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Contestatory Fairy Tales and Liminal Spaces in Guillermo del Toro’s Pan’s Labyrinth

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Fairy tales serve a meaningful social function, not just for compensation but for revelation: the worlds projected by the best of our fairy tales reveal the gaps between truth and falsehood in our immediate society.
--Jack Zipes

This essay revisits how Guillermo Del Toro’s Pan’s Labyrinth (2006) deconstructs some of the conventions of the fantastic, especially the fairy tale genre, in order to problematize the official discourse of recent Spanish history through fiction. Ofelia, the child protagonist, is the destabilizing vehicle that represents resistance against fascism, using fantasy as a powerful tool to redefine reality. The child’s perspective within the genre of the fantastic serves as an optimal medium to discuss history now that Spain deals with an excess of memory both in film and in literature. Although, Del Toro retains some traditional formal elements of the fairy tale genre, he ultimately redefines the fantastic realm, not only as a place to escape reality. Fantasy becomes a liminal space that shows reality’s violence, in order to change it. The author studies the concept of liminality in a broader sense as the transitional space between two worlds, genres, spaces and narratives, in which distinct categories are questioned.

Este ensayo explora cómo El laberinto del fauno (2006) de Guillermo del Toro deconstruye algunos de los pilares de lo fantástico, en particular del género de los cuentos de hadas y problematiza el discurso oficial de la historia de la Guerra Civil española
a través de la ficción. La niña protagonista, Ofelia, es el vehículo desestabilizador que representa la resistencia del fascismo a través de la fantasía y propone este discurso como el único posible para revisitar la historia. En *El laberinto del fauno*, lo fantástico se convierte en un espacio liminal que el antropólogo Victor Turner entiende como un espacio de transición. En *El laberinto del fauno* lo liminal en lo fantástico es el espacio intermedio entre dos mundos, géneros y narrativas.

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ithout any exaggerations, and taking into account Spain’s history over the course of the twentieth century, we can certainly assert that its most traumatic event was undoubtedly its bloody and turbulent Civil War (1936-1939). If, according to Antonio Gómez López-Quiñones, there was in the seventies a “Pact of Historical Amnesia,” nowadays we continue to find numerous representations that deal with the war and its painful consequences, both in film and in fiction, perhaps in part “because the war is no longer a threat” (1).¹ It is well known that since the country passed the Historical Memory Law in 2007, proposed by the Socialist Party, this process of remembrance has also accelerated. And now the law recognizes the victims on both sides of the Spanish Civil War and the victims of the dictatorship of General Francisco Franco. This necessary process of recognition and reconciliation with Spain’s shattered past rapidly begins to speak for the more than one hundred thousand people who were killed over the Francoist period and those who went into exile during his dictatorship.²

As survivors of the Spanish Civil War are just about to disappear, Mexican film director Guillermo del Toro has taken the lead to reflect on this topic, both in *The Devil’s Backbone* 2001 and in *Pan’s Labyrinth* 2006. Consistently, and particularly since the beginning of his career as a film director, Del Toro has had a special interest in the Spanish Civil War not only because Mexico opened its doors to a great number of exiled Republicans, but especially because those stories of exile and migration, of displacement and traumatic memory affected him as a child.³ Those of us familiar with his film productions on this topic would agree with the author when he asserts that both of his Spanish Civil War
movies are indeed “mirror sisters” reflecting on two different periods of the same conflict. In an effort to give us the “whole picture,” he sets *The Devil’s Backbone* right at the end of the war in 1939 and *Pan’s Labyrinth* during the postwar period in 1944. This filmic timeline invites us to reconsider the war and its direct aftermath, in order to visualize how much the world had changed during the first five years of the outbreak. Del Toro revisits the Spanish Civil War as one of those wars that never ended. Precisely because the war was not fully resolved, Del Toro and other film and fiction writers continue to revisit this traumatic moment, if not to change it, at least to make sense of it and, most importantly, to prevent history from repeating certain patterns of violence.

Del Toro’s choice to rearticulate history’s most unpleasant moments has distinguished him among other filmmakers. Through the clever use of the fantastic genre, and at a time when fantasy and horror films are extremely popular and continue to attract audiences of all ages, he amalgamates history and fiction. The unprecedented success of his horror fairy tales have a lot to do with the fact that Del Toro has twice employed a child protagonist in charge of assimilating the war and its devastating effects. This characteristic alone immediately associates *The Devil’s Backbone* and *Pan’s Labyrinth* with other films in which children are in charge of reconstructing historical memory and trauma, such as the Spanish films, *The Spirit of the Beehive* (1973), *Butterfly* (1999) or *Carol’s Journey* (2002). And yet, as Tracie Lukasiewicz argues: “despite its realist roots, *Pan’s Labyrinth* probably attracts its audience through its parallel story of fairy tale fantasy” (77).

In view of these particularities, this essay revisits how *Pan’s Labyrinth* deconstructs some of the conventions of the fantastic, especially the fairy tale genre, in order to problematize the official discourse of recent Spanish history through fiction. As Rosemary Jackson argues: “The fantastic traces the unsaid and the unseen of culture: That which has been silenced, made invisible, covered over and made absent” (4). Ofelia, the child protagonist, is the destabilizing vehicle that represents
resistance against fascism, using fantasy as a powerful tool to redefine reality. As has been argued in several critical studies and theoretical works, the inclusion of a child in films dealing with historical memory and trauma puts forth an innocent perspective that evolves and matures as it is directly or indirectly affected by history. What I am arguing here is that the child’s perspective within the genre of the fantastic serves as an optimal medium in discussing history now that Spain is dealing with an excess of memory both in film and in literature.

Although Del Toro retains some traditional formal elements of the fairy tale genre, he ultimately redefines the fantastic realm, not only as a place to escape reality. Fantasy becomes a liminal space that shows reality’s violence, in order to change it. According to Victor Turner’s anthropological theory, the liminal and liminoid phase is the intermediary period of an individual’s life (54). I adopt the concept of liminality in a broader sense as the transitional space between two worlds, genres, spaces and narratives, in which distinct categories are questioned. We can see the articulation of liminality in Del Toro’s film as we enter the time-space of a historical allegory that seeks to portray the Spanish Civil War from the fantastic (and yet real) perspective of a child.

**Another Fairy Tale?**

As is well known, *Pan’s Labyrinth* tells the story of Ofelia, a girl who comes to live with her pregnant mother’s new husband, the fascist Captain Vidal. The story is set in 1944 when the Republican Resistance still hopes to overcome Franco’s dictatorship. Concurrently, the film also narrates Ofelia’s fantasy world, in which she, as the dethroned princess Moanna, undergoes a series of tests to be able to return to her kingdom, in order to achieve immortality. As the film progresses, both worlds become part of a liminal territory, a hybrid fictional space that intertwines equal amounts of fantasy and history. As viewers, we are immediately placed within a particular historical context, as the film begins with the subtitles: “Spain, 1944: The Civil War is over. Hidden
in the mountains, armed men are still fighting the new Fascist regime. Military posts are established to exterminate the Resistance.” In the next scene, we see Ofelia lying on the floor, bleeding from her nose. The audience might be tempted to think that her death has been caused by the clash of military forces but, instead, a long camera shot takes us deep into her eyes, and a male voice takes over the narrative:

A long time ago, in the underground realm, where there are no lies or pain, there lived a princess who dreamt of the human world. She dreamt of blue skies, soft breeze and sunshine. One day, eluding her keepers, the princess escaped. Once outside, the bright sun blinded her and erased her memory. She forgot who she was and where she came from. Her body suffered cold, sickness and pain. And eventually she died …

Following the formula of the most traditional fairy tales, Del Toro uses the typical structure of “once upon a time” to juxtapose reality and fantasy. This usage of traditional elements reminds us of Vladimir Propp’s *The Morphology of the Folk Tale*, for the action of the story remains in the hands of the villain (Captain Vidal) and the heroine (Ofelia), within a folkloric tale of loss and recovery of a particular treasure or a lost kingdom. As Propp states, “[fairy tales] tend to have a due order [:] beneath their ‘amazing multiformity’ lies a ‘no less striking uniformity’” (228). Even though not every single tale contains all of these elements, they are consistently in the same order and tend to follow a similar structure. Del Toro uses a parallel premise in *Pan’s Labyrinth*, as he affirms in his commentary on the making of the film:

You can preserve the structure of a fairytale and go on deconstructing the characters or you can try to deconstruct the fairytale structure and preserve the simplicity of the characters. You cannot do both, because then the fairy tale essence, I believe, becomes unrecognizable. Since I knew I was going to be juxtaposing reality and fantasy and making the
anecdotic elements of the tale against the grain, I decided to keep the structure simple.

As we can see, Del Toro also largely follows Joseph Campbell’s hero story pattern, as exposed in *The Hero of the Thousand Faces* (1953). In the film, Ofelia is introduced to the real world in which she receives the call to adventure. She is reluctant at first but is quickly encouraged by the wise old man (the Faun) to cross the first threshold, where she will encounter various tests and a number of helpers.\(^{10}\) As she seizes the sword and begins to walk back to reality, she is inevitably transformed by her experience. The portrayal of Ophelia’s journey accurately follows Campbell’s pattern.\(^ {11}\) She encounters the Pale Man during her second and most difficult test and finally returns to her kingdom at the end of the film. Liminality, therefore, plays an important role as the entire film sits on the verge of the real and the fantastic.

**Against the Grain: Deconstructions of the Fairy Tale**

While it is certainly true at first glance that Del Toro follows the basic structure of typical fairy tales, he constantly plays with the meaning of these elements and distorts our expectations. This is evident, for instance, in his recurring use of the number three throughout the film, where we find that three women are the main characters — the aforementioned Ofelia, together with Carmen, her mother, and Mercedes, her nanny; three are the tests that the protagonist undergoes, and three are the thrones that we find at the end. As we continue watching the film, however, it becomes clear that Del Toro uses these sets of three in order to subvert common dichotomies. What appears in the form or shape of a common fairy tale suddenly opens up a third hybrid space that not only belongs to reality or fiction, but where the two overlap.\(^ {12}\) Because of this trinity, we, as viewers, no longer try to distinguish between history and fantasy, but rather recreate a human conflict somewhere in between, in the midst of both discourses. This is, of course, something
that we often observe in various literary reconstructions of memory that create liminal spaces, but not necessarily in film, where we tend to find ourselves either in the realm of total fantasy, or fully immersed in the waters of a “real” or “more or less realistic” historic reconstruction, based on an accepted version of history. This state of liminality allows viewers to oscillate between different intertextual registers, in order to conclude that Spain’s historical discourse can only be recreated within an intermediate and ambivalent space.

Del Toro’s singularity, therefore, remains in the fact that he retains some of the archetypes of traditional folk tales but simultaneously deconstructs their content. If we take a closer look at the film, we could in fact argue that he uses some of the conventions of the so-called New Historical Novel to revisit the Spanish Civil War and its aftermath. As Jane Hanley states in her study on fantasy and power in Del Toro’s *Pan’s Labyrinth* “*El laberinto* most nearly approaches what Maccallum terms ‘historiographic metafiction,’ where the reformed and disobedient fairy tale interrogates the narrative of the past” (38). The implicit and rather sophisticated questioning of the past is successful, then, because it is accomplished through the eyes of a child, through the perspective of someone who does not always understand war or its underpinnings, but nonetheless suffers its consequences, indiscriminate violence, and inevitable outcome.

Throughout the film Del Toro creates a hybrid narrative which, from the perspective of a child, draws on various intertextual elements to portray history as a postmodern series of narratives. Since intertextuality is one of the defining characteristics of the New Historical Novel, “constructed as a mosaic of quotations and the absorption and transformation of another” (Menton 24), *Pan’s Labyrinth* could easily be interpreted as a new historical representation of the Spanish Civil War composed with traces from *Alice in Wonderland*, and *The Wizard of Oz*, as it also pays a tribute to Goya (the Pale Monster), the Pre-Raphaelites, and the symbolists painters. This collage of visual texts
and intertexts reaffirms the creation of a legitimate third liminal space in *Pan’s Labyrinth*, where the past is not only successfully revived but, more importantly, questioned, contested and problematized. When reflecting on this particularity, Del Toro confirms in his commentary that the film is “hybrid from a generic point of view: I’ve always preferred genres to be mixed. Like combining horror with a historical narrative, for example. For me, *Pan’s Labyrinth* is therefore a drama rooted in a context of war, with fairytale and mythological elements grafted on.”

Not coincidentally, this hybridity serves as a metaphor to understand the ambivalent significance of fantasy. On the one hand, it is an escape for the protagonist; but on the other, the cruelty of reality permeates fantasy. One cannot live without the other. Paul Julian Smith summarizes this relationship noting that “Del Toro uses mise-en scene in such a way as to reinforce rather than to reduce the horrors of history” (3). This is most obvious when we consider that the horrors of history are revealed through the experience of a child, but we can also see this ambivalence through the character of the Faun, the androgynous figure who becomes younger as the film progresses. The Faun, therefore, is the incarnation of liminality that is in constant change, “an ambiguous figure” that also reinforces the film’s third space (Gavela-Ramos 191). In many ways, and because he confuses the audience about his true intentions, the Faun represents the ambivalence of fantasy in the film, which may be understood as a mental refuge and also as a reinforcement of reality’s violence.

This reconfiguration of fantasy as more real than reality allows us to see history through a different critical lens. By using the historically marginalized genre of the fairy tale, the Civil War is rearticulated with new undertones that educate the audience about Spain’s most traumatic episodes. The fantastic device attracts a wider audience. After all, historical facts are simply that. Through a well-crafted interplay between fantasy and reality, however, Ofelia’s fairy tale surprises us when we least expect it. And just when we think that we have entered a
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child’s wonderland or a fantastical world of wizards, the story becomes tainted with inexplicable violence, so as to echo the horrors of the past.

At the beginning of the film, there is a clear separation between history and the fantastic sphere that Ofelia creates in order to escape from a cruel reality imposed by her new father, Captain Vidal. At first, all the scenes belonging to the war’s historical reality appear in dark and cold colors, while those associated with fantasy are presented with warm colors. Since the reality of the Spanish Civil War and its fatal consequences was evidently “darker,” Del Toro represents it through a series of straight lines versus the warm golden colors and the round shapes of the fantasy world. As the film progresses, though, Ofelia’s fantasy begins to manipulate reality, and she takes control of it. The fantasy-colored palette suddenly affects her real world. As Linda Hutcheon points out in regards to postmodern enterprises of metafiction: “Knowing translates into telling, and it is this translation precisely that obsess[es] postmodern fiction” (89). In Pan’s Labyrinth, the historical context as a form of knowledge is “translated” through the terrifying fairy tale that traps Ofelia. The historical facts first take place in the world of fantasy, but as the film progresses, the fictional discourse becomes a stronger reality.

Being faithful to the tripartite structure of traditional folklore tales, Del Toro transgresses the realm of fantasy first to reflect reality, and then to manipulate it. As we have seen, at the beginning of the film the two worlds are completely differentiated, and Ofelia acts as a disobedient Cinderella. As Laura Hubner points out “Ofelia disobeys throughout the film: she refuses to call Vidal ‘father,’ she ventures into the woods and returns to the labyrinth. Finally she disobeys her step-father… and disobeys the faun by not handing over the baby and she says ‘no’ to Vidal after he takes the baby” (6). Later, as she undergoes the three tests assigned by the Faun, fantasy begins to foreshadow reality and finally subverts it. In short, what occurs in the real world, appears later in Ofelia’s fantasy world. The magic link to both worlds is provided by
Vidal’s key, which is later stolen by Mercedes so that the rebels can get more weapons to continue their fight.

Ofelia’s second task follows the same filmic structure, in which a scene in the real world is later reflected in the fantasy world. We observe this when Ofelia enters the Pale Man’s dining room to obtain a dagger, but she must not eat or drink from the feast table. In agreement with the structure of classic fairy tales, there are three doors, of which she must choose one. Ofelia disobeys the Fairy’s instructions and opens a different door. She gets what she needs, but her disobedience betrays her when she reaches for a grape. Consequently, the Pale Man awakens and attempts to kill her. As Del Toro reflects in his commentary: “It is very important that disobedience has different meanings in the tale. She always remains true to herself. She doesn’t distrust her nature and instincts.” Crafted from the perspective of a child, this scene mirrors reality. A few scenes before, Captain Vidal has a banquet with several supporters of fascism, such as the priest and other members of the army, and he appears as a mirror image of the pale, blind man. He is, in other words, a blunt representation of fascism, a monster having no vision.

At the beginning, the book of crossroads guides Ofelia in her tests, but right before the third task fantasy foreshadows what will happen in reality. Ofelia, for example, is able to see her mother’s death. Once she is in charge of fantasy, she begins to change reality. The key that Ofelia needs to open the door in order to get the dagger is the same one that in reality opens the millhouse door to save the rebels. Likewise, the piece of chalk that she uses to save herself from the Pale Man is also the one that she uses to fight Captain Vidal at the end of her life. As the movie progresses, the two worlds are inevitably intertwined in a liminal third space, and they ultimately produce a single horrendous outcome.

**Fantasy, Fascism and Spaces of Resistance**

As fantasy imposes itself as a tool of resistance in *Pan’s Labyrinth,*
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it also represents the counterpart of fascism, which is the total lack of fantasy and imagination. Captain Vidal represents a cold reality while all the rebellious characters in the film — such as the Doctor, Mercedes, or the militia forces that hide in the forest — belong to the mythical space of fantasy, where salvation is possible. In fact, only from this liminal space are the militia forces able to find against fascism. This can be seen from the very beginning of the film, when Ofelia appears in a car with her mother. As she reads a fairy tale, her mother feels sick, and the car must stop. Moved by her own fantasy or by the reality that blurs the lines between the real and the fantastic, Ofelia sees a small flying creature and follows it until she finds a statue with a missing eye. When she goes back to the car, her mother warns her, “Fairy tales? You’re too old to be filling your head with such nonsense.” The fantasy behind this passage signals hidden truths about the war and its costs. The statue symbolizes Spain’s lack of vision in that moment, as if the country refused to see any alternatives to an oppressive government. Metaphorically speaking, only those who can find fantasy in reality, or those who are able to distinguish fantasy’s potential to change reality, will be able to resist fascism and what it conveys. If we follow this reasoning, Ofelia’s mother is unable to survive the war’s chaos precisely because she does not believe in fantasy and its liberating powers.

In many ways, then, Ofelia represents a spirit of resistance against fascism’s lack of imagination, a particularity that she shares with other rebellious characters in the film, such as Mercedes’s brother and the other militia rebels who take refuge in the forest and symbolically belong to the world of fantasy. These characters hide in caves and, curiously, every time they appear in the frame are surrounded by the same fairy dust found around the Faun or the fairies. They live in the forest that stands as a magical place, governed by fantasy, which in turn makes us think that they all represent the symbolic triumph against fascism. Speaking of this, Del Toro admits in his commentary: “I was interested in seeing fascism, which is the absolute lack of imagination,
the absolute lack of choice and the most masculine expression of power.” This lack of imagination is embodied by the counterpart of the militias, Captain Vidal. Unlike the rebellious characters, he never leaves room for improvisation and the pocket watch with the cracked dial becomes a leitmotif throughout the film of his obsession with time and lack of choice. He is obsessed with details and loses perspective.

Vidal’s lack of imagination becomes more apparent when he does not catch the militia hidden in the forest because he is unable to see the fantasy in reality. Two key scenes embody this. At the end of the film, Ofelia is locked in the attic and must leave in order to save her newborn brother. She escapes using the same chalk that in the world of fantasy allows her to draw a door to the Pale Man’s room. This time that very same chalk gives her the opportunity to escape from the attic, as she runs to the labyrinth with Vidal’s newborn baby. When the Faun appears, Ofelia talks to him. However, when Vidal enters the scene, we realize that he is not able to see the magical creature. As a symbol of fascism, Vidal has no imagination and does not understand that fiction has the power to create another reality.

Carmen, Ofelia’s mother, seems to be trapped in a similar scenario when Ofelia is mesmerized by the creature that poses on the blind statue, and cries “look mom, a fairy, I saw a fairy!” Carmen will not participate in her fantasy world. She is only obsessed with Ofelia’s clean shoes that now appear “covered in mud.” This difference between Ofelia and her mother continues throughout the film until just before Carmen’s death. When Ofelia foresees her mother’s death in the book of crossroads, she seeks help from the Faun, and he tells her to put a mandrake underneath her mother’s bed so she will feel better and not have a miscarriage. When Carmen finds out what her daughter has done, however, she throws the mandrake into the fire and refuses to believe in the power of fiction, and she reprimands Ofelia, “As you get older, you’ll see that life isn’t like your fairy tales. The world is a cruel place.” Ofelia refuses to believe this, but Carmen then grabs the girl by
the shoulders, shakes her and cries right before she dies: “Fantasy does nothing for you, me or anyone else!” Thus, her words dethrone Ofelia’s fantasy in a Bakhtinian sense.

In the very last scene, we hear the voice-over narrating the fairy tale moral and reiterating once again the power of fiction:

And it is said that the Princess went back to her father’s kingdom. And that she reigned with justice and a kind heart for many centuries. And that she was loved by all her subjects […] And, like most of us, she left behind small traces of her time on earth, visible only to those that know where to look...

If we pay attention to these words, only those who know where to look for reality’s fantasy are able to resist fascism and may change history.

This ending is indeed metaphorical, since Spain, as we all know, dealt with Franco’s dictatorship until 1975. As Hanley explains, “Viewers, however, understand that though the fairy tale ‘villain’ has suffered defeat, the historical moment is located at the beginning of a long period of Fascist oppression and that its opponents are faced with the prospect of a lifetime of suffering and subtle resistance or a lifetime of exile” (38). Even though Spain was about to suffer thirty-one more years of Franco’s dictatorship, 1944 was a very symbolic year for the resistance against fascism. In the same way that Ofelia and the rebels fight against Vidal, the Republican resistance in Spain helped the Allies in the Battle of Normandy and still hoped to be saved by them. Although they are forgotten in the middle of the struggle, Ofelia’s agency through fantasy still symbolizes alternative ways to examine the course of history.

The child dies when Vidal follows her to the labyrinth and takes her brother from her. Her death, however, evokes a rebirth in the world of fantasy, the one that really matters as it represents a higher plane of
reality. Del Toro’s structure mimics the cyclical nature of history: the film ends where it begins, with Ofelia’s death. In that world of fantasy, the child protagonist finds immortality as Princess Moanna, and her magical rebirth represents a wishful attempt to reinsert the rebels’ resistance, even if we know the war’s true outcome.

Given Spain’s current excess of historical memory, it is not surprising to see that fantasy can be used as an effective deconstructionist tool to revisit historical discourse. Del Toro uses this contestatory fairy tale to show Ofelia’s resistance as a metaphor for the ongoing struggle against fascism and violence during the post-war years. Fantasy tropes deconstruct the fact-fiction dichotomy, and Del Toro is able to rewrite the historical trauma that still haunts the Spanish Peninsula. In Pan’s Labyrinth, history becomes another postmodern historical narrative that crafts its own discourse relying on polyphony, anachronisms, intertextuality, dialogism and the Borgesian motifs of the labyrinth and the mirror. With these tools, Del Toro empowers the child’s figure as a liminal vehicle of transformation. The importance of Ofelia is twofold. On the one hand, she represents the innocent child figure who is able to look at fantasy and understand it as a coherent reality. On the other hand, she becomes the agent of resistance and disobedience who is able to change reality while remaining true to herself. Thus, Del Toro’s film exercises liminality as a social transition and invites us to remember history in alternative ways.

With this double-sided narrative style, Pan’s Labyrinth participates in a democratic effort of remembrance that has replaced, since the late eighties and early nineties, the “Silence Pact” of the Transition years. In their many forms, today we see multiple cultural representations of the Civil War, especially those that try to recover the memory of those who lost the war, of those who did not appear in the Francoist Official History. Not for nothing Andreas Huyssen states: “As we approach the end of the twentieth century and with it the end of the millennium, our gaze turns backwards ever more frequently in an attempt to take stock
and to assess where we stand in the course of time. Simultaneously, there is a deepening sense of crisis often articulated in the reproach that our culture is terminally ill with amnesia” (1).

Del Toro’s films, particularly *Pan’s Labyrinth* and *The Devil’s Backbone*, remind us of the power of memory and the need for remembrance. The director uses a specific historical moment, but his message is universal. In this fashion, he refutes fascist ideals and their personification in contemporary societies. Del Toro’s *Pan’s Labyrinth* was released exactly five years after *The Devil’s Backbone*. In those five years the world changed tremendously with the September 11 attacks of 2001 and, as Del Toro states, “Everything I had to say about brutality, innocence, childhood and war changed dramatically.” Accordingly, his film transcends national borders and specific historical periods, in order to reflect on two fundamental themes of today’s world: choice and disobedience. Ofelia’s journey, as we have seen, symbolizes the birth of a nation, of a world that cannot forget, and as such, it stands in opposition to historical amnesia.

**Notes**

1 For further analysis, see the works of Joan Ramón Resina and Cristina Moreiras-Menor.

2 In his book *La política del miedo*, Santiago Vega Sombría says that at least 465,000 Spaniards arrived to France and 200,000 to Mexico.


4 For more on horror films in the marketplace refer to Lázaro-Reboll’s work. The author examines the marketing strategies employed in Spain and the US to discuss *Pan’s Labyrinth*.

5 Only Del Toro’s *The Devil’s Backbone* and *Pan’s Labyrinth* can be considered fantastic films.

6 I use Rosemary Jackson’s definition of fantasy as a literary mode from which a number of related genres emerge, such as fairy tales, horror and science fiction.
7 See Karen Lury’s *The Child in Film: Tears, Fears and Fairy Tales* (2010). This study cleverly questions why the figure of the child has such a persistent impact in today’s cinema.
8 Currently, one of the most explored topics in Spanish film and literature is the Civil War. I refer to today’s excess of memory in comparison to the historical amnesia of the Franco regime.
9 For a more detailed study of Propp’s and Joseph Campbell’s elements in *Pan’s Labyrinth*, see Thomas Deveny’s critical article “Once Upon a Time in Spain in 1944.”
10 The second step in the story pattern happens when Ofelia visits the Faun, and he tells her to pass three different tests.
11 Interestingly, in his article “Rethinking the monomyth,” John Perlich shows how Del Toro’s film reverts to Campbell’s idea of the traditional male hero.
12 In view of this evidence, Lucasewicz considers that *Pan’s Labyrinth* can be an example of “neomagical realism.”
13 For more on intertextuality in *Pan’s Labyrinth* see Kristine Kotecki’s “Approximating the Hypertextual.”

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