehive: the parents, the school teacher, and the manifestation of the monster. Because I have previously deemed the parents untrustworthy, the latter two are Ana’s representations (one literally and the other
symbolically) of the importance of learning. Apart from the family estate and the fringes of
town, the schoolroom is the space in which we see Ana most frequently. According to M.-L. von
Franz in his contribution to Carl Jung’s *Man and his Symbols*, when children are about
school-age they develop the ego, and begin the process of adapting to the world. At the same
time, however, children feel exceedingly different from others. This reveals a unique loneliness
developed from the inability to cope with the world’s evils, especially those imperfections not
yet understood (168). Ana and Isabel attend the same class led by Doña Lucía. Though
enthusiastic and dependable, Doña Lucía’s teaching plans frequently fall flat as her students
chew gum, partially ignore her questions, and speak out of turn. During an anatomy lesson she
introduces her students to a life-size plywood cutout named Don José, gradually unveiling
missing organs as the girls are asked to piece-by-piece reassemble his body. He is stand-in for a
man, and yet he is lacking. This ailing lesson — both a sickly failure to teach anatomy to a room
of young girls, and perverse in its accidental resonance with Ana’s fascination with a tale of the
misguided construction of man — culminates when Ana’s opportunity to play physician arrives.
Don José needs one more piece before he is complete. Doña Lucía asks which piece, to which a
confounded Ana modestly repeats her sister’s benevolent, but unsporting whisper, “*los ojos.*”
She is called forth to give him his eyes, and therefore, the ability to *see*.

Figure 5 (left) Doña Lucía asking students to build a man / Figure 6 (right) Don José receiving his eyes from Ana
Robin Fiddian asserts that, “being more imaginative than the other children, Ana is more deeply affected by the lesson of Don José and more convinced, we sense, that she has taken part in the creation of (a simulacrum of) a human being” (29-30). Calling this exercise both a simulacrum and palimpsest, Fiddian recognizes this scene as Erice’s nod to multiplicity of narrative meaning (31). Don José, of course, being a simulacrum of a real man, cannot see despite the gift of eyes. Ana, being a real girl, can.

Although we might expect the professional educator to be the most competent purveyor of knowledge, Doña Lucía regularly delivers her lessons without explanation; often the exercises appear as simple activities to occupy time. Doña Lucía does not elaborate upon the tasks the girls engage in or the texts they read. Why would the teacher neglect to imbue a more worldly message upon these enigmatic actions and words? The likely justification of her disposition is that Doña Lucía too is a mournful adult. One afternoon Ana and her classmates listen to a poem recited by a fellow student, and the downcast look on Doña Lucía’s countenance grows as each line is read aloud:

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Now neither malice nor hatred
Nor even the fear of change.
I only fear thirst, a thirst for I know not what.
Rivers of life, where have you gone?
Air, I need air.
What do you see in the darkness that makes you silently tremble?
I see not, but only stare like a blind man
facing straight into the sun.
I shall fall where the fallen never rise.24
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When the nameless young girl concludes her reading, she quietly closes the book. Every one of the girls look moved, but uncertain. As in Ana and Isabel’s experience watching *Frankenstein*,

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24 Rosalía de Castro, 1837-1885
there is no explanation of the poem. If Doña Lucía, and all other adults, have experienced too much loss and sadness to explain the world, with all of its pain and joy, Ana must interpret life’s lessons on her own accord. During the reading, the camera eventually closes in on Ana, and we watch her earnestly and silently participate in reading the poem. Her lips move rhythmically to form the words; we can almost see her brain mirroring this very movement as she begins to process the lyrics. John Berger’s *Ways of Seeing* begins: “Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak” (7). Seeing is directly related to the acquisition of knowledge. The act of seeing adds upon the layers of that which has been seen — it requires a moment to process, the desire to understand, and the ability to connect. Often when we begin to understand something, our faces visibly illuminate; perhaps we respond with a colloquialism like, “Ahh, I see!” Do we see? In many ways we do.

The cinematic monster in *Frankenstein* is denied knowledge. Unlike the creature Shelley created, the monster Ana sees never crosses paths the French family whom he devotedly observes and thereby learns to speak, and never courageously approaches the elderly blind patriarch by whom he is received with great compassion. For a brief moment, Shelley’s monster faced neither malice nor hatred. Whale’s monster, on the other hand, is annihilated by the eyes which stare and invade and misunderstand. Ana wishes to free herself from the incarceration of misjudgement. Like the girls, the protagonists of both lyric and screen are thrust into a world of

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25 In 1975 Ana Torrent played another character named Ana in Carlos Saura’s *Cria Cuervos*. In many ways this film picks up where *The Spirit of the Beehive* terminates, and further displays the anxiety trembling in children, and the use of popular media as a mechanism for identity formation during this pervasive national transformation. In present-day Spain, Ana and her sisters are left in the charge of their authoritarian aunt following the traumatic deaths of both parents. The film opens with the mid-coitus death of her father, a distressing scene Ana witnesses firsthand, and therefore interprets as her fault. Repeatedly listening to a seven inch single on her portable record player, Saura’s Ana finds peace in a song by pop artist Jeanette called “Porque te vas,” silently mouthing the lyrics, “why did you go?” Much like the protagonist of the poem, the young girls in both films stare to the sun like a blind man, unable to make sense of the world, yet thirsty for knowledge and for life, and it is through their relationship with popular art that they are able to articulate this desire.
confusion, where at times they may feel blinded by hatred and fear and sadness, and yet they begin to understand that perhaps peace can be discovered — you have to see where you belong. Much like the narrator of the poem, Ana thirsts for air. It is an intimidating and feared task, to step away from the normalized path, and yet, Ana advances into the darkness. Perhaps she will not see with her eyes. Not all seeing is so literal.

To my dear misanthrope
Kinship with the monster

In his 1951 essay “The Child’s Needs,” Winnicott delineated three psychological tasks with which young children must contend: first, the growing perception of selfhood in relationship to reality; second, a developing relationship with the mother; and third, a desire to foster relationships with others (The Child and the Outside World 21). As we have established, Ana lacks the maternal relationship Winnicott lists second among the tasks of self-discovery. One afternoon devoid of parental observance, the girls browse through personal belongings. The mysterious words “To my dear misanthrope,” embellish a photograph of her mother as a young woman, and curious Ana quietly whispers the handwritten caption. This simple object represents a great deal. It is a talisman of the mysterious past lives of adults who were once youthful dreamers. It is an ironic symbol beckoning Ana to love mankind. When Fernando and Teresa abandoned their former selves they left their young daughters to face with sadness without resolution, and isolation without question. Ultimately, these themes resonate with Ana as she digests the sadness and isolation of the monster in Frankenstein. This is where Winnicott’s last task becomes the most important. Ana has relationships with others — family, classmates, housekeeper, teacher — but she finds solace in fostering a relationship with the Other.
Consistently seeing goodness in what is commonly considered bad, Ana’s identification with the Other overwhelms her consciousness. Kroger states, “identity gets defined as a balance between that which is taken to be self and that which is taken to be other. The means by which we differentiate ourselves from other people in our lives…constitutes the very core of our experiences of personal identity” (8). Lacking meaningful communication with her parents, and eventually straining her relationship with her sister, Ana’s formation of personal identity is largely informed by certain cultural cues and personal experiences which take her by surprise.

Undeniably inspired by Erice’s story, director Guillermo del Toro illustrates the fracture between child and adult in the aftermath of the same Civil War in *El Laberinto del Fauno* (*Pan’s Labyrinth* 2006). In 1944, fairy-tale obsessed Ofelia and her pregnant mother move to the roaming hills of Castile y León to join Captain Vidal, a violent Falange militarist and new patriarch of their family. Ofelia follows a fairy to ancient ruins guarded by a mysterious and grotesque faun where she learns she is the reincarnation of Princess Moanna of the Netherworld, and this labyrinth is last remaining to portal to deliver her home. While awaiting the birth of his heir, Vidal fights a guerilla resistance army with immense brutality, and his housekeeper Mercedes spies for the rebels. At the same time, Ofelia must complete three magical tasks before the full moon to prove she is a worthy princess. In his study of del Toro’s film, Antonio Gomez L-Quiñones writes:

the structure of the film is…organized around the contrast between two worlds — the historic and fantastic, the subterranean and that which happens on the surface, the world of fairies and (emphases added) the world of guerrilla warriors and Franco’s soldiers — in short, the world in which only Ofelia participates and the intersubjective world of adults. Both occur in parallel to and, to a large extent, are unconscious of each other. (50-51)
Children and rebels, with their testimonies of possibility, some magical and others sensible, pose a threat to the existing condition (53). The union between child and delinquent manifested through Ofelia and guerilla fighters, namely the housemaid Mercedes, is one of difference and defense, of fighting for a place in a world unpolluted by ruling tyrants.

Like El Laberinto del Fauno, The Spirit of the Beehive is formed by contrasting worlds: the austerity of the managed corporeal, and the transitory understood by the magical. The fourth and final adult figure who shapes Ana’s perception of her personal reality is the monster (the stranger, the spirit). One afternoon during one of their adventures to the abandoned farmhouse, Isabel recalls the story she sleepily narrated to her shyly curious sister following the screening of Frankenstein — that the monster is a vulnerable spirit — and presents this specific place as home to the spectre. She tells another lie. Ana is ultimately drawn back to the farmhouse, and specifically the well, which fulfills her desire to hear her echo — to have herself speak to herself. As adult outsiders looking in, perhaps we cannot imagine the existence of spirits in a vacant farmhouse. We would be mistaken for the monster does eventually manifest in Ana’s world, and finds solitude in the remote dwelling. For a moment this space makes up the subterranean world of Ana’s dreams and desires.

Soy Ana / It’s me, Ana
Ana’s true self

Yellow-hued honeycomb windows populate a number of rooms which make up the family manor. Visually, the windows are serene and elegant. Viscerally, they are enigmatic, almost elysian. For each character, the windows embody liminality. Shortly after we are introduced to Fernando, we follow him to his study where he moves behind the window and
peers over his desolate estate from the balcony. We see a patriarch disguised — a blurred image behind the gold color, intricate latticework, and thick panes of the window — and yet we eavesdrop on an exchange this man cannot hear. Erice playfully exploits *Frankenstein* dialogue between Frankenstein and Waldman: “I wouldn’t care if they called me mad,” says Frankenstein, to which the doctor retorts, “wake up and see the reality; the brain from my laboratory belonged to a criminal.” Fernando neglects his expected duties as father. He inhabits an ephemeral world separate from the melancholic reality of his provincial life. He is childishly capricious, a characteristic to which those around him are not immune; even the housekeeper tells him he should “come down out of the clouds.” Teresa sits in profile at a sturdy wood desk and writes a letter. The lustrous windows loom behind her, casting a golden glow upon her fair features. Though angelic in appearance, this matriarch is devilishly unfaithful to her family. She lives in her own world. Teresa half-heartedly plucks at piano keys, bicycles to and from town for reasons unknown, listlessly readies her children for school and bed, and daydreams as she pens her letters. As the sisters patter about the manor, playing games, pretending to shave, and harassing the family cat, they also move past the mystical windows.

Figures 7-10 (clockwise) Fernando outside; Teresa dreaming of another life; Isabel reveling in her wit; Ana mesmerized by her father’s bees
More than mystical, the windows appear mythical at times. In “Myth Today,” Roland Barthes concludes that there is value inscribed in myth: “truth is no guarantee for it; nothing prevents it from being a perpetual alibi” (123). This value is found within the intricate bond of meaning and form, whereby meaning always showcases form, and form always pushes beyond meaning. He clarifies this notion through metaphor:

"...if I am in a car and I look at the scenery through the window, I can at will focus on the scenery or on the window-pane. At one moment I grasp the presence of the glass and the distance of the landscape; at another, on the contrary, the transparence of the glass and the depth of the landscape; but the result of this alternation is constant: the glass is at once present and empty to me, and the landscape unreal and full. (123)"

Ancient myths negotiate travel between tiered worlds: Olympus and Hades, Heaven and Hell, Earth and the cosmos. The window peers into the layers of storytelling within The Spirit of the Beehive. Considering the gothic tale upon which Frankenstein is based, Dorothy Van Ghent’s discussion of the window motif in Emily Brontë’s Wuthering Heights is a useful tool in unraveling the myth of the window in Erice’s film. When outsider traveler Lockwood falls into slumber in the midst of hurriedly reading long-deceased Catherine Earnshaw’s childhood journal, he is abruptly woken from a dream in which a spectre scratches at the window pleads to come inside. Van Ghent asks why an educated city-dwelling man would ignore the obvious explanation of branches cast away by storm-gale winds, only to succumb to foolish dreams of child ghosts. She answers this query with:

"His lack of any dramatically thorough motivation for dreaming the cruel dream suggests those powers as existing autonomously, not in the ‘outsideness’ of external nature, beyond the physical windowpane, but also within, even in the soul least prone to passionate excursion. The windowpane is the medium, treacherously transparent, separating the ‘inside’ from the ‘outside,’ the ‘human’ from the alien terrible ‘other.’ (190-191)"
For both Barthes and Van Ghent, there is a choice to be made: to see the glass, or see through the glass. The goal is to wake up and see the reality. Perhaps the reality is the unexpected.

Just before Ana meets the stranger in the farmhouse, her relationship with Isabel shifts. One sun-kissed afternoon the girls play in separate rooms in the estate; Ana writes at the typewriter, seemingly colossal next to her tiny frame, and is interrupted by a chilling cry. After tiptoeing through each abandoned room, she finds a lifeless Isabel beside the honey-colored window in their father’s study in a staged images that mirrors the scene in Whale’s *Frankenstein* when Elizabeth is ravaged by the monster. Hearing the family dog barking in the distance, Ana goes to the open window, as if the monster fled minutes before just as he did in the film. “He’s not here anymore,” whispers Ana to her unresponsive sister. Adults, and therefore help, are nowhere to be found, and when Ana returns to the room, Isabel has disappeared, only to terrorize her moments later. Isabel has betrayed Ana’s trust, tricking her into believing the worst possible fate: the death of her most valued companion.
The girls must acquire experiences and knowledge from each other, and by the end of the film, even Ana has broken free from the mythologies created by her older sister, understanding that she too will soon be an untrustworthy adult. The truth is, Isabel never understood the misunderstanding between monster and mob, and she certainly never crossed paths with a spirit. The elder sister lied to hide the shame of being just as bewildered as her younger sibling. In the evening of Isabel’s fateful midday trick, Ana sits to the side as a few older children, including her sister, leap over a bonfire. The cinematic style shifts to engage in tropes of horror cinema: the spectral unveiling of a pagan ritual, the eerie score, and the slow motion-to-freeze frame editing showcase a new Ana. Completely mesmerized, she gazes toward this rite of autumn almost possessed. This scene marks a juncture in Ana’s life; sisterly solidarity is dissolved as Isabel abruptly evolves to a deceptive adult figure. In this fragile state Ana soon meets her lonely and silent spirit, and she interprets her interactions with this modern outcast as her opportunity to create her own destiny.

Though the aforementioned early writings from Winnicott were groundbreaking in the field of developmental psychology, his later theories truly illuminate the intricate processes of identity formation. Employing the term “fantasying” to describe a world outside both dream and reality, Winnicott discusses the impact of this liminal space (and state of mind) in relationship to the identity formation of children. In his 1971 book Playing and Reality, Winnicott writes that while the process of fantasying is reliant on the animated absorption of the real and the dream, because it directly relates to shifts in creativity and imagination beginning at a very young age, it must be studied as an isolated phenomenon (36). Supposing a potential reluctance to conceive a difference between fantasying and imagining, Winnicott introduces the element of time as
crucial: “in the fantasying, what happens happens immediately, except that it does not happen at all” (37). Knowing this, what is the impact of dreaming? In one of his test studies with a young woman, Winnicott realizes that where fantasying eventually reaches a dead end, “the corresponding dream, however, *had poetry in it*, that is to say, layer upon layer of meaning related to the past, present, and future, and to inner and outer, and always fundamentally about herself” (48). The poetic nature of the dream extends the process of fantasying, and into the realm of self-identifying.

Interested in how playing correlates with a growing perception of selfhood, Winnicott writes of a sacred space of play. This playground is both literal and metaphorical — while it is grounded in reality, it is also a dreamland. Nevertheless, the child brings their concept of reality to the land of play: “In playing, the child manipulates external phenomena in service of the dream and invests chosen external phenomena with dream meaning and feeling” (69). The coalition of experiences grounded in reality, and the adventures imagined in the mind, culminates in a kind of creativity crucial to understanding self. Winnicott’s development that creativity and imagination fuels the search for self is critical in an exploration of Ana and her emotional kinship with her monster. The neutral zone of play bolsters creative impulses; it is at once a place of reflection of one’s inner reality, and a shared reality with others (86). The only shared space of play Ana has ever known is shattered when Isabel betrays her trust. And so she must find a new place to reflect, and a new friend to treasure.

That night, after the makeshift effigy is reduced to ashes, we follow a restless Ana through the shadows inside her home, cutting away to a train bursting through the dark land where the girls so often play in bright light of day. The scene cuts from solitary Ana to this train
because Erice’s intends us to bear witness to a stranger jumping from the moving train. The stranger is a wounded soldier, and likely a deserter or a dissenter. Despite the visual parenthesis of the stranger, we are totally and completely in Ana’s head. This departure in aesthetics is marked by the use of double exposure: Ana’s face is placed over the enigmatic train tracks which represent a great outside world just one adventure away, the same tracks upon which she and Isabel press their ears against in the hopes of feeling the dizzying gust of wind from an inbound train, and the same tracks where this stranger has leapt into her life. Returning to the farmhouse one morning, Ana finds her spirit no longer bodiless, and approaches the injured man with tremendous compassion.
CHAPTER FOUR: THE MONSTER IN US ALL

You may deem me romantic, my dear sister, but I bitterly feel the want of a friend
The birth of a myth

1816 is remembered as “The Year Without a Summer.” Volcanic ash from Indonesia’s Mount Tambora transformed much of the world into a perpetual winter. During that gloomy June, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley26 vacationed in Switzerland at Lord Byron’s Villa Diodati overlooking Lake Geneva alongside intellectuals of the Romantic movement — poets Percy Bysshe Shelley and Byron, and writer and physician John Polidori — and on one exceptionally stormy evening, under the creative spell of their host, they each pen a sensational ghost story (Wolf x). The creation of an eighteen-year-old Shelley, Frankenstein or, The Modern Prometheus is structured in the epistolary fashion, as a series of letters by Captain Walton for his dear sister Margaret Walton Saville. Walton sets out to explore the Arctic in the veiled hope to make a scientific discovery valuable enough to render him famous. In the second letter which opens the first narrative of Frankenstein, Walton reflects with great sincerity on the melancholy of isolation. Writing does not adequately express feeling, and thus, his solitude cannot be disguised by his work. To Mrs. Saville he writes, “I desire the company of a man who could sympathize with me; whose eyes would reply to mine. You may deem me romantic, my dear sister, but I bitterly feel the want of a friend” (15). Near the North Pole, he crosses paths with a disheveled Victor Frankenstein. Imagine Walton’s elation when he finds the wandering doctor, weakened by his own self-imposed desolation. Walton provides shelter, warmth, and hot soup. Frankenstein fulfills the void of friendship Walton so desires. He also discloses the most savage of stories. The tale with which Frankenstein regales Walton serves as the original source for the

26 Not yet married to Percy Bysshe Shelley, at this time she was Mary Godwin. For the sake of this thesis, however, she will be referred to as she is collectively remembered: Mary Shelley.
many diluted adaptations of the narrative. It tells the story of a man gone mad with insatiable thirst, and the creation he brings into the world only to abandon when the burden of parenting becomes too much.

The character of Frankenstein should be read as a manifestation of madness. From his introduction in the original 1818 publication, Frankenstein represents obtuse irrationality with great consequences. Robert Shattuck, in *Forbidden Knowledge*, comments on Shelley unwavering moral judgment against the doctor (98). His very existence, his ravenous quest for knowledge, however, is itself a didactic experience for the reader. Unlike Milton’s depiction of the events which transpired between Adam and Eve in Eden as a “Fortunate Fall” in *Paradise Lost*, a text revered within *Frankenstein*, Shelley does not fleetly absolve the sinner. Regarding this fall from grace, Shattuck writes:

> ten pages before the end, Walton says of the dying Frankenstein, ‘He seems to feel his own worth and the greatness of his fall.’ By this time, we know how much salt to add. Shelley has not deployed any battalions of angels to carry him off. This is no Fortunate Fall. No one can redeem the destruction Frankenstein has left behind. (99)

Frankenstein may believe he is hunting his ghoulish creation, desiring to eradicate it once and for all, but in the end, this journey is another move toward self-annihilation. Frankenstein is not simply weakened by the cold, but is weak of heart. The cowardly man is no friend at all. The idealism of redemption and the disavowal of rebellion represented through the “reformed” traitorous son of Franco’s *Raza* is nowhere to be found in *Frankenstein*, a reality understood by the children of war. The monster is more a man than his maker.

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27 The Fortunate Fall, or *felix cupa*, refers the sins of Adam and Eve as a necessary evil to improve mankind. For a succinct analysis of the origins of the phrase, and its application to Milton’s text see Daniel K. Judd’s “The Fortunate Fall of Adam and Eve.”
Frankenstein endures today as a myth of its own. The storied history of its genesis, the crowd-pleasing 1831 revision\textsuperscript{28}, the many stage and cinematic adaptations, and its endless influence on the popular imagination have elevated Shelley’s narrative and characters to cult status. And yet, one image born from this story stands above the rest. In his introduction to The Annotated Frankenstein, Leonard Wolf writes, “we know Frankenstein’s creature as if we had always know him: Boris Karloff, tall lurching, mute, shabbily clad, a humanlike thing with a square head and electronic pegs sticking out of his neck and a look of baffled innocence on his face” (ix). This same iconic visual Erice recalls from his childhood, and the same embodiment who haunts children around the world.

\textit{Oh! no mortal could support the horror of that countenance}

\textit{Rebels, delinquents, monsters, young girls, and other Spanish bodies}

The Victor Frankenstein first introduced by Shelley is controlling and determined, often outwardly callous toward other humans (people who may interfere with his experiment). At the same time, he is superficial and sanctimonious, passing judgement on those he has deemed inferior to the self-ascribed superior human body and mind he possesses. Commenting on the tremendous toll of engineering a new race of man, Frankenstein declares, “A human being in perfection ought always to preserve a calm and peaceful mind, and never to allow passion or a transitory desire to disturb his tranquility” (50). This proclamation is important from two reasons: firstly, it retains a prophetic quality regarding to his own deteriorating mental health; secondly, it positions Frankenstein as purveyor of a presumed perfection, as the egocentric

\textsuperscript{28} According to Leonard Wolf, these revisions serve to make more toothsome the shocking horrors of the original publication — Walton is given a more noble motive for his exploration, Frankenstein’s parents are portrayed as exemplary of traditional domesticity, and Frankenstein’s bride is no longer his first cousin, but is an orphan taken in by the family.
designer of life. Frankenstein is akin to Franco: mobilized through delusional ambition, and empowered by ideological manipulation. Deliriously hungry for power, Frankenstein heeds warning to the impact of “passion or transitory desire.” These very transgressions against the “peaceful mind” of the “human being in perfection” nourish revolutions. The first step toward dethroning the despot is to dream outside the master’s mythology. In this allegory, monster is the manipulated masses: indentured to a system of beliefs, and controlled by a omnipotent master. Eventually the monster resists.

Feenstra discusses, in New Mythological Figures in Spanish Cinema, the identities of women, homosexuals, and delinquents as “dissident bodies” during the post-War regime (22). These othered bodies are disharmonious among the carefully constructed parties who make up the Spain belonging to Franco. The term *dissident* stems from the Latin roots *dis* and *sedere*, meaning *sit* and *apart*. Feenstra’s use of the term “dissident bodies” creates a spatial specificity to the conflict. The dissident man and woman are divorced physically from the regime in two distinct ways. The first occurs in a way the body cannot control: physicality and physiognomy. The body looks and acts different from the norm. This is where it is important to examine the grotesque and the aberrant. The second deviation from the “norm,” here the regime, is the physical space the dissident body itself occupies. The body possesses an active nature — the desperate will relocate, the impassioned will protest, and the victimized will turn the world upside down.

Upon electrifying his monster into existence, Dr. Frankenstein remains bewildered by the appearance of his own creation: “Oh! no mortal could support the horror of that countenance. A mummy again endued with animation could not be so hideous as that wretch. I had gazed on him
while unfinished; he was ugly then; but when those muscles and joints were rendered capable of motion, it became a thing such as even Dante could not have conceived” (54). In their discussion of the grotesquerie of the deformed body depicted in *Frankenstein*, Justin D. Edwards and Rune Graulund\(^{29}\) explore the profundity of the monster’s abnormal body: “As a compilation of human body parts, the creature is quite literally a man ‘of sorts’, different sorts of men. But in the more figural sense the monster is a man of sorts precisely because he is a *new sort*, a new type and a new form of man who has been created in a larger ‘frame’” (56). Rebellions can be understood through a similar lens: they are also a compilation of parts (men and women from different backgrounds), *and* a new communal coalition within the larger framework of existing society. Spurned and misunderstood, rebels are imbued with animation.

The rebels represented in a film like *El Fauno del Laberinto* are unmistakable. In the hills surrounding the captain’s compound, guerilla factions lie in wait. They are men old and young, some physically wounded, others emotionally scarred. One man must have his leg amputated as another man born with a stutter looks on. Mercedes is expected by adhere to the societal laws written for a working-class woman, and although she must feign loyalty to the captain’s home, she remains allied with the men in the hills. Young Ofelia must reconcile the ways in which her difference places immense strain on Vidal’s desperate patriarchal control. She is an unloved step-daughter, a misunderstood reader of fairy tales, and a reincarnated princess. The process of self-discovery in *The Spirit of the Beehive*, however, is a tale of great complexity. Ana is born into a family brimming with contradictions. Although the previous chapter discussed the ways in

\(^{29}\) Edwards and Graulund, in the introduction to *Grotesque* (a part of Routledge’s *The New Cultural Idiom* series), provide one of the most straightforward definitions of the very complex concept of ‘the grotesque’: “A grotesque body that is incomplete or deformed forces us to question what is means to be human: these queries sometimes arise out of the literal combination of human and animal traits or, at other times, through the conceptual questions about what it means to deviate from the norm” (3).
which Teresa and Fernando reject the traditional roles of mother and father, or at least the fictional functions endorsed by Francoism, they also refuse to revolt. Often times Fernando stares despondently at his glass beehive, cautiously surveying the events he describes as, “constant agitation in the honeycomb… the mysterious maddened commotion,” this poetic practice taking precedence over all else. His words are haunting reminders of the world’s tumults and traumas, and of the repetitive nature of this chaos. And yet, he is complicit, finding solace only in the observation of a chaos he can control. With her father occupied by bees, mother absorbed in daydreams, and sister growing obsessed with lies and games, Ana must animate herself. The rebellion comes from within.

**What was I? The question again recurred, to be answered only with groans.**

*The fantastic friendship of child and Other*

We know in Shelley’s novel, the monster, not only abandoned, but loathed by his creator, his father figure, flees to the countryside and there finds solace in the compassion of the blind De Lacey patriarch. This monster acquires knowledge through the teachings of someone who sees based only on compassion and instinct. Whale’s monster, based on a screenplay by established Hollywood writer Robert Florey, is depicted as an inherently evil brute — thanks, of course, in part to the abnormal brain determining his thought processes. Whale and Karloff managed to create a remarkably sympathetic creature out of Frankenstein’s heretical experiment. However, by removing the scene in which Shelley’s monster learns to speak, Whale’s creature remains silenced. While this specific transaction of knowledge does not occur in Whale’s adaptation, it does occur in *The Spirit of the Beehive*. Although Ana and the stranger never exchange words, they communicate nonetheless. She sets aside her fears and initiates friendship, and this speaks
volumes. Ana has the courage to be seen, and to see others. This seemingly simple transition from speaking to silence contributes greatly to Ana’s relationship with the mystic (and mythic) quality of Frankenstein’s monster. Camaraderie with her stranger is not exchanged through words, but through dreams.

On February 6, 1799 revered Spanish painter Francisco Goya published *Los Caprichos*, a series of eighty aquatint plates inspired by his observations regarding the ever-growing extravagance of Spanish society, and his recent readings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and other intellectuals of the French revolution (Hofer 1-2). While these social satires are riddled with
witticisms and puns, they are also quite resolute — biting and grave, and at times, almost otherworldly. Literary critic José Luis Munárriz wrote of *Los Caprichos* with great candor, and as a close confidant of the artist, likely just as Goya himself would have described the resonance of the work: “When the brain is hurt by an accident, or the mind disordered by dreams or sickness, the fancy is overrun with wild dismal ideas, and terrified with a thousand hideous monsters of its own framing” (quoted in Hofer 5). At the age of forty-six, in 1792, Goya found himself suffering from nervousness, struck by moments of vertigo, and nearly deaf. For the next two years the artist recovered, but a changed man. Personally, he grew bitter and secretive; artistically, he engaged in new motifs and mediums, including the social satires and aquatint copper plates employed in *Los Caprichos* (Hofer 2). The spirit of Goya lives on through those who question their reality, through characters like Frankenstein’s monster and Ana. The monster in Whale’s film exists as a compilation of existing pieces of man (and existing pieces of Shelley’s cultural phenomenon), and yet he is built upon an eight-foot frame managed by an abnormal brain, and is thus more than man; the nature of his existence is accidental. For Ana, her world has been, and largely unbeknownst to her, restructured by the accidents and injuries of a war and a dictatorship. There are countless means for damaging the brain, and recovery involves self-discovery. *Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters*, likely the most famous of the etching of *Los Caprichos*, depicts a well-dressed man sitting beside a cluttered desk, his head resting in his crossed arms as he crumbles into exhaustion. Cats and bats and owls stalk his dreams. The inscription reads: “Imagination abandoned by reason produces impossible monsters: united with her, she is the mother of the arts and the origin of their marvels.” Dreams are not futile or simple

30 Goya’s illness went undiagnosed; the likely cause was Ménière’s disease, an inner ear disorder without a cure.
representations; they hold a place in reality. The personalized visions, ideals, and manifestos which seem to reside within the dreamworld are not mere images; they are conjured imaginations. And most importantly, the belong to her. While man is the pictured protagonist of this image, sleep, dreams, and imaginations are feminine.

As Frankenstein lays before Captain Walton the wild tale leading up to his Arctic chase, he establishes a third narrative line. Frankenstein’s narration finally arrives to the place where, after time apart, his creature approaches him, and articulately recounts his own autobiography. The monster reveals to his maker the overwhelming despair of being without a family, of existing without memory:

...Where were my friends and relations? No father had watched my infant days, no mother had blessed me with smiles and caresses; or if they had, all my past life was now a blot, a blind vacancy in which I distinguished nothing. From my earliest remembrance I had been as I then was in height and proportion. I had never yet seen a being resembling me... What was I? The question again recurred, to be answered only with groans (emphasis added, 126).

This wretched existence is no way to live, and those guttural groans are no way to mourn. Interpreted by Erice, “what the monster wants, in his misery, is to be accepted into society, yet society rejects him — perhaps because of his excess of humanity, for there is something tremendously human in the monster. So the child’s identification with him is the identification with those who suffer, because she experiences suffering too” (Sight & Sound 26). Handing over a bruised and beautiful apple pulled from her bright red lunchbox, Ana learns from the mistakes of Maria in Whale’s Frankenstein, and approaches her monster not with a game he cannot comprehend, but with a gift of friendship. While the Spain depicted in The Spirit of the Beehive — with its violence and silence, intellect and artistry, magic and monstrosity — is full of contradictions, Ana does not reside in a garden defined by the dichotomy of good and evil. The
apple has fallen from the Tree of Knowledge, but into the hands of the increasingly wise young girl, and she chooses to pass the fruit along to the next curious and misunderstood creature. When Ana gives this familiar fruit to the stranger, she is passing over a symbol of humanity. Even without dialogue Ana and the stranger communicate with shy compassion and unadulterated understanding. She is very much awake, and she has come across the most fantastic of monsters.
CONCLUSION: THE QUEST FOR KNOWLEDGE

Ultimately, Ana is betrayed by the adult world when she discovers the man (or in her eyes — the spirit, her friend) is taken from her. On her second visit to the newly occupied farmhouse, she delivers a wool coat of her father’s to her strange ally. Inside the coat pocket the man finds Fernando’s prized watch. When he flips open the face, the carnival tune emanates from the mechanism. The following series of scenes pass without dialogue, a stark contrast to the hypnotic melody that plays inside the shared playground of child and monster. Perhaps that very night, discovered by the Falange, the stranger is murdered for his treasonous escape. Fernando, questioned by the authorities, discerns his daughter’s role. When he returns home from the makeshift morgue (the same building which was just recently a makeshift theater), Fernando opens the watch, and surprises his daughter with the sounds of that familiar tune. It is music she remembers as belonging to first her father, and as regifted to the stranger. With the watch returned to her father’s hands, Ana immediately recognizes the man is gone, never to return. If *The Spirit of the Beehive* were to follow the strict rules of Francoist mythological nationalism, the death of the deserter would mark the espousal of the worst kind of delinquent. The film instead consents to a young girl’s insurrection.

Ana’s rebellion, however, reveals a unique message of youthful resistance against establishment. It calls for the construction of multiple myths, and celebrates the Other, the rebel, the monster. Paul Julian Smith expands this notion beyond the confines of the screen, writing in his book, *The Moderns*: “Like Ana…the director has no unique and solitary identity, no sense of self without the Other (crew, industry, audience) with whom and to whom he offers his vision” (40-41). Through the process of understanding how to construct a personal identity that can also
be a communal identity, Erice’s child exemplifies the new Spanish nation. The child’s monster is the monster found in every person; it is the strange delinquent emerging to the surface, calling for change after years of fermentation.

*The Spirit of the Beehive* conceptualizes a simultaneous specificity and timelessness. For a moment let us return to the beginning: “Once upon a time...somewhere on the Castilian plain, around 1940.” The Spanish landscape and post-Civil War date are specific reminders of history. However, *somewhere, around*, and more than anything, *Once upon a time* fashion the film as an immortal fantasy. This revision of the coming-of-age narrative marries the classic drama of growing older to the fairytale so beloved in youth. The employment of this magical balance symbolizes a new structure of representation for the Spanish people. The return of the delinquent as sympathetic monster is symbolic in *The Spirit of the Beehive*, interpreted within the narrative through the eyes of the child. Ana senses significance in objects and moments perceived mundane by adults. Children have the rare ability to recall with tremendous zeal and sincerity the stories so often forgotten, yet are inclined to overlook events deemed meaningful to adults (von Franz 168). One particular conversation between Fernando and his daughters showcases this dynamic. The investigation of mushrooms to Fernando is intended to be simultaneously helpful (he is surrendering fatherly wisdom) and harmless (he will protect his daughters), but for Ana, the memory of this conversation has sinister repercussions. Following the death of her spirit, Ana runs away, crossing that forest threshold that previously marked mushroom harvest’s conclusion, slowing only to walk along the water in this dark and tranquil woodland. Ana desperately longs for knowledge and adventure, and recalls the story of the devilish mushroom. When she gazes
desirously upon the species of fungus once stomped into the earth by her father, a man she now distrusts, she contemplates her rebellious feast.

In *Man and his Symbols*, von Franz states, “if the development of consciousness is disturbed in its normal unfolding, children frequently retire from outer or inner difficulties into an inner ‘fortress’” (169). Pained by betrayal, Ana actively builds her fortress when she flees her purblind village. On her retreat from society, Ana pauses to kneel in the dewy creek bank, and reviews her reflection; slowly this impression of her own self distorts, morphing into that of the monster. It is her personal Frankenstein’s monster of a sympathetic stranger, pieces of Karloff, Fernando, and the stranger wrapped into one figure. She finds solitude in her inner fortress, seeing herself in the deserter, in the monster, and as a resistant delinquent so feared by the Franco government. Perhaps the toxic mushroom fuels such vivid hallucinations, or perhaps Ana genuinely befriends a monster. Somehow this distinction matters not. Visually quoting the scene in *Frankenstein* in which Maria treats a monstrous being with compassion, this strange figure peers in Ana’s eyes as he delicately holds her tiny frame. He consoles the child.

![Figure 14 (left). The Spirit of the Beehive / Figure 15 (right). Frankenstein](image-url)
Quickly apprehended by the adult world, Ana reluctantly returns home dejected and muted, much like Whale’s creature. To the doctor visiting Ana’s bedside Teresa laments her daughter’s spirits: “Light bothers her. She looks our way but does not recognize us. It’s as if we didn’t exist.” While we are never explicitly told what ails Ana, considering the doctor’s dietary recommendations — food gentle on the stomach like light soups or boiled eggs — perhaps the young girl did, in fact, consume the mushroom. This possibility does not, however, discount the transcendental experience of Ana’s pilgrimage to the woods, of her journey into her own fairy tale. The doctor consoles Teresa by retorting, “Ana is still a very small child, she’s under the effect of a very powerful experience. But she’ll get over it. Bit by bit she’ll begin to forget.” Parallel to the Spanish translation of the *Frankenstein* prologue, the adult desire to deny the potency of experiences which promote curiosity, adventure, wisdom, and resilience, asks for the complacency that accompanies the notion of not taking it “too seriously.” What happens then if Ana wishes to remember? What if this moment adults declare a fleeting nightmare is only the beginning of the child’s imagination?

One night the quiet child stands alone at her window, and finally speaks. “It’s me, Ana,” she announces to the world. She sheds the layers of mythologies created by the generation before her, and emerges from her inner fortress. She is hungry for movement. As with any space (the writer’s desk, the film set, the battlefield, or the playground), the subterranean world of the Other demands rhizomatic exploration, for it has neither beginning nor end. For Deleuze and Guattari, the rhizomatic line does not contour, but “breaks or twists” and “passes between things…[and] takes on a consistency of its own. These are multiplicities of masses or packs…multiplicities of becoming, or transformational multiplicities” (505). The Other world is a territory rooted in the
ever-growing movements of dreams; its creation is a process. Ana’s melancholy dreams manifest into reality when she allows, in this somnambulistic state, her imagination to abandon all notions of reason, and in this moment she tenderly acknowledges and accepts her monster. *The Spirit of the Beehive*, a film born within a post-war era of instability, a piece of art created in a cruel dictator’s rapidly decaying world, reveals a rebellious and merciful reality in recognizing the perceived monstrous as a reflection of oneself. Ana develops a brilliant acceptance of delinquency and, in turn, resistance. Human memory is monstrous — it embraces both the animation of individuality and the shared spirit of community. *The Spirit of the Beehive* remembers the legendary myth of the survivor. She is ready to compose her fantastic manifesto.
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