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UNIVERSIDAD DEL PAIS VASCO
EUSKAL HERRIKO UNIBERTSITATEA

DEPARTAMENTO DE FILOLOGIA INGLESA Y ALEMANA
INGLES ETA ALEMANIAR FILOLOGI SAILA

TRANSVASES CULTURALES:
LITERATURA
CINE
TRADUCCIÓN

Eds.: Federico Eguíluz
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Edita: FACULTAD DE FILOLOGIA
Dpto. Filología Inglesa y Alemana
Imprime: EVAGRAF, S. Coop. Ltda.
Alibarra, 64 - Vitoria
D. L. VI - 139 - 1994
I.S.B.N. - 84-604-9520-5
Vitoria-Gasteiz 1994

MONSTROUS WOMEN: THE FRANKENSTEIN MYTH AND THE ROLE OF THE MOTHER IN VÍCTOR ERICE'S *EL ESPÍRITU DE LA COLMENA* (1973)

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El espíritu de la colmena has been considered from the beginning as a radical film which, through understatement and the intensification of "significant silence", transmitted to the spectator of the last years of the dictatorship a critical view of Spain under Franco. Against this initial aura, more recent voices have doubted the commitment of Erice's cinema to political analysis. As Paul Julian Smith has recently said about the use of ellipses in *El sur*, "[they] seem more a product of wilful amnesia than a provocation to memory" (1993:29). This position coincides with Thomas Elsaesser's analysis of German silent cinema. He argues that "the fantastic both represents conflicts and disguises them, [...] it raises the question of agency and at the same time attributes it to supernatural forces." (1989:23).[1] In his conclusion, he extends this politically ambivalent function of fantasy to the relationship between cinema and history, emphasising the "conservative" effect of the consumption of films on the spectator: "the consumption of narratives and images intervenes to block or displace the contradictions of history into effects of disavowal and substitution" (1989:37). Whatever ideological value we give to this transformation of history by the fantastic, Erice himself seems to agree with the process undergone by history in his film: "En la película el ámbito histórico se halla interiorizado [...E]xiste un desdoblamiento fantástico de lo real" (1976:147).

In this paper, I would like to discuss *El espíritu de la colmena* as a generic text which inscribes itself within the genre of the fantastic,[2] and which uses the myth of Frankenstein and, in general, a set of elements belonging to the cinematographic genre of the horror film. More specifically, the monster and the concept of monstrosity become the focal point from which meaning starts circulating. Associations are, implicitly or explicitly, made between the monster and all the characters, and the complexity and sometimes contradictory nature of these associations results in a highly ambivalent ideological structure. Although I will be referring to several of these associations, my main focus will be on one which has been generally overlooked, that between the monster and Teresa, Ana's mother. This is one particular way in which the film's introspective idiom seems to me to have something to say about society and politics: the representation of women in cultural texts and also the place of women in Spanish society during the Franco-ist era. In order to substantiate my hypothesis I want to pay close attention to Teresa's role in the film and relate

Ana's narrative development to that of her mother, through the figure of the monster.[3]

The nature of the interaction and interdependence between the psychic life of the individual and society and history has been analysed by Freud, among other works, in his "Totem and Taboo" (1913). The well-known and widely polemical parallelism he draws between the development of the individual and the evolution of human views of the universe is based on the vicissitudes of the principle of the "omnipotence of thoughts", which is the technique of the animistic mode of thinking, on which magic is based. According to this principle, a relationship established by the mind between the ideas of two things is believed to exist also between the things themselves. This implies, as Freud says, "an attitude towards the world [...] which, in view of our knowledge of the relation between reality and thought, cannot fail to strike *us* as an overvaluation of the latter. Things become less important than ideas of things" (1990:142). Humans ascribe this omnipotence of thoughts to themselves at the animistic stage, then transfer it to the gods at the religious stage, and finally give it up at the scientific stage, although some of the primitive belief in their omnipotence still survives in their faith in the power of the human mind. The omnipotence of thoughts, characteristic of primitive men, also occurs, according to Freud, in the behaviour of children, as can be seen in their games, and in neurotics, whose guilt feelings are not based on the reality of experience but of thought (see 1990:140-49).

This belief in the omnipotence of the individual's thoughts to shape reality seems a useful tool to explain Ana's psychic development in the course of the film. My point is, however, that it is not limited to the character's experience of the world but can also be extended to the perspective of the text. Ana's feeling of internal power over external reality is doubled by the text's manipulation of Teresa's "historical" experience as a woman in post-civil war patriarchal Spanish society. In other words, Ana's belief in her own power to shape her own reality is paralleled by the film's belief in its own animistic power to shape, through Ana's interiorisation of the Frankenstein myth, the historical reality of Teresa. I also want to suggest that the film may ultimately be as concerned with the process of repression of Teresa by Spanish history as with Ana's development as an individual.

Before abandoning Freud, I also want to refer to the method which makes the correspondence between psychic and historical development possible — the psychical mechanism known as *projection*, which Freud explains in the following way: "Under conditions whose nature has not yet been sufficiently established, internal perceptions of emotional and thought processes can be projected outwards in the same way as sense perceptions; they are thus employed for building up the external world, though they should by rights remain part of the *internal* world" (1990:120). Again I would like to suggest that, just as the text marks the "apparition" of the silent Republican soldier as a "positive" projection

of Ana's internalised image of the monster, the negative consequences of Ana's relationship with the monster are projected by the text, perhaps unexpectedly, perhaps unconsciously, onto Teresa. Projection for Freud is a defensive procedure against what he calls the basic "emotional ambivalence" of the individual in her/his reationships with others, and which is most clearly manifested in intense emotional attachments: "behind the tender love there is a concealed hostility in the unconscious" (1990:116). The individual defends her-/himself against this unconscious hostility by projecting it onto the object of the hostility. In *El espíritu de la colmena*, the relationship between the text and its characters, particularly Teresa, is also characterised by the coexistence of "tender love" and "unconscious hostility" which is, by means of projection, transformed into Teresa's apparent lack of interest in her daughters and later her feeling of guilt at Ana's disappearance. In other words, as I will try to suggest in the rest of the analysis, Teresa's guilt can be seen as a projection of the text's hostility towards women and its guilt at the ways in which it represents them.

I would like to concentrate on the figure of the monster and on the use that *El espíritu de la colmena* makes of the Frankenstein myth. It could be said that the film has two prologues: a) the arrival of the cinema truck in Hoyuelos and the preparations for the screening of the Universal version of *Frankenstein* (1931); and b) the prologue to the old film, as spoken by Bela Lugosi (and dubbed into Spanish). When Lugosi ends his introduction to the film: "yo les aconsejo que no se lo tomen muy en serio", there is a fade out to black and a fade in to a close-up of Fernando (Fernando Fernan-Gómez), who is working on his beehives and has a rather excessive face-protector on, which marks him, from the very first shot, as something of a monster. The sense in which Fernando is identified with the monster has already been analysed elsewhere (see, for example, Peter Evans 1982:15-16 and Marsha Kinder 1983:57-76) and I will be returning to some of the dimensions of this identification later, but for the moment I want to point out the way in which, by taking as it were the Lugosi prologue out of the old film and grafting it onto the new one, *El espíritu de la colmena* makes itself into one more version of the Frankenstein story, however distant from Mary Shelley's novel and later renderings of the myth. Before continuing with my analysis of Erice's film, then, I would like to refer very briefly to the Frankenstein myth.

James B. Twitchell has recently argued that the lasting appeal of the myth, especially among young audiences, lies in the "implied androgyny of Frankenstein" (1985:167). The story written by Mary Shelley has a male and a female part. The former is concerned with the horror of incest, and the latter is about the horror of giving birth. While the male part is about what the monster does, the female part is about how it was created. In the male section, which culminates with Elizabeth's murder, the monster carries out Victor's unconscious desire. Elizabeth has been constructed by the novel as more than a cousin,

almost a sister to Victor, and he even has a dream in which Elizabeth turns into his mother. When the monster kills her —on the wedding night, before her marriage to Victor is consummated— he is averting Victor's horror of incest by preventing him from having sexual intercourse with his cousin. The first part of the story, on the other hand, is about the creation of the monster, about Victor giving birth, but an unnatural birth because this happens without the intervention of a woman. The novel is, in this sense, both about the monstrosity of unnatural birth, through the exclusion of the mother, and about the anxieties of motherhood, since Frankenstein *does* perform the role of mother to the monster both in creation and education. This dimension of the story is related by Twitchell to Mary Shelley's real-life experience of motherhood: "[...] she knew first hand what [horror] was; it was somehow connected with what she experienced sexually as a woman — all the dread, fear, guilt, depression, and excitement of birthing"(1985:175).

I would like to suggest that there are also two sides to Ana's experience and to her creation of the monster in *El espíritu de la colmena*, which are related to her father and to her mother. Although I want to concentrate on the latter, I want to say a few words about Ana's relationship to her father through the concept of the monster, because it also has some bearing on Teresa's fate in the narrative. Evans has explained the ways in which the monster is linked both with Fernando, as an embodiment of patriarchal law, and with the Republican soldier, as representative of "otherness" (1982:14-16). Psychologically, we could say that, through successive identifications with the monster, the soldier becomes a substitute for the father.[4] This replacement of the father by his social opposite, the political outcast, allows Ana to break in one go the two original taboos from which, as Freud explains, religion and morality were born: incest and the killing of the father. In other words, she displaces the two sides of her emotional ambivalence towards her father on to the soldier: in the derelict old house, the symbol of the primeval mythic past, she spends long hours of tenderness and caring with the silent soldier, a relationship which is in fact clearly resented by Fernando later on. On the other hand, it is never explained why the police find the soldier's hiding place but, if we accept the film's positing of Ana's omnipotence of thoughts, it is not difficult to conclude that Ana has also wished his death. Furthermore, at a realistic level, the soldier's death directly affects Fernando, who is questioned by the police on the objects belonging to him which were found in the possession of the soldier and which, as we know, were given to him by Ana. The outcome of the interrogation by the police is never shown but we may infer, in the meal sequence, that Fernando, the coward, the character who has accepted the new political situation, is in serious trouble with the political authorities. Therefore, Ana both wishes the symbolic death of her father and realistically gets him into trouble with the police. This ambivalence of hostility and love on the part of Ana towards her father is left unsolved, but it functions as one more

ingredient of the attitude of the text towards Teresa. At a narrative level, Fernando's confrontation with Ana in the old house, after the soldier has been killed, is the cause of her running away, and her running away provokes, as I shall try to explain, the end of Teresa's dreams of transgression and her textual disavowal as a mother.

The monster as a psychological construct is an ambivalent figure. It embodies a fantasy of wish-fulfilment, but, as Laplanche and Pontalis suggest (1973:314), not only the wish but also, simultaneously, the Law that has repressed the wish. This explains the subject's 'emotional ambivalence', to use Freud's phrase again, towards it: both attraction and repulsion, wish fulfilment and prohibition. Whereas the Frankenstein monster generally embodies these two conflicting feelings, it seems to me that its presence in *El espíritu de la colmena* is, from the point of view of the spectator, devoid of its repulsive dimensions, and presented as a rather sympathetic, sad figure, never an object of fear but rather one of pity. In this, the spectator is distanced from Ana, who *does* construct her fantasy "properly", as a mixture of horror and sexual attraction. The film looks at the monster positively, and the hostile feelings are displaced onto the characters with whom the monster has links, in some cases more consciously —Fernando— and in others, more unconsciously —Teresa. In other words, the "parents as monsters" are given both positive and negative interpretations by the text. Whereas in the case of Fernando both elements coexist at a relatively explicit level, in the case of Teresa there is a greater ambiguity and uncertainty, which the text itself does not always seem to be able to handle.

Of the four members of the family, Teresa is the one whose presence is most unobtrusive and, in a way, most fragmentarily articulated in a narrative which, as Paul Julian Smith reminds us, is famous for its use of discontinuity and ellipsis and its fragmented presentation of the family (1983:28). There are only two occasions in the course of the film on which she is in the same room as her daughters: 1) when she combs Ana's hair and Ana asks her about "espíritus". This is, as we shall see, when Fernando leaves the house on a rather mysterious journey. 2) During the meal after the death of the soldier, a scene which is presented stylistically by means of alternate shots of each of the four characters without any establishing shots to show them all together —incidentally, Teresa gets the least number of shots (3, as opposed to 4 of Isabel, 6 of Ana and 8 of Fernando) and the least screen time in this scene. In all, she shares the frame with Ana for about thirty seconds in the whole of the film, and none at all with Isabel. Until the final moments, she is mostly on her own, writing letters, riding her bicycle to the railway station in order to post the letters and even sleeping on her own, due to Fernando's habit of staying up all night. It would seem that the text constructs her in her loneliness, positively, as a symbol of what Spanish people have lost after the Civil War, but also negatively, and more ambiguously, as a mother who neglects her daughters and even a wife who neglects her marital

duties. I propose, in what is left of ths paper, to follow Teresa's presence in the narrative and account for it at these two levels, which are never ideologically reconciled by the text.

From the beginning, the character of Teresa is surrounded by ambiguity. Before her first appearance in the film, writing a letter, there is a rather long sound bridge by means of which her voice is heard about fifteen seconds before her image can be seen. Her voice-over is heard over an extreme close-up of Fernando, who seems to be concentrating intensely on something. Not knowing the exact nature of the relationship between him and the female voice, the spectator who sees the film for the first time may infer that the words are being presented through Fernando's mind, maybe as the contents of a letter that a woman has recently written to him. We later discover that the words and the image of Fernando are diegetically unconnected, and that Teresa is his wife and is writing the letter to another man, somebody who used to live in the house in which they now live and who is now abroad, in the south of France, most certainly a Republican exile. These are the exact words uttered by Teresa: "Aunque ya nada puede hacer volver las horas felices que pasamos juntos, pido a Dios que me conceda la alegría de volver a encontrarte. Se lo he pedido siempre desde que nos separamos en medio de la guerra y se lo sigo [at this point, the film cuts visually to Teresa] pidiendo ahora en este rincón donde Fernando, las niñas y yo tratamos de sobrevivir."

It is difficult to decide at what exact point the spectator realises that Teresa is Fernando's wife, that they live together and that she is writing letters to somebody else, but what I find remarkable is the narrative ambivalence, even violence, with which Teresa is introduced in the film by means of this strategy. It is important that we see Fernando first, that we are given the chance to identify or, at least, sympathise with him before she appears, and that, although he is visually identified with the monster, as I explained before, he is also given a profoundly sad expression. This makes us relate the female voice with his own frustrations, with what *he* has lost and what *he* has become as a consequence of the war. As in many classical films, the female protagonist is introduced as a construction of the male mind, as one more element of the construction of his psyche, and related to his desire. This strategy brings us closer to him than to her. When we realise that we were being misled by the text, and that Teresa's voice was not a product of Fernando's imagination or memory, but autonomous, the effect is one of moral distance from her: not only has history repressed the hero but there are also signs that his wife is being unfaithful or, at least, would like to be unfaithful to him. The autonomy that the image of the woman gives to her voice does not succeed in disengaging her, in the mind of the spectator, from Fernando's control. The fluidity with which the associations between the monster and the different characters are carried out by the film, allows us now to, consciously or unconsciously, transfer its negative connotations ("unnatural

behaviour") on to Teresa and keep the positive ones (the sadness of "otherness") with Fernando, at least at this point. This indirect consideration of Teresa as a moral monster is reinforced visually when she appears to materialise out of the steam produced by the train arriving at the station, in a composition which reminds us of the unnatural birth of the Frankenstein monster in the classical American and British film versions of the story.[5]

After posting the letter, she stays on the platform for a few seconds, looking at the soldiers inside the train, one of whom also fixes his gaze on her. This exchange of looks can be interpreted in two interrelated ways. The train, as a link between Hoyuelos, the space of Francoist repression, and the outside, the monstrous political "other", brings Teresa memories of her friend, and therefore the soldier in the train becomes a positive symbol of her struggle against social repression and a negative symbol of her deficiencies as a mother and as a wife. On the other hand, this soldier works also as an anticipation of the escaped Republican soldier, and Teresa's exchange of looks with him can be parallelled to Ana's later silent communication/communion with the soldier in the derelict house outside the village. Apart from her identification with the monster, Teresa is here confronted with it and connected with it by means of the look, in a way which I will later relate to Ana's look at the monster in the wood.

Women have often been connected with monsters both in Western culture and literature and, specifically, in the history of the cinema. From medieval times, evil temptresses, witches, and various types of *femmes fatales* have filled our culture. In horror stories, the presence of the monstrous-feminine, as Barbara Creed notes (1989:63), embodied in such classical mythological figures as the Medusa, with her 'evil-eye', head of writhing serpents and lolling tongue, is a symbol of "what it is about woman that is shocking, terrifying, horrific, abject" (1989:63). In feminist criticism, it is Julia Kristeva's *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982) that has most fully discussed the representation of female monstrosity in our culture, but I would like to refer now to a much shorter article by Linda Williams called "When the Woman Looks" (1984:83-99), in which she describes the differences, in horror films, between the look of horror at the monster of the man and of the woman. The male look expresses conventional fear at the monster. The female look expresses that too but she also "recognises the sense in which this freakishness is similar to her own difference" (1984:88). This is "a recognition of their similar status as potent threats to a vulnerable male power." She concludes:

> This would help explain the often vindictive destruction of the monster in the horror film and the fact that this destruction generates the frequent sympathy of the women characters, who seem to sense the extent to which the monster's death is an exorcism of the power of their own sexuality (1984:90).

When, earlier on in the film, Fernando arrives home from the beehives, he calls out for Teresa but she is not at home, a fact which, Fernando, within Fernán Gómez's usual expressionless performance, seems to resent, especially because her absence is related to the fact that the two girls are also out. The fragmentation of the family is surreptitiously blamed on Teresa. Later on, when Fernando comes to bed at dawn, Teresa, who has been in bed all night, is awake. While he undresses and gets ready for bed, the camera concentrates on his wife, and we can only sense his presence through the noises he makes and his shadow which is cast over Teresa's body. The moment he comes into the room, Teresa closes her eyes, pretending to be asleep, and only opens them again when she is certain that he has gone to sleep. Evans explains this scene in terms of Teresa's imprisonment in a marriage which has become meaningless for her, set against her longing for the man she has been writing to (1982:15-16). However, from Fernando and, possibly, from the male spectator's point of view, Teresa's behaviour can also be read as a failure to fulfil her marital obligations, which can be related to her failure as a mother. In her loneliness and frustration, Teresa, while externally carrying out her duties,[6] silently rebels against the two main female functions in patriarchal society: reproduction and nurturing of the children. It seems interesting that a film that presents female sexuality as a threat to patriarchal power in the family and to the stability of the family itself introduces the female protagonist as a monster (at the moment of its unnatural creation) whose first act after the metaphorical monstrous birth —materialising out of the steam— is to look at another monster figure, one who represents her repressed but threatening sexuality. Apart from longing for the absent friend, Teresa's look is here one of recognition and identification with the monstrosity of the soldiers in the train.

With the exception of the brief scene of the combing of Ana's hair, the girls' education is presented as mostly carried out by Fernando. While Teresa can only answer Ana's question by saying "un espíritu es un espíritu", in a later scene, Fernando seems more suceesful when he teaches the girls to differentiate between good and bad mushrooms. About this scene Fernando Savater says:

> Paseando en busca de setas, tropiezan con una particularmente venenosa. Una auténtica asesina, según el decir del padre, quien la aplasta con el pie en un involuntario símbolo del tratamiento que reciben los enemigos de la colmena. ¿No ha sido él también triturado en parte como una seta ponzoñosa? ¿Cómo no guarda mayor solidaridad con su hermana réproba del reino vegetal? Ana aprende así el criterio del bien y el mal que aplica la colmena (1976: 20-1).

Just before they find the *amanita verna*, Fernando points to "el monte del jardín de las setas", a magic-looking place, where the father promises to take the girls one day, in order to look for the egg yoke, the most wonderful mushroom

of all. The only condition is: "teneis que prometerme una cosa: no decir nada a vuestra madre." In one sense, Fernando's remark is just a way to construct the mountain as something more mysterious, more magical, for the children. Yet it is significant that he chooses to exclude the mother as a strategy to win their attention. However, the mountain, whose top is surrounded by a mist which reminds us of the steam around Teresa in the previously analysed scene, is marked as not belonging to the realm of reason and good sense in which Fernando's discourse is inserted, but rather as "the reign of the archaic mother" in Roger Dadoun's words (1989:43), a pre-Oedipal stage of imaginary plenitude (the place where the best mushrooms grow), previous to the appearance of the father-figure. After uttering these words, Fernando stops in his tracks and fixes his eyes on the mountain for a few seconds. What we see in his eyes is the mixture of attraction and fear with which we are now familiar, an expression of the emotional ambivalence towards the monstrous feminine. Back in the reign of the symbolic, the film cuts to a detail shot of the *amanita verna*, the poisonous mushroom. Now he gives his daughters his metaphorical speech on good and evil: "No lo olvideis hijas. Es la más venenosa, la peor de todas. El que la prueba se muere sin remisión," and then he crushes it. One cannot help noticing that the finding of the mushroom, even the detail shot of it, comes immediately after Fernando's reference to Teresa, joining in the spectator's unconscious the mother with the mushroom as "the most poisonous and the worst of all". The father's hostility towards his wife is projected onto the woman herself, whose monstrosity is now associated with that of the poisonous mushroom. The girls' look at the mushroom, on the other hand, corresponds more closely to the woman's look at the monster as described by Linda Williams: a recognition of themselves in it. The father's stamping of the mushroom can be taken as a metaphor for the early crushing of female sexuality in the two girls, who are being prepared for their entry in the symbolic order of patriarchal Law.

What irradiates from this scene is the beginning of an identification between Ana and Teresa in their revolt against the repression of female sexuality by patriarchy.[7] This identification is intensified in the following scene, when the father is absent from the house, and Ana looks at a photo-album of her parents. Here she concentrates mostly on her mother as a younger woman, before the changes brought about by the war and, possibly, by marriage started to occur. In spite of her father's hostility, this scene shows that Ana has not renounced pre-Oedipal identification with the mother. It also gives us a hint that the whole process of Ana's construction of the monster is prompted precisely by her identification with the mother, or, as is obvious in the course of her interior adventure, by her refusal to grow up in the terms proposed by the father. There are, however, certain differences between Ana and Teresa, which must not be overlooked: Teresa's rebellion is silent but external and social, Ana's is psychological. Teresa's rebellion will be crushed, like a poisonous mushroom. Ana's will arguably

succeed, at least within the temporal boundaries of the film, and this success will ultimately be dependent on Teresa's repression.

I have previously mentioned that the ostensible reason for Ana's "flight to the woods" is her refusal to accept the Law of the father. The "mushroom scene" does not even feature Teresa with the rest of the family. After the photo-album scene, the mother practically disappears from the narrative, and it is only in the climactic scene, at the moment of Ana's metaphorical sexual initiation that she reappears, bracketing Ana's night in the woods, and again, at its centre. Why does the film choose to alternate between Ana and Teresa at this point? At the beginning of the scene, Teresa is desperately shouting from the top of the house, as if Ana's escape was her fault. The remorse that she feels is that she has not been a good mother and a good wife and this is a sort of divine punishment on her for her immoral behaviour. In the darkest moment of the dark night, she makes a momentous decision: she burns the letter that she was writing and chooses to metaphorically bury herself in her house. This moment is presented by means of a dissolve after Ana, in the wood, has found another *amanita verna* and touched it. Metaphorically and metonymically, Ana's gesture of stretching out her hand towards the mushroom suggests her reaching out for Teresa, but not so much for her as a mother as for the forbidden sexuality that she has been made to represent by the film, and which she is at this very moment renouncing for the sake of the patriarchal family, for the sake of her role as Oedipal mother. Ana's climactic moment of construction/ projection of the monster, which comes immediately afterwards, coincides, by means of crosscutting, with Teresa's awareness of her own monstrosity. After we have seen Teresa's image, Ana looks at herself in the water in a Lacanian gesture of identification with/separation from the mother, except that what she sees reflected next to her is, predictably, not Teresa but the monster. The film, therefore, identifies Teresa with the monster and, in spite of the apparent textual ambiguity towards her repression, defines her behaviour as socially and sexually monstrous. It is only after her symbolic renunciation of her own difference is completed that the text can allow Ana to be recuperated for civilised society. Ana's slow recovery is also figured as totally dependent on her mother's patience and ministrations and her recognition that, as the doctor, the usual representative of the patriarchal Law, says, "the important thing is that Ana is still alive".

But Ana is still alive in more than one sense. Whereas, socially, her integration in the new order of things after Franco's triumph in the Civil War may be summarised by the doctor's sentence, mentally the little girl has found the way to fulfil her fantasy. In the final image of the film, she opens the window, remembers her sister's words from the beginning: "all you have to do is close your eyes, and say 'I am Ana', and he will come to you." As Ana closes her eyes and the film concentrates on a close-up of her face, we hear on the soundtrack the sound of the train that symbolises the triumph of forbidden desire. This

seems to be a happy ending of sorts, which argues that, even within the repressive political regime, fantasy and the imagination allow the individual an escape and a degree of mental freedom. Yet her closing her eyes may also be interpreted in a different sense. After all, the conjuring up of the monster has been carried out throughout the film through an act of looking, of visual identification with the monster, an act of "opening her eyes to it". Ana's closing of her eyes may also suggest a conservative gesture on the part of the film, in Paul Julian Smith's words, the "problem of the family as asylum from history" (1993:29), a conscious effort on the part of the individual not to commit him/herself to social change. This interpretation is reinforced by the previous scene: after her husband has fallen asleep over his books as he usually does, Teresa tenderly covers him up and blows out the candle. After the fade to black we see Ana picking up the glass of water, taking a drink and going to the window. Teresa's final decision to comply by the rules and occupy the traditional female space of the home is punctuated by the fade to black, a definitive darkening of her life as an act of sacrifice to patriarchy.[8] At the same time, this darkening is taken as a cue for Ana's flight to the monster, as if the film needed to complete its violent repression of the mother before allowing the happy ending for the daughter. Within Laplanche and Pontalis's definition of fantasy, Ana is finally identified with the wish-fulfilment side of the monster, Teresa with the prohibition.

This split within the text is also a split between the social and the psychological, the historical and the fantastic. By firmly placing Ana (who after all is the clearest surrogate for the spectator within the diegetic world) in the fantastic, the film sacrifices Teresa, relegating her to the submissive role of the obedient wife, and encapsulating in her the role of women in the patriarchal order of Spanish society. In the introduction to his book, Twitchell says that "modern horror myths prepare the teenager for the anxiety of reproduction" (1985:7). Ana's fantasy can also be understood in this way: her "unnatural" conception of Frankenstein is the mind's response to the horror of birthing and nurturing, a horror to which her mother has been condemned forever by patriarchal society and the mysoginist text. By opposing female sexuality to motherhood, *El espíritu de la colmena* effectively disavows the former, hiding its hostility towards it under a mask of sympathy towards those who were condemned to loneliness and silence by the dictatorship, revealing the ideological aim of fantasy to go beyond social criticism and historical analysis of the country's past. As Ana grows up into the patriarchal order she will probably come to realise that there is more at stake for women in the loss of the belief in the omnipotence of thoughts than Freud could give voice to in his text.

NOTES

I wish to thank Constanza del Río, Peter Evans, Anita La Cruz, Vickie Olsen and Leandro Martínez for suggestions made on earlier drafts of this article and help with bibliographical research.

[1] This is opposed to the view taken in classic critical works on the period, like Siegfried Kracauer's *From Caligari to Hitler* (1989:23). Kracauer's book is an account of the social and political meaning that can be attached to narratives of fantasy and the socially subversive potential in such narratives. This radicalism of fantasy is, incidentally, also one of the central theses of modern theories of the fantastic, particularly Rosemary Jackson's *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (1981)(see, for example, 90).

[2] Erice himself would disagree (see interview 1976:139)

[3] Teresa's centrality has been generally overlooked in the critical bibliography of the film. It is, for example, significant that her presence is never once mentioned in Rikki Morgan's recent analysis of the film's ideology "Romper los moldes: implicaciones estéticas e ideológicas de *El espíritu de la colmena* (1973)" (1993). Riley's brief positing of a link between Teresa and Ana in the centre of the film (1984:493) can be considered a partial exception to this critical silence.

[4] Marsha Kinder's analysis (1983: esp. 60) proposes a similar reading to mine although her focus and conclusions differ substantially.

[5] On the other hand, Teresa is explicitly constructed also as a victim of the historical moment. She is the only character who directly voices the immediate consequences of the war, through her letters to her absent friend, since Fernando's writings on the beehive are more indirect, more metaphorical references to the historical situation. In this sense, the hostility of the text is replaced by conscious sympathy in the positioning of the spectator with respect to her. She is, like Fernando, but more explicitly, another victim of the war.

[6] Later on she throws Fernando's hat to him from the window, when he is about to set out on his journey, and she stays behind looking after the children.

[7] E.C. Riley places the beginning of "a line of communication" between mother and daughter in Teresa's inane answer to Ana's question about spirits (1984:493).

[8] Riley's reading of this moment as the confirmation of a reconciliation between the couple reinforces the patriarchal assumptions of the film's closure (1993). Whereas the text's sympathy towards Fernando seems obvious, Riley's reading of the scene (1984:495) suggests that there is no meaning in a text beyond textual intention and that this intention must provide the full measure of the critic's reading of the text.

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