J. A. BAYONA'S ECSTATIC TRUTH

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to seek the ecstatic truth that lies in the Spanish filmmaker, J. A. Bayona.

In order to do so we have analyzed his four films, *The Orphanage* (2007), *The Impossible* (2012), *A Monster Calls* (2016), and *Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom* (2018), as well as the first episode of the television series *Penny Dreadful* (2014).

Our perspective has been a psychological one. Bayona defines his first three films as a trilogy on the mother-child relationship and death. Thus, we have studied his films from the point of view of Freud's theory of the unconscious and the primal scene.

Our research shows that Bayona's films may be failing in trying to deal with two unconscious conflicts: 1) his need to detach from an archaic mother figure; and 2) his need to get rid of the anguish caused by the possibility of not being born, which is also related to the first conflict.

Keywords: *Cinema, art, Bayona, psychology, unconscious, psychoanalysis.*

Introduction

The question of truth is central to filmmaker J. A. Bayona. According to him, "there are only two kind of cinema, and they are not good and bad cinema, commercial or artistic, but —simply — honest and dishonest cinema. What is the director telling? Is it something that comes from his guts?" (García Ramón, 2015).

Another filmmaker, Werner Herzog, in his speech "On the Absolute, the Sublime, and the Ecstatic Truth" (Herzog & Weigel, 2010), understands truth as the correspondence of a statement with a reality. Thus, if the statement is sincere, the question about truth becomes the question about reality.

Some realities may be confirmed by facts, but others, maybe the most important ones, cannot. That is the case of the realities about which artists try to make statements in their works — "in the fine arts, in music, literature and cinema, it is possible to reach a deeper stratum of truth, a poetic, ecstatic truth", says Herzog. Or, to put it in Bayona's words, "sometimes, fiction explains truth better that reality itself" (De Fez, 2016, p. 165).

Besides, according to Herzog, these ecstatic truths can be sublime, religiously rapturous, as in *The Great Ecstasy of Woodcarver* Steiner (Herzog, 1974), or horrifying, sinister, as in *Lessons of Darkness* (Berriff, Herzog, & Stipetić, 1992).

What is the nature of these realities that cannot be confirmed by facts? Herzog, in seeking an answer, refers to the etymology of the Greek word for truth, "alêtheia", that means "not hidden", "revealed", "disclosed".

If we look at human nature, we find that these deeper realities that art can disclose may be related to the unconscious mind, which is "hidden" in the depth of the human mind. This unconscious reality is revealed by the artist, and its power lies in the way it is shared with his audiences.

What then is the unconscious mind? How has it been studied?

The unconscious mind

Cognitive science has studied the unconscious as subliminal information processing in two ways: "the preconscious analysis of stimuli prior to the products of the analysis being furnished to conscious awareness, and skill-acquisition research involving the gain in efficiency of processes with practice over time until they become subconscious" (Bargh & Wilson, 2008, p. 74).

According to Bargh and Wilson (2008), the cognitive approach seems inappropriate, due to several reasons:

> First, this operational definition is both unnatural and unnecessarily restrictive. Subliminal stimuli do not occur naturally—they are by definition too weak or brief to enter conscious awareness. Thus, it is unfair to measure the capability of the unconscious in terms of how well it processes subliminal stimuli because unconscious (like conscious) processes evolved to deal and respond to naturally occurring (regular strength) stimuli; assessing the unconscious in terms of processing subliminal stimuli is analogous to evaluating the intelligence of a fish based on its behavior out of water. (p. 77)

Although these authors explore other approaches — notably the social psychology approach, that understands the unconscious as "mental processes of which the individual is unaware", closer to the traditional approach in Darwin or Freud — , and even if they point out the flaws of Freud's theory of the unconscious — "the data from which Freud developed the model were individual case studies involving abnormal thought and behavior not the rigorous scientific experimentation on generally applicable principles of human behavior that inform the psychological models" — they affirm the preeminence of Freud's theory of the unconscious: "Freud's model

of the unconscious as the primary guiding influence over daily life, even today, is more specific and detailed than any to be found in contemporary cognitive or social psychology" (Bargh & Wilson, 2008, p. 73).

Freud's theory of the unconscious

Freud (1940) distinguishes two types of contents in the human mind: conscious and unconscious. And, within the unconscious, he distinguishes between the preconscious and the unconscious proper.

He defines the unconscious as what is not conscious. He does not explicitly define the conscious, "there is no need to characterize what we call 'conscious': it is the same as the consciousness of philosophers and of everyday opinion" (p. 16). But he indicates that "consciousness is in general a highly fugitive state. What is conscious is conscious only for a moment" (p. 16).

In the unconscious, he defines the preconscious: "everything unconscious […] that can […] easily exchange the unconscious state for the conscious one, is therefore preferably described as 'capable of becoming conscious' or as preconscious" (p. 17); and the unconscious proper as "other psychical processes and psychical material which have no such easy access to becoming conscious but must be inferred, recognized and translated into conscious form in the manner described" (p. 17).

Regarding the importance of the unconscious proper contents to cure some psychological pathologies, as he observed in some of his first patients via hypnosis, he develops a therapy — psychoanalysis— aiming to gain access to this content. But there are "strong resistances" to do so. However, these resistances are "a sine qua non of normality", as he finds that in psychotic states it happens to a large extent that "material which is ordinarily unconscious can transform itself [spontaneously] into preconscious material and then becomes conscious" (p. 18).

In normality, these resistances can be overcome when they are relaxed. "A relaxation of resistances […], with a consequent pushing forward of unconscious material, takes place regularly in the state of sleep, and thus brings about a necessary precondition for the construction of dreams" (Freud, 1940, p. 18).

Thus, Freud finds that it is possible to gain access to the unconscious of an individual studying his dreams, verbal slips, hypnosis, psychotic states, repetitive behavior, phantasies, and day dreaming.

After all, Freud, for whom the unconscious is one of the main sources of human behavior, is close to the ideas of the Amazonian natives whose beliefs —"ordinary life is only an illusion behind which lies the reality of dreams" (Herzog & Weigel, 2010, p. 7) — Herzog chose as an example to illustrate realities beyond factual.

Phantasies and primal scenes

In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud (1900) found that dreams are the fulfillment of a wish. Several authors have compared films with dreams. Filmmaker Orson Wells said about it: "a film is a dream. A dream can be vulgar, flat and amorphous; it may be a nightmare. But a dream is never a lie" (Bessy, 1963, p. 101). In this way, films can be analyzed as the dreams, or nightmares, of its author.

But there is another manifestation of the unconscious very close to dreams, what Freud called phantasies: "I cannot pass over the relation of phantasies to dreams. Our dreams at night are nothing else than phantasies like these, as we can demonstrate from the interpretation of dreams" (Freud, 1908, p. 8).

Phantasies are created by the subject in childhood. They can be conscious, preconscious or unconscious, and frequently they constitute the motivation of child play. When the child becomes an adult, they are maintained as phantasies and daydreams, and Freud

highlights its importance in artistic creativity (Freud, 1908).

This point of view is shared, for example, by filmmaker David Lynch (The West End Magazine | 4101-TV, 2015):

> I've never really gotten many ideas from dreaming – nighttime dreaming – but I love daytime dreaming. I love to sit in a chair and dream about things, and go on a daydream and sometimes ideas come when I do that. I always say I love the idea of dream logic – how dreams can go, and how even though they're very abstract, you can understand them. So this dream logic is something I really like to think about.
>
> Up to a certain point of their psychological evolution, boys and girls share the same path, but then they diverge. As we are studying the phantasies of a male filmmaker, in this article, we will focus on the path followed by the boys.

As Laplanche and Pontalis explain (1988), Freud understands phantasies as the *mise-en-scene* of a forbidden desire "that is always present in the actual formation of the wish". That is, they are "still scripts (scenarios) of organized scenes which are capable of dramatization usually in a visual form" (p. 318).

Freud identifies four phantasies as the most typical —intra-uterine existence, primal scene, castration, and seduction—, and he calls them "primal phantasies" (*Urphantasien*).

According to González Requena, the most important of them is what Freud calls the "primal scene", that is, the sexual intercourse between the child's parents, which the child has either observed, or imagined.

When the subject creates the primal scene phantasy, he is at the stage of primary identification with the image of his mother or close to it. He does not see himself as something different from this image. Thus, authors have used different terms to refer to this mother-figure, as the archaic mother (Kristeva), or the primordial imago (González Requena). This image is omnipotent for the child, as he receives everything from her and her absence leads him to anguish.

So, one of the main problems in a human life is:

> how can the self differentiate itself from the primordial imago in which it is gestated? To answer this question is the same as answering this other one: how does reality arise in which the self can locate itself in a place different to her, once she is no longer the omnipotent imago in which it originally recognized itself?, What is needed is the act of a third party, someone able to castrate her —and castrate the self— from that omnipotence. That is the task of the father. (González Requena, 2011, p. 347)
>
> Freud found that, typically, almost always, in the script of the primal scene, the father was the aggressor. Thus, it is told by the child as "my father beats my mother", or, as he identifies himself with his mother, he typically tells it as "my father beats me". This fantasy is often linked to sexual arousal, as Freud points out in *A Child is Being Beaten* (Freud, 1919).

In this phantasy, the father castrates the mother, she loses her phallus, and the child experiences this castration, because he is related to the primordial imago via primary identification. This way, the father ends with the omnipotence of the primordial imago, which enables the child to become and individual, to be born distinctively into reality.

Additionally, the experience of the threat of castration is intolerable for the child's conscious, and he represses it deep in his mind. This way, he founds his unconscious mind (González Requena, 2011).

But what González Requena finds is that there is a second version of this primal scene, in which it is the mother who is the aggressor. Actually, Freud had encountered cases with this second phantasy, but he had regarded them as exceptions, or even as another form of the scene "my father beats me", rejecting "my mother beats me" as a genuine primal scene.

González Requena, on the contrary, studying films, finds that the phantasy "my mother beats me", nowadays may not be an exception as in Freud's times, but it "may have become a massive datum in our contemporary western society and its increasing and worrying unease" (González Requena, 2011, p. 356).

In short, in the primal scene phantasy[1] "my mother beats me" we find: the subject, the female-mother aggressor (the phantasm), who is omnipotent, keeps her phallus, the one assumed by the child before perceiving her lack of it, and kills and castrates the father. The subject remains linked to primary identification with his primordial imago, that later will be his mother, and, in extreme cases, he is unable to found his unconscious, becoming, thus, psychotic.

"Mummy"

Many scenes and characters in contemporary films are related to the primal scene in its version "my mother beats me" — *Alien, The Brood, The Hunger, Jaws, The Exorcist, Sisters, Basic Instinct, Gone Girl, Maleficent*, or *Psycho*, among many—as several authors have noted (Creed, 1993; Schubart, 2007; González Requena, 2011). Notably, González Requena studied the close relation between Alfred Hitchcock's and Luis Buñuel's filmographies regarding this type of phantasy.

In this study, we are going to focus on the filmography of Juan Antonio García Bayona. He has directed four feature films: *The Orphanage* (*TO*) (Atienza & Bayona, 2007), *The Impossible* (*TI*) (Atienza & Bayona, 2012), *A Monster Calls* (*AMC*) (Atienza & Bayona, 2016), and *Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom* (*JWFK*) (Spielberg & Bayona, 2018). The latter was released while this study was being written. He has also directed the first two episodes of the television series *Penny Dreadful*, "Night Work" (Mendes & Bayona, 2014a), and "Séance" (Mendes & Bayona, 2014b).

So what are Bayona's films about?

If we look at the opening of the story, we find some motifs[2] in his first three films.

In *The Orphanage* (Atienza & Bayona, 2007), after the prologue and the title credits, the story begins with a voice crying in the darkness.

SIMON (child): Mummy! Mummy! MUMMYYYYY!

CARLOS (father): I'll go, it's my turn. (he goes back to sleep)
LAURA (mother): I'm coming!
Laura goes to Simon's room.
LAURA: Simón!
Simon takes the blanket from his head, so we can see his face.

In *The Impossible* (Atienza & Bayona, 2012), after an introduction about the *tsunami* of 2004, we move to a plane where we see a family. Firstly, there is a discussion between Henry (the father), and Maria (the mother), who are seated by their youngest son, Simon. There is some turbulence and their second son, Thomas, who is afraid, comes to his mother from the back of the plane. He says that his older brother, Lucas, won't talk to him, something that could help to sooth his fear of the turbulence. Maria gives him her seat, and she goes to the back of the plane with Lucas.

MARIA: Lucas. (Lucas has his headphones on and does not answer her) Lucas!
Lucas takes his headphones off and turns to Maria.
MARIA: You know you could try being a bit nicer to your brother; he's just scared.
LUCAS: So what else is new? Everything scares him.
WAITRESS: Buckle!
Maria is scared by the turbulence.

> LUCAS: I wonder who he takes after, though.

In *A Monster Calls* (Atienza & Bayona, 2016), a boy, Conor, wakes up in the middle of the night. He is suffering from a nightmare in which we see him holding his mother's finger so she won't fall into a crevice, in a cemetery, while the earth is trembling. A monster comes to calm him down.

> CONOR: Mum! Mum!
> He lets his mum's finger slip away, so she falls into the crevice.
> Conor sits up in his bed.
> CONOR: How does this story begin?
> MONSTER: It begins like so many stories. With a boy. Too old to be a kid. Too young to be a man. And a nightmare.
> Thus, in these three film openings we find several motifs: the characters, a mother and her son, the emotion of fear, and death, in the case of *AMC*. The first word uttered in two of them is "mummy/mum". While, in *TI*, the first word is "God" (Oh, God).

We can also see some differences. Regarding who is afraid, in *TO* and *AMC* it is the protagonist boy who is afraid. In second one, *TI*, it is the mother of the protagonist, Lucas, who is afraid. But there is another boy who is afraid, Lucas' younger brother, Thomas.

Regarding who has the role of calming a boy down, in *TO* it is the mother who goes to calm her son down, while the father stays sleeping in bed; in *TI* Lucas laughs at his mother's fear, and in *AMC* it is a monster who calms Conor down.

The three scenes happen in an enclosed space, but, in *TO* and *AMC*, they happen in the boy's room, while in *TI*, it occurs inside a plane, while flying.

We also can see some similarities in *TO* and *AMC*. Both belong to the fantasy genre, if we assume their ambiguity and that they are set in a gothic-like atmosphere, with dark colors, in contrast to *TI*, a realistic story set in an exotic location, full of light and with a blinding sun.

Thus, after looking at the motifs and the differences, we can say that these three films are about mother-son relationships, as well as about fear or death, as Bayona acknowledged after finishing *AMC*:

> In a short time I have made three intense films which are tightly linked. *The Orphanage, The Impossible* and *A Monster* [*Calls*] make a trilogy about the mother-son relationship and the death. I have finished a cycle. Now I am going to shoot the *Jurassic World* sequel, what is to say: I'm going to stop and have fun for a while, I need to relax. (Suárez, 2016).

It could be argued that he is not the screenwriter of his films. Sergio G. Sánchez is the screenwriter of *TO* and *TI*, and Patrick Ness wrote *AMC*. But Bayona is the epitome of *auterism*, as his Director of Photography, Óscar Faura, confesses: "Guillermo del Toro once told me that '[…] if you are not on top of everything nobody will be, because nobody knows the film better than you'. And nobody follows better that advice than Jota [Bayona], because […] he lives for his movies, he looks out for absolutely everything, even the cover of the dvd." (De Fez, 2012, p. 107)

Moreover, if we see the opening of the first episode of the television series *Penny Dreadful*, "Night Work" (Mendes & Bayona, 2014a), we find that it follows the same motifs. The series is set in Victorian London. A mother and her little daughter are sleeping in the same bed. The mother goes to the bathroom and is abducted by a something that the audience cannot see. Later we will learn that she has been dismembered. Her daughter wakes up and goes to the bathroom to look for her mother.

LITTLE GIRL: Mum?... Mum?... Mum?

When she opens the door, she sees the monster and screams.

> Again, we see a mother and her child, as well as fear/death. And "Mum" is the word that opens the episode and the series.

So, what happens between mothers and their children in Bayona's films? How is the aggressive mother and primary identification represented in them?

The Orphanage: "There was a lighthouse"

The subject is the protagonist, Simon, a 5 years old child. The aggression from the mother is explicit: the inciting event that will end in Simon's death is Laura hitting Simon when he wants to show her the space of his invisible friend, Thomas, instead of going down to the garden where the opening party of the orphanage is taken place.

But the mother-aggressor character is reinforced when Laura kills Simon, involuntarily and indirectly. She locks him in the basement, unaware the he is there, and he later dies falling down the basement stairs.

There is another character where the mother-aggressor resonates, namely Benigna, an old social worker at the orphanage before it was acquired by Laura and Carlos. She was the mother of Tomas, a child with a disfigured face who wore a mask so the other children would not make fun of him. His secret room is in the basement, where his drawings are all over the walls. Tomas died after the rest of the children at the orphanage took his mask off inside a cave by the sea to see if he would come out unmasked. He didn't, and he drowned when the tide came in. Benigna killed them all in retaliation.

Therefore, Benigna is a mother aggressor, as well as an archaic mother figure, since she is an old woman at the time of the story. The goriest and most horrifying image of the film is the open and disjointed mouth of Benigna when she is accidentally killed by Carlos, who runs over her.

The mouth is the first erotic organ for the human being, as it is related to the feeding of the baby by its mother. Then, it is not surprise that Benigna kills the orphans with poisonous food, more precisely with a cake, which ties in with the fact that the rejection of a cake is what leads Laura to beat Simon in the opening party, and, in the end, to kill him.

The phallic condition of the mother resonates in the phallic shape of the lighthouse near the orphanage. In the first scene, when Simon is afraid and Laura goes to his room, he calms his childhood fears creating the illusion that the lighthouse, which can be seen through the window and has been out of order for some years, shines again. When, in the end, Laura meets Simon and the killed orphans in her death delirium, the lighthouse is working again, and its light covers the whole scene over and over.

In the denouement of the story, Laura kills herself and enables the reunion of mother and child, which reenacts primary identification in death. The father of the story, a secondary character, stays eternally out of the mother-son relationship after they are both dead.

It should be noted that the identification between Laura and Bayona himself was actually in the prologue of the story. When Laura is going to be given in adoption, we see her file and date of birth, May 27, 1975. Bayona was born on May 9, 1975.

The Impossible: "I think it was his Dad"

The author states before the story begins, that we are going to see a true story: the survival story of a family in the *tsunami* of 2004. But, in fact, Bayona does not include a very significant part of the real story (López Díez, 2017).

Bayona decided to make *TI* after he heard the story that one of the survivors of the *tsunami*, María Belón, told in a radio interview. The climax of the story is when, in the middle of the waves, she

finds her son, Lucas. He is scared and tells his mother that they are both going to die, but María, with a very moving and confident voice, tells him that "you and I are not going to die". She repeated this as a mantra and acknowledges that it helped to keep them alive (Francino, 2007).

Surprisingly, Bayona changes her words and attitude to something completely different. After they reach a tree trunk, Lucas confesses to his mother: "I was a brave kid, mom… but I was scared". And Maria says to him: "I'm scared, too". So in such an important part of the true story, when María Belón showed all of her determination to live, Bayona changed it for a very different attitude.

As Bayona acknowledged, he didn't want to make a film about the *tsunami* itself: "this film recreates the *tsunami* to talk about the human condition, to show that moment when man faces his own *tsunami*" (De Fez, 2012, p. 17)

We may identify Lucas, the protagonist, as the subject of the film. The one the filmmaker identifies the most with, as he seems to indicate when we see him with a video camera when the family arrives to Khao Lak.

Lucas is 12 years old, older than Simon. And older than the real person the character was based upon, Lucas Álvarez Belón, who was 10 years old when he survived the *tsunami*. And Tom Holland, the actor who plays Lucas in the film, was 14-15 years old when the movie was shot. So, we see him more as an adolescent than as a child.

An important difference with *TO* is that we do not see a female aggressor character in TI. We may regard the sea as related to motherhood, as it may be related to amniotic fluid in which the fetus lives before being born, but Maria is the character who is worst beaten by the *tsunami*. It almost kills her, while her husband and sons, all males, are barely injured.

Instead of an image of a phallic woman, or some kind of fetish like the lighthouse in *TO*, what we see is an image of a "castrated" mother. In the most horrifying scene of the film, she shows a horrible injury on her leg, a part of the mother's body that Freud associates with fetishism and, thus, with castration (Freud, 1927).

Moreover, in the midpoint of the film, Lucas is confronted with the death of his mother, threatening the possibility of primary identification. He leaves her at a bed in the hospital but, when after a while he comes back, she is not there anymore. And he is told that she has died. Precisely at this moment the story of Henry looking for Maria and Lucas begins, emphasizing the importance of the father figure.

Then, in the second climax, Maria is taken to the operating room, where she may die. After she enters in it, we see what we think is Maria's dream. She is underwater and it seems that she has died. She looks at the camera, with no expression, and she is floating among dead corpses, objects and dead animals.

All of a sudden, she starts to go up and then we are confronted with one of the most iconic images of Bayona's filmography: Maria rises from the dead, outside the water, alive, with her hand up, while we hear a sinister sound.

The next image we see is Lucas suddenly waking up as if suffering from a nightmare. This juxtaposition suggests that it was not Maria's dream that we were seeing, but Lucas nightmare. What nightmare? The sinister resurrection of the mother figure. This nightmare anticipates the one that open *AMC*. And it is again his father who calms him down.

Thus, one of the main differences between *TI*, *TO* and *AMC* is that the father figure, incarnated in Henry, is not weak nor absent, but strong and active in the search for Lucas and Maria. We see the importance of the father figure for the subject in several scenes.

Accordingly, in the first climax of the film, highlighted by a moving score, Lucas meets his father, as well as his

brothers, and we see several scenes of father and son reunion. The most significant is related to the child that Maria and Lucas save after the *tsunami* waves have ceased. They hear his crying. Lucas does not want to go rescue him — we may say that he wants to be the only one with his mother— but Maria insists and they rescue him. Afterwards, we see him at the hospital, with his father and, at the end of the movie, inside the plane that will take Maria to a better hospital, Lucas' last words to his mother in the film before the plane takes off, are about that child.

> LUCAS: Mom, guess what? I saw Daniel again... He was so happy. He was in somebody's arms. I bet it was his Dad, Mom.
> MARIA: I'm so proud of you. I love you so much.

Therefore, though in *TI* we do not find a primal scene of the type "my father beats me", we also do not find a clear resonance of "my mother beats me". The mother primary figure is badly injured, the subject faces the castration of the mother figure, which is not related to omnipotence, and there is not a clear primary identification —even if in the final shot we see the whole family inside a plane, subsumed in the sea and brightness of a sun that had been associated with the mother figure at the beginning of the film (López Díez, 2017). Instead, we find a highlighted father figure, in comparison with his other films, something that seems an "impossible" task for the subject regarding the rest of Bayona's work.

A Monster Calls: "This is your room now"

The subject of the film is again a 12 year old boy, Conor.

As in *TO*, we find a weak and absent father figure, who leaves Conor to go live in another country. Bayona describes him as "a weak man, but not a bad person […] a defeated guy, who has been got over by circumstances" (De Fez, 2016, p. 21); "Conor wishes his father would be a hero, but he finds that he is a common man. He doesn't live up [to Conor's expectations], and he disappoints him" (De Fez, 2016, p. 50).

The departure of his father gives cause to the second tale told by the Monster. In it, the parson of a church, who has two daughters —doubly a father figure — is "a man of faith without faith", as the Monster says. His daughters die and Conor ends up destroying the parsonage, which we may associate with the father's house. Back in reality, he is destroying a big clock, traditionally a symbol of time linked to a father figure, as it is the act of the father that separates the child from primary identification with his mother. The fact that he is destroying his grandmother's living room also reflects Conor's resistance to go with her, but he actually thinks that he is destroying a parsonage.

Consequently, we may say that Conor's story becomes timeless, something that Bayona wanted to transmit: "An obvious characteristic of *A Monster Calls* is that its spaces are timeless: houses where objects of different periods coexist, homes that seem frozen in time, […] in a sort of temporal limbo" (De Fez, 2016, p. 43).

In *AMC*, fear of castration is related to the scene in which Harry, a classmate who is bullying Conor, threatens Conor with tearing his tongue out, followed by Hitchcockian black birds starting to fly.

We find an archaic mother figure in Conor's grandmother, who is a cold, severe and stern character; this is reflected in the ambiance of her house, where rooms are bigger than they should be to make Conor look smaller, as in an early stage of his life (De Fez, 2016, p. 105).

Conor's mum, on the contrary, is a sweet and loving character. Bayona made some changes in the script, written by the author of the novel, Patrick Ness. A significant one is that Conor loves to paint, like Bayona himself. But in the film, Conor's love for painting comes from her mother, who gave up the School of Arts to take care of her child. While in Bayona's real life it came

from his father, who painted posters for movie billboards and worked as a house painter.

We also see Conor's relationship with an archaic mother figure in one of the characters of the first story the Monster tells him. The subject of the story is an orphan Prince. He is brought by his grandfather, the King, whose wife has died. The King marries again with a woman who is said to be "an evil witch" —a representation of Conor's grandmother. When the King dies, there is a rumor that she poisoned him. Then, the Queen, his step-grandmother, wants to marry the Prince — as Conor's grandmother wants him to go to live with her. The Prince flees with his "beloved", and kills her —as Conor "kills" his mother in his nightmare— but he tells the villagers that the murderer is the Queen, who, in the end, is saved by the Monster. Thus, the story is a way to reconcile Conor with his grandmother.

The nightmare that haunts Conor is set in an old cemetery, by an old church. The content of the nightmare is that his mother is falling into a deep crevice. Conor is holding her finger, but, in the end, he lets her go. He feels guilty because he causes his mother's death.

In this case, it is a Monster, not his mother, as in *TO*, who comes to soothe him. It is a male monster, related to Conor's grandfather, who is dead, as the Monster is played by Liam Neeson, and he is also Conor's grandfather, as we see in a picture at his grandmother's house.

But male monsters may be male only in appearance (González Requena, 2011), and in this case we can see a tight relationship of the film's Monster —a tree, a yew— with the archaic mother a child primarily identifies with. The Monster was inspired by The Green Man, an old British and Celtic deity associated with wild Mother Nature before being touched by human hands, "an elemental form of the Earth, of the Universe" (De Fez, 2016, p. 75) of immense power.

Moreover, the Monster tree is related to another Monster that appears in the movie, King Kong. Bayona says that Conor is impressed by how King Kong falls from the Empire State, because it reminds him of his nightmare, that is, of how his mother dies (De Fez, 2016, p. 85), which, again, links the Monster to his mother.

The Monster, as a primary force of Nature, is omnipotent. And Conor is possessed by the omnipotence related to primary identification when, in the third and last tale, he badly injures one of his classmates, as well as when he destroys his grandmother's living room. This sensed omnipotence enables him to exert an unrestricted violence, with no limit or self-control.

In the end, Lizzie, Conor's mother, dies. And he accepts letting her go in his nightmare. Bayona explains how her death is linked to the first story: "The prince has to kill his beloved to become king, as a child has to kill his mother figure to become a man" (De Fez, 2016, p. 165).

What then becomes astonishing is the final turning point of the film. The novel, by Patrick Ness (2011) ended with Conor accepting his mother's death:

> "I don't want you to go," he said, the tears dropping from his eyes, slowly at first, then spilling like a river.
> "I know, my love," his mother said, in her heavy voice. "I know."
> He could feel the monster, holding him up and letting him stand there.
> "I don't want you to go," he said again.
> And that was all he needed to say.
> He leaned forward onto her bed and put his arm around her.
> Holding her.
> He knew it would come, and soon, maybe even this 12.07. The moment she would slip from his grasp, no matter how tightly he held on.
> But not this moment, the monster whispered, still close. Not just yet.

> Conor held tightly onto his mother.
> And by doing so, he could finally let her go."

But Bayona suggested a different ending for the film, in which Conor enters his mother's childhood room at his grandmother's house, where he finds the Monster and the three stories in her drawing block. That is where he is going to live, the place he is going to inhabit to start his life again. A reenactment of primary identification with his mother.

What we find remarkable is that this final change confirms that, even if Bayona is consciously influenced by his readings of Bettelheim's psychoanalytic interpretation of fairy tales previous to the shooting of *AMC*, he works in his films with his unconscious mind, "with his guts", with his inner truth —like a true artist, no matter how commercial his films may seem— as he contradicts his conscious explanation in his movie.

Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom: "You could be her mirror image"

This film was released in June 2018. It was produced by Steven Spielberg, one of the main references of J. A. Bayona filmmaking. Making this film, Bayona didn't have the freedom he had in his previous movies.

Maisie, a 10 year old girl, could be considered to be the main subject of the film, at least from Bayona's point of view and taking into account his previous works.

The female aggressor is found in the dinosaurs. In the beginning of the Jurassic Park series, it is stated that all the dinosaurs are female —all the animals in Jurassic Park are female. We've engineered them that way." (Kennedy, Molen, & Spielberg ,1993)—, so they can control their breeding.

In the sequels, male dinosaurs become possible. At least one of the velociraptors in *Jurassic World* (Marshall, Crowley, & Trevorrow, 2015), Charlie, is male and, in *JWFK*, the great villain, the Indoraptor, is also supposed to be male. But most of the dinosaurs in *JWFK* are supposed to be females.

Castration and female omnipotence resonate in every killing and dismembering by the dinosaurs. And it should be noted that all of the human characters that we see killed in JWFK are males. And, at the end of the movie, a male surfer is about to be eaten by a Mosasaurus, and a male lion faces certain death in the jaws of a female T-Rex.

Besides the Indoraptor, the T-Rex, and Blue, the empathetic velociraptor, there is another significant dinosaur in the story. It is the skull of a big Triceratops in the center of the library inside the Lockwood mansion. We assume that she is a female Triceratops. Not only because we assume it is one the dinosaurs of the old Jurassic Park, but because the movie relates Triceratops to motherhood, as we see mother Triceratops and her offspring in a cage at the Lockwood mansion.

The phallic horns of this Triceratops are what finally kill the Indoraptor, with the aid of Blue, in the first climax of the film.

Another image of the female aggressor is seen when Claire holds a shotgun and points it at Owen during the final fight with the Indoraptor.

Regarding primary identification, in this film we find one of the most explicit representation a sinister primary identification of Bayona's filmography in a homage shot to Hitchcock's *Psycho* (Hitchcock, 1960), in which the head and the threatening jaws of a dinosaur superimposed on Maisie's face, as Hitchcock superimposed Norman Bates' face and his mother's.

Moreover, the subject's primary identification could not be more extreme, as Maisie is a clone of her mother. Or, as his grandfather tells her: "You could be her mirror image". This reinforces the identification of Maisie with the Triceratops in the library, not only related to her mother, but to being a cloned

creature herself, and a kind of "monster".

In the second climax, in a regression of Nature caused by Maisie, the archaic female omnipotent monsters spread all over the world, transforming it into a global realm of primary identification.

"Can I wake up?"

Bayona decided to shoot *The Impossible* when he heard the story of María Belón, a survivor of the 2004 *tsunami*. As we mentioned above, even if the movie states at the beginning that it is a true story, Bayona changed a significant part of María Belon's story.

One question we may ask is what moved Bayona so much about her story to the point of abandoning the film project he was preparing at that moment. Bayona says that it was the decision of María Belón to save a child who was crying in the distance, after the *tsunami* ceased, opposing her son, who wanted to climb to a tree and leave that little child alone. "[She] convinced Lucas to come to the aid of a child that was crying for help in the distance. That gesture moved me. She decided to teach her son a lesson in love and generosity, knowing that it would probably be the last thing she did" (De Fez, 2012, p. 15)

But we think that there may be another part of María Belón's story that could have moved the filmmaker:

> At that moment [when the ***tsunami*** wave hit her] everything ended for me. It was very, very, very hard the experience of the water. I was going through the hotel, I was breaking it, and I was aware of every time I hit a wall, until it broke, it broke, and it broke. And when I came out of the water it was a very complex experience because you open your eyes and […] it takes you some time to know whether that is really happening or it is a nightmare. And the brain struggles between yes, no, yes, no… but I was swimming at the height of the hotel's roof, everything around was black, it was death, it was pieces of—I don't know, of everything, and the feeling of "how terrible, I'm alive!", "how terrible, I'm alive!", because there I left three children and my husband". (Francino, 2007)[3]

The anguish linked to the feeling of being alive, of maybe not having been born, related to a mother figure, seems present in Bayona's films as the sort of primal phantasy related to intrauterine life, but also as the urge to become an individual, born into reality, as a human being separated from the mirror-like realm of primary identification with an archaic mother figure.

Thus, in *TO*, the subject, Simon, becomes "alive" only when his mother arrives to his bedroom, as that moment is when he uncovers his face, taking a blanket off from his head. Later in the same film, Simon wakes up in bed with his mother, and he asks her permission to wake up, which we can see as asking her permission to live. It may not be by chance that the first production company of *TO* was called *He is alive!* (*Está vivo! Laboratorio de Nuevos Talentos*).

In *AMC*, Conor is invisible for his classmates, as if not being born. Finally, full of the Monster's omnipotence —Superman is one of Bayona's favorite characters— he hits a classmate and sends him to hospital.

But where we found it more clearly is in *JWKF*.

Firstly, in the opening scene, where a submarine enters the lagoon of Jurassic World Park through a narrow entrance, which resonates as the birth channel. If we follow the comparison, they are entering the uterus. But if we look at the scene, the light is on the other side of the gates, that is, in a certain way they are also being born.

Then, we see the anguish that Maisie shows related to being alive, when she may have not been born. Just like the dinosaurs, that should not be alive. To find a relief for this anguish is what makes her release the archaic omnipotence of the dinosaurs all over the world, even at the expense of the risk they pose.

MAISIE: I had to [release them]. They're alive. Like me. (Bayona, 2018)

Finally, this other ecstatic truth may also be related to the fact that the filmmaker came to life unexpectedly, as his twin brother, Carlos, recalls in his blog (MNSXY, 2012):

> I was born on May 9, 1975, and only 10 minutes later my brother [Juan Antonio] came unexpectedly. No one had informed my mother that she was pregnant with twins. She could not stop crying, there were no resources to raise a third child, and they had come two [they already had two daughters]. Luckily, our grandmother, our granny, soon showed her that she had to be strong, and as Laura (in ***The Orphanage***) and María (in ***The Impossible***), she should seek strength where it seemed there was not any".

Conclusions

To summarize, in Bayona's films we find a progression in the mother-child relationship. In *The Orphanage*, he stages the delusional complete fusion of a child and his mother, eternally bound in death, as an extreme primary identification would lead to the impossibility of the subject of being born as an individual.

In *The Impossible* we see an attempt of the subject to detach from his mother figure, who appears badly beaten, as well as a horrifying representation of her castration, and an enhanced father figure in comparison with his other films.

However, in *A Monster Calls*, the closing film of his mother-child and death trilogy, the subject ends up incarnating the omnipotence of a Monster who may be related to a primeval state of Nature, and inhabiting his mother's room.

Moreover, in *Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom*, it is the character we consider the main subject of the film, Maisie, is a clone of her mother—her father does not even exist— who causes the world to regress to an era full of omnipotent archaic aggressors, all female.

Finally, we should note that Bayona has signed all of his films, including his short films, as J. A. Bayona, that is, with his mother's name. His full name is Juan Antonio García Bayona: García being his father's surname, and Bayona, his mother's. It could be argued that García is the most common surname in Spanish and in his career he wants to use a more distinctive last name. But the fact of rejecting other options —as including one of his first names, or leaving a trace of his father's name, like the screenwriter of his first three films does, Sergio G. Sánchez, also a García— may be unconsciously related to the tight mother-child relationship shown in his films.

In addition, we find in these films an anguish related to maybe not having been born, as a consequence of being unable to avoid primary identification.

Thus, we may associate Bayona's films to a primal scene of the sort of "my mother beats me", as other authors have found in other contemporary films and authors.

J. A. Bayona is a very successful filmmaker, not only in Spain, where his films are among the highest grossers in the Spanish film industry, but also worldwide, where *Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom* ranks #25 in the list of all-time worldwide grosses (Box Office Mojo, 2018).

If we accept that we can seek the ecstatic truth of films in the unconscious manifestations related to them, then acclaimed commercial films and

filmmakers may be a good place to do it, or, as Freud indicated in *Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming,* "we will choose not the writers most highly esteemed by the critics, but the less pretentious authors of novels, romances and short stories, who nevertheless have the widest and most eager circle of readers of both sexes" (Freud, 1908, p. 9).

Moreover, these films, may help us to understand the psychology of the societies where they were produced, as Siegfried Kracauer suggested in relation with the rise to power of Nazism in Germany (Kracauer, 1947), as "in general, that the technique, the story content, and the evolution of the films of a nation are fully understandable only in relation to the actual psychological pattern of this nations" (p. 5), and, thus, "through the analysis of the German films deep psychological dispositions predominant in Germany from 1918 to 1933 can be exposed — dispositions which influenced the course of the vents during that time" (p. v).

Therefore, if we regard Bayona's —and other filmmakers'— works as manifestations not only of his individual unconscious, but of an increasingly frequent unconscious in Western societies, we may find an ecstatic truth stated in Bayona's last film to be not so delusional, namely: "We've entered a new era. Welcome to Jurassic World."

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Notes

1 González Requena calls "phantasmatic scenes" what Freud called phantasies to highlight that they are mise-en-scenes, scripts, with the presence of the subject and a phantasm, the mother in this second version of the primal scene phantasy (González Requena, 2011).

2 We understand "motif" as defined by Bordwell and Thompson (2008): "We shall call any significant repeated element in a film a motif. A motif may be an object, a color, a place, a sound, or even a character trait." (p. 66)

3 The possible key importance of this part of María Belon's story for Bayona was suggested by Carlos Braga, professor at Instituto Politécnico de Leiria (Portugal).

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