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Carlos Saura's *Cría Cuervos* as a Mode of Reading: In-Between Narrative and Allegory

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¹ For the following thesis, the film will be abbreviated with *CC*.

No entiendo como hay personas que dicen que la infancia es la época más feliz de su vida. En todo caso para mí no lo fuy y quizá por eso no creo en el paraíso infantil, ni en la infancia ni en la bondad natural de los niños. Yo cuando era niña me sentía angustiada y sola. (Ana in Cría Cuervos)

Introduction

In an interview with the BFI in 2011 Spanish director Carlos Saura stated that after finishing *CC* in 1975 he showed it to some friends and critics who in great part disliked his film. A disillusioned Saura left for Canada uncertain about the future of *CC*.² Despite his desperation, the film made it to Cannes in 1976 where it was shown on the first day and won, to Saura's surprise, the Special Prize of the Jury.³ Subsequently, the film went on being lauded everywhere but in Spain. Had it not been shown in Cannes the film might have sunk into oblivion.

But it is exactly this oblivion that *CC* so fervently opposes in its narrative as well as allegorical meaning and this constitutes the reason for choosing this specific film as a topic for the following thesis. The film is not only situated in-between the classical and the art film narrative but furthermore it marks the transitional crossroad at which Spain was at that moment: namely, the end of the Franco regime and the beginning of a democratic Spain. Because of the unique moment of production of *CC* it is so interesting to investigate the political as well as non-political idea behind the film.

The first chapter of the thesis will introduce Carlos Saura and some main characteristics of his cinema. In addition, it covers the questions of how the film fits into Saura's work and the context of the Franco regime.

Afterwards, the second chapter will investigate the narrative of the film. The questions of how the film makes use of both, traits of the classical and modern art film cinema narrative and consequently if the film should be read as a classical *or* modern art film after all will be addressed.

² Saura, 2011.

³ Ibid.

Following, the third chapter will pick up where the second chapter ended and will ask the question whether the film can be rather understood as a mode of reading. Therefore, the film will be analyzed as an allegory in comparison to the second chapter's narrative analysis

The conclusion will pick up the key question of how the film can be read as non-political film and at the same time as a political statement against the Franco regime taking into account the outcomes of the last two chapters.

1. Saura and his cinema

1.1. Characteristics of his work

Carlos Saura was born in Huesca, Spain, in 1932.⁴ He lived the Spanish Civil War as a child and “belongs to the generation that grew up under Francoism, and the theme of the Spanish Civil War was obsessive in his work and life”.⁵ Saura’s film production depended on what censorship allowed and this influenced the content of his films. This gave way to “[...] what has been called the ‘Francoist aesthetic’” in which directors tried to hide their subversive messages beneath a seemingly non-political narrative.⁶ Politics were nevertheless an important factor in regard to Saura’s films as well as to the European art film whose “[...] main determining factor [...] was rather the ideological and political environment”.⁷ Saura’s cinema succeeded in “Creating private mythologies [...]” which “[...] inspired a number of other auteurs whose previous work had not pointed in this direction: Carlos Saura films of this period, especially *The Garden of Delights* (1970), *Anna and the Wolves* (1973) and *Cría* (1976) [...]”.⁸ Furthermore, these films are “[...] a spectacular, markedly fictitious, and poetic movement [...]” which “[...] represented the auteur’s totalizing vision about the world, which had very little to do with empirical reality”.⁹ Saura as an auteur was intrinsically tied to the world surrounding him and his rendition of reality always remained contextual as well. His films did not intend to represent reality as an objective unit but rather in relation to the subjects perceiving the world. As a consequence, his work became highly subjective. Because of the political climate in Spain the director saw himself obligated to use non-linear structures as well as a strong imaginary in his films in order to avoid censorship but simultaneously his aim was to invoke critical reflection on the political situation in Spain.¹⁰ There was a shift in Saura’s films which moved away from his incidental objective realism in his first films such as *Los Golfos* (1959) or *La Caza* (1965) in order to focus more on the interior world of his protagonists.¹¹ *Cría Cuervos* falls into this category, but also films such as *Elisa, Vida Mía*,

⁴ Gubern, 1979, p. 7.

⁵ Kinder, 1979, p. 15.

⁶ Smith, 2012.

⁷ Kovács, 2007, p. 355.

⁸ Ibid, p. 379. He continues “The reason why I use the term *mythical* here is that these models were always built on historical stories. Unfolding an ideological image through stories about how things are organized in the world and creating imaginary emblems of this arrangement – this is basically what myths do”.

⁹ Ibid, p. 379.

¹⁰ Kinder, 1979, p. 16. Kinder quotes Saura: “I believe that when Franco was still alive, I had a moral obligation—maybe for myself than for society—to do everything that was possible within my form of work to help change the political system as quickly as possible”.

¹¹ Ochoa, 2009, p. 357.

El Jardín de las Delicias or *Prima Angelica*. The emphasis of the story is not goal-driven anymore but rather lies on the inner, emotional world of their characters and consequently

Saura's films achieve extraordinary subtlety in their psychological realism. He makes unusual demands on his actors, whose facial expressions and physical gestures must simultaneously convey both the masks required by the society and the underlying passions and ambivalences.¹²

This way, his films not only address the political circumstances in which its characters found themselves but moreover focuses on the impact these had on them on a personal level. The emphasis on the subjectivity and singularity of the characters defined Saura's cinema as "[...] a fight for individuality within a repressed society (and censorship) which favors the flight from reality and the withdrawal to the interior".¹³ Reality is then perceived through the eyes of an individual rather than being postulated as a stable unit. As a result, meaning is not established through a given context but rather through the interference of a person with that specific context. In case of Saura and his work until 1975 this context was characterized by the Francoist regime in which the "[...] Spanish audience identifies completely with the traumatic experience of these characters" and "In short, the three (author, characters, viewer) belong to one and the same sociological reality: Spain".¹⁴ The meaning of his cinema situates itself in-between these three agents and therefore also in-between the real world and the diegetic world of his films. The reality of Spanish society during Francoist regime influenced the way Saura produced his films. Reversely, the diegetic films penetrated the extradiegetic world as well and interacted with the audience who were perfectly able to understand Saura's subtle subversive messages underlying the cinematic images.

¹² Kinder, 1979, p. 17.

¹³ Ochoa, 2009, p.359. Translation from Spanish to English by the author of the thesis.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 359. Translation from Spanish to English by the author of the thesis.

1.2. The idea behind *CC*

CC was, up until then, Saura's by far best distributed film and allowed Saura to "[...] penetrate triumphantly the international markets, including the most difficult market in the United States".¹⁵ Saura went on making films after Franco's death in 1975 with *Elisa, Vida Mía* (1977), *¡Ay Carmela!* (1990) and still today, with 85 years, he continues making films.¹⁶ An important aspect in relation to Saura's work was the team that stood behind his films. One of the most important supporters was his Basque producer Elías Querejeta who worked with him on all 13 of his films between *La caza* (1966) until *Dulces Horas* (1982).¹⁷ In contrast to many other producers Querejeta did not only provide the money for Saura's films but rather engaged in the process of filmmaking itself with the directors and in the cultural debates surrounding the work. Both of them wrote the script for Saura's *Elisa, vida mía* (1977) together.¹⁸ The photography of *CC* is the work of Teodoro Escamilla who uses a natural and sober light which gives way to a focus on the movements and looks of the characters.¹⁹ Pablo González del Amo, who also worked with Saura on his films *La caza* and *Bodas de sangre* (1981), was responsible for the montage of the film.²⁰ Del Amo achieved an outstanding work in relation to the editing of *CC* since it is his montage that constitutes the narration of the film and influences how the audience will understand it. Furthermore, due to the montage, both, Ana's imaginary and the real diegetic world surrounding her are intertwined, seamlessly flowing with ease from one of her nightmare or hallucinations back into a more objective perspective from outside. Another important factor is the choice of the cast of *CC* which brings, of course, Ana Torrent to mind who plays little Ana. After having seen her in Victor Erice's *El espíritu de la colmena* Saura decided that he wanted to work with her up to the point where he nearly called the entire project off because Torrent's parents did not want her to play the part.²¹ It is her gaze that is capable of invoking a parallel world that challenges the adult perspective on things and becomes the gaze of a generation.²² In addition, Geraldine Chaplin, who was Saura's long term partner then and worked with him on several of his films (*Ana y los lobos*, *Peppermint frappé*, among others) acts brilliantly as Ana's mother María who is the epitome of the Spanish woman in post-war Spain, being passive, without rights and

¹⁵ Gubern, 1979, p. 39. He furthermore states that after its screening in 1977 in New York along with *La prima Angélica* it was met with universal acclaim. Translation from Spanish to English by the author of the thesis.

¹⁶ <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0767022/>

¹⁷ Tolentino, 2017, p. 15.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 15.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 21.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 23-24.

²¹ Gubern, 1979, p. 36.

²² Thau, 2011, p. 132.

always dominated by her husband.²³ Two other important characters in the film are Anselmo, María's husband played by the Argentine actor Héctor Alterio and Florinda Chico who interprets Rosa, the housemaid.²⁴ By relying mostly on people he had previously worked with, Saura ensured that he could trust them to understand the ideas behind his films. Therefore, he could keep up a certain way of producing his films as well as an aesthetic quality he wanted to achieve.

In *CC*, Saura further developed his idea displayed in *La prima Angélica* (1973) in which “The narrative focalization or perspective is constructed like a game of Russian dolls (*matrioska*) departing from the conceptual fundament that a person is the sum of successive ‘I’s’ which shape one’s vital path”.²⁵ The director fuses past and present in *La prima Angélica* and focuses on how its protagonist Luis recalls his childhood and his relationship to his cousin Angélica. It is exactly the idea of memory and of how childhood, and thus the past, interacts with the present and future that Saura picks up in *CC*. Two factors inspired the director to produce *CC*: first, that he saw Ana Torrent in Victor Erice’s *El espíritu de la colmena* in 1973 and knew that she would be the protagonist for his next film, and second the image of the mother combing the hair of her daughter Angélica using the camera as a mirror.²⁶ The image of mother and daughter united in front of the camera will recur two years later in *CC* and constitutes the point of the narrative departure for this film in which an adult Ana in 1995 recalls her childhood in 1975. Saura would then continue to deepen his ideas about childhood, dreams and time in *Elisa, vida mía* in 1977 in another “Ambiguous work par excellence [...] for dreams are always ambiguous, we find in it, nevertheless, the great themes of Saura: the infancy, the family, the Freudian image of the parents, the relation between present-past [...]”.²⁷ This way, *CC* can be situated in-between two of Saura’s most important films that deal with the problematic relation of a person with its own childhood in which *La prima Angélica* marks the beginning of a cycle that ends with *Elisa, vida mía*. The latter one perfects what the director had already started with *La prima Angélica*, continued in *CC* and establishes a “labyrinthine and circular construction, in the way of an anti-narrative of Borges or Cortázar [...]”.²⁸

²³ Tolentino, 2017, p. 28.

²⁴ Ibid, p. 29.

²⁵ Ochoa, 2009, p. 363. Translation from Spanish to English by the author of the thesis.

²⁶ Gubern, 1979, p. 36.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 40.

²⁸ Ibid, p. 40.

1.3. Embedding *CC* in a historical context

CC was produced with the impending end of the Francoist regime set at its background and had its screening premiere on the 26th of January of 1976, 40 years after the beginning of the civil war.²⁹ While producing the film Saura could not possibly have known for certain that Franco would die in the same year but interestingly enough his film is set in the future of 1995 which opens up the question about the time after Franco. Jo Labanyi makes an interesting remark about the victory of the Nationalist army when stating that “This Nationalist alliance [...] was driven by a desire to negate the Enlightenment belief in universal human right precisely in order to implement capitalist modernization to the maximum benefit of the dominant classes [...]”.³⁰ Striking is the apparent contradiction in her statement about the Francoist regime; namely on the one side the regress on a socio-cultural level (‘the negation of the universal human right’) and on the other side the emphasis on economic progress (‘capitalist modernization’). Since the Marshall-Act excluded Spain, the country remained culturally as well as economically isolated for some time but Spain’s economy took a significant turn with “[...] the process of industrialization initiated by the Opus Dei technocrats’ Plan de Estabilización of 1959” which also included their intention to promote Spain’s image abroad.³¹ José María García Escudero was appointed director general of cinema in 1962 until the year 1969 and during this time, Spain tried to open to foreign countries in order to attract tourists and promote Spanish culture, including film, abroad.³² As a consequence, the censorship got a bit more lax because, although the Francoist regime continued to be in charge, Spanish society started to turn into a modern consumer society which did not want to be excluded from the economic development of other European countries. With the increasing terroristic attacks from the Basque terror group ETA during the 70’s such as the assassination of Carrero Blanco in 1973, the Carnation Revolution in Portugal in 1974 and the resignation of many military officers in Greece the Spanish government tightened their restrictive actions again which led to multiple executions of members of ETA and leftist groups during this time.³³ As a consequence, the making of *CC*, although produced in the year of Franco’s death, fell into a time of political tension in which

²⁹ Schmidt, 2002, p. 473. Franco died on the 20th of November of 1975/Smith, 2007.

³⁰ Labanyi, 2007, p. 92.

³¹ Faulkner, 2004, p. 652. On the same page she furthermore writes that the measure taken back then influenced Spanish society in such a way that “[...] in November 1975, Spain as a whole was a modern consumer society little different from others in Western Europe”. She makes reference to the so called *apertura*, which means so much as opening, “[...] a period that dates from Manuel Fraga Iribarne’s appointment as Minister of Tourism and Communications in 1962 to the cabinet reshuffle of 1969 [...]”.

³² Ibid, p. 652.

³³ Schmidt, 2002, p. 477-478.

the old Francoist regime tried to cling to its power whereas other political forces started to emerge in opposition to it.

1.4. Synopsis of the fabula

The film's plot revolves around Ana, a nine-year-old girl, who has lost her mother and her father. The film follows her and her two sisters, Irene and Maite, during the summer vacation. The film is set in 1975 as well as in 1995, where the older Ana tells her memories to the audience. Most of the story takes place inside a big, bourgeois villa in the center of Madrid where Ana's aunt Paulina and her grandmother move in with the girls after they have lost both their parents. Saura's film expresses how Ana deals with the loss of her parents, especially her mother with who she shared a strong bond. The filmic text consists of a mixture of memories, hallucinations and dreams of both the younger and older Ana.

2. Narrative in CC

2.1. Classical vs. modern art film narrative

The question whether a film belongs to the canon of classical cinema or the art film has, obviously, a crucial impact on *how* a story is told and therefore the narration, that is “[...] the representation of a (perceptible) temporal development [...] Filmic showing is never a neutral narrative act, however, but always already an interpretation by the visual narrator”.³⁴ Narration is therefore not an independent as well as adjacent unit, its meaning rather lies embedded in the viewer’s subjective perspective in relation to the representation on screen. Bordwell describes the narrative of classic cinema as follows

[...] in the classical cinema, narrative form motivates cinematic representation. Specifically, cause-logic and narrative parallelism generate a narrative which projects its action through psychologically-defined, goal oriented characters. Narrative time and space are constructed to represent the cause-effect chain.³⁵

The classical cinema confronts the audience with a plot that is easy to follow and understand because it is built upon a unity of time and space that does not challenge the viewer’s own understanding of both terms. Classical films offer “[...] one story line that is traditionally divided into beginning, middle, and end; all segments are neatly put together and causally linked; and the overall appearance of the film is designed to disguise its artificiality”.³⁶ Consequently, the classical cinema aims to evoke a world which makes the viewer forget that s/he is actually watching a film; a fictive construct that manipulates the audience into thinking that it is depicting reality. In most cases, time is linear and causal in the classical narrative so that events form a clear-cut narrative that depends on the dynamics of action-reaction so that the audience can establish a coherent understanding of the story.³⁷

In contrast to this form of narrative Bordwell delimits the art cinema narrative as characterized by “[...] two principles: realism and authorial expressivity [...] It will show us real locations [...] and real problems [...]” and at the same time it “[...] is classical in its reliance upon psychological causation; characters and their effects on one another remain

³⁴ Verstraten, 2009, p. 8. The “visual narrator [...] is to show moving images”, p. 7.

³⁵ Bordwell, 1979, p. 57. Traits of the classic narrative cinema were “[...] figures of cutting (e.g., 180° continuity, crosscutting, “montage sequences”), mise-en-scene (e.g., three-point lighting, perspective sets), cinematography (e.g., a particular range of camera distances and lens lengths), and sound (e.g., modulation, voice-over-narration)”.

³⁶ Klecker, 2013, p. 129-130.

³⁷ Bordwell, 2006, p. 44 Bordwell writes in regard to time and causality in classical film “If temporality and causality did not cooperate [...] the spectator could not construct a coherent story out of the narration [...] The relatively close correspondence between story order and narrational order in the classical film helps the spectator create an organized succession of hypotheses and a secure rhythm of question and answers”.

central. But whereas the characters of the classical narrative have clear-cut traits and objectives, the characters of the art cinema lack defined desires and goals”.³⁸ Subsequently, modern art cinema becomes a consequence of the classic cinema because even if it challenges the narrative features of the latter this challenge is intrinsically tied to what is challenged. Some general characteristics of modernism influenced also the modern art film in which “Modernist elements of fragmentation, defamiliarization (*ostranenie*, *Verfremdungseffekt*), collage, abstraction, relativity, anti-illusionism, and a general rejection of the transparency of realist representation all find their way into acts of [documentary] filmmaking”.³⁹ This argument does not have necessarily to be applied exclusively to documentary filmmaking. All these elements find their way into a way of filmmaking that differs narratively from the plots found in classical cinema but “Although these films are challenging to narrative rules and make it impossible to ascertain a coherent fabula, they are nonetheless narrative”.⁴⁰ As already mentioned above there is an intrinsic tie between the two opposing terms. The idea of the modern art cinema as a realistic cinema *d’auteur* was only possible exactly because the classical cinema rested on different artistic claims. In his famous essay, “Art Cinema as an Institution”, published 1981 in *Screen* Steve Neale characterizes the art cinema similar to Bordwell when writing

Art films tend to be marked by a stress on visual style (an engagement of the look in terms of a marked individual point of view rather than in terms of institutionalized spectacle), by a suppression of action in the Hollywood sense, by consequent stress on character rather than plot and by an interiorisation of dramatic conflict.⁴¹

The fabula of the film becomes more subjective and concentrates on the inner world of its characters, such as emotions, psychological reasons, etc. Consequently, the art film’s narrative focuses rather on *how* the world influences the characters and moves away from an exclusive emphasis on external influences. Whereas the classical narrative is interested in revealing why a character acts the way s/he does and in establishing stable relation between

³⁸ Bordwell, 1979, p. 58.

³⁹ Nichols, 2001, p. 593.

⁴⁰ Verstraten, 2009, p. 16.

⁴¹ Neale, 1981, p. 13. Furthermore he characterizes the Art cinema as follows: "It is also true that Art films are marked at a textual level by the inscription of features that function as marks of enunciation-and, hence, as signifiers of an authorial voice (and look) [...] They engage the other primary ideology of Art, the Romantic view that Art is subjective expression. They function both as signs of such expression and, hence, as the marks of Art itself", p. 13-14. His statement is connected to Bordwell’s “concept of authorship” in art films and Neale also establishes a commercial link between the film and its “author”, namely the filmmaker as a sort of label that sells the film as a product of a certain filmmaker/author. The role of the author therefore shifts more in the foreground instead of the story or its stars. The end of his quote hints at the self-reflexivity that distinguished modern films from its classical predecessors. Subjectivity and “Art itself” became the focus of the filmmaking, pointing to the self-reflexive tendencies some modern art films had/have.

subject-object (A leaves B because B cheated on A), the art film narrative challenges that subject-object relation which suddenly does not seem so safe anymore. Subsequently, the reasons for the character's behavior remain hidden and are not explicitly explained by the narrative which turns the understanding of the film into a more complex task for the viewer.

2.2. The diegetic world of *CC*

2.2.1. Story and time in *CC*

In an imagined present/future set in 1995 the older Ana looks back on the year 1975 when she was eight years old. She narrates the story from her point of view which makes her, alongside the filmic narrator, the internal focalizer.⁴² The events in 1975 recalled by the adult Ana get interrupted by dreams/hallucinations of the younger Ana. The film's story is based on her memory whose "[...] traces have a *telescoping* nature. That is, a number of events or personalities are contracted into one, or some aspects of an experience are ordered and highlighted".⁴³ Thus, the brain selects certain memories that were of great importance to an individual and shapes them in such a way that they fit into a temporal order and become understandable. Consequently, the depicted events in the flashbacks of Ana in 1995 are not to be taken as how the events really occurred, but rather they become an already filtered account of the subjective perception of Ana. However, Ana's recollection of memories taking place in 1975 is interjected by dreams and hallucinations.⁴⁴ *CC* provides the viewer with enough hints which make it possible to distinguish between past and present/future as well as between the real diegetic world and Ana's imaginary. The fact that the film states clearly that it is taking place on two different time levels constitutes a coherent narrative unit that enables the viewer to situate the film temporally because of the marked flashbacks/flash-forwards without causing further confusion. Furthermore, the audience knows where the events are taking place (a house in Madrid) and what events caused Ana such a trauma that even after 20 years still troubles her (the death of her parents). The juxtaposing of the real diegetic world with Ana's imaginary represents a rather modern element precisely because her perception of the world is marked as highly subjective and is not always bound to a comprehensible causality since

⁴² Verstraten, 2009, p. 40-41. He states in regard to focalization "Internal focalization may be present at the same time but is never completely independent; it is always embedded in the external vision [...]. Thus, 'internal' should be taken to mean '(external plus) internal'".

⁴³ Winter/Sivan, 1999, p. 13.

⁴⁴ Gadaño, 2013, p. 64. He observes the relation between the different temporal levels in the film which "[...] question the process of memory" [translation by the author].

“[...] no syuzhet explicitly presents all fabula events, states, and existents. Rather, the syuzhet leaves out some information. This disparity creates gaps that can be temporal, causal, or spatial”.⁴⁵ The constant oscillation between a seemingly objective perspective from the narrator and/or an adult Ana in comparison to the imaginary of a younger Ana makes it impossible for the viewer to be sure whether what is shown on the screen belongs to the real diegetic world or belongs exclusively to Ana’s perception. This way, the film ‘creates gaps’ that are not always explicitly filled which does not interrupt the coherent temporal flow of the film but its causal linearity. Although the film follows a chronological timeline the fact that her childhood is still haunting the adult Ana brings to the foreground how different temporal levels are intrinsically interwoven. Her past forms an irrevocable part of her and remains inside of her. This counters the apparent chronological temporal order of the film and creates a rather circular temporal flow. Thus, the film’s temporal order offers an apparent classical temporal structure which then is undermined through a subtle, subversive understanding of time.

2.2.2. Through the eyes of Ana: Focalization in *CC*

A crucial role in regard to narration plays focalization which varies to such an extent that “Whereas one film might clearly indicate that a certain scene is a representation of the (confused) imagination of a character, other films have few markers-or none at all”.⁴⁶ In the case of *CC* the film is focalized in a triad way: there is an external narrator all along but the internal focalization shifts between the adult Ana, through which the viewer experiences the events in 1975, and the younger Ana, whose focalization becomes most obvious in those scenes in which her imaginary interferes with reality or when subjective shots take in her position.⁴⁷ The film’s focalization “[...] aligns us with the little girl’s point of view, using subjective shots [...]” when Ana finds her dead father.⁴⁸ This sequence does not only use subjective shots but also shots which show Ana herself. Therefore the focalization shifts between being internal and external. The camera employs an over-the shoulder shot when Ana is observing the door to Anselmo’s bedroom. Shot/reverse shots are used when Amelia, Anselmo’s lover, leaves the room and the camera observes Amelia from a subjective

⁴⁵ Klecker, 2013, p. 130.

⁴⁶ Verstraten, 2009, p. 109.

⁴⁷ D’Lugo, 1983, p. 37. He notes in regard to the internal focalization “Our placement with Ana as the frame of narration is secured early on through a series of point-of-view shots in which we are brought to identify with her glance as the principal internal narrative authority of the film”.

⁴⁸ Smith, 2007/Saura, 1975, 00:02:01-00:06:24.

perspective of Ana. Verstraten makes a crucial distinction between subjective shots and over-the-shoulder in regard to the focalization when writing “Internal focalization occurs in subjective shots: the perception of the character coincides with that of the visual narrator. An over-the-shoulder shot distinguishes itself from a subjective shot because internal focalization has now become embedded in external focalization”.⁴⁹ So, the audience in the over-the-shoulder shot is still witnessing the scene from Ana’s perspective but she is not the focalizer of the scene anymore. Although the separation between the external and internal focalizer is only a slight one it still gives the viewer a bit more distance in regard to the observed action. This way, Ana is still the stand-in for the viewer but simultaneously the spectator witnesses the scene alongside Ana without taking in her position completely.⁵⁰ *CC* also is a good example of how

[...] thin [...] the dividing line between the exclusive vision of the narrator and ambiguous focalization is. In the first case, the visual narrator shows the situation as it actually ‘is’, whereas in the second case the narrator adds the option that the scene is a representation of how the character experiences the situation.⁵¹

Saura’s film oscillates between these two options. Sometimes the audience sees the diegetic world being focalized by an external narrator when suddenly María, Ana’s dead mother, walks abruptly into the frame. Consequently, the presented image on the screen becomes focalized by the young Ana and forces the viewer to become “[...] quickly aware of the instability of the narrative structure [...] These problems of narration force the spectator to reflect in his own mind on the internal logic of the film’s imagery [...]”.⁵² The viewer has to be ready at any minute to shift from an external focalization to an imaginary world perceived through Ana’s children eyes. The audience can never rest and just mindlessly follow the narrative taking over *one* perspective but has to accept that there is not just one but two different ways of seeing things. Thus, the narrator in *CC* becomes a ‘complicit visual narrator’ who “[...] in his role as external focalizer, has consequently conformed its vision to the (distorted) perception of the insurance agent up until this point”.⁵³ The external narrator becomes Ana’s accomplice by putting him-/herself in more neutral position “[...] before a visual field which appears to lack temporal stability” but still taking over Ana’s imaginary perception of the world.⁵⁴ As a consequence, Ana’s focalization makes the in-between state of

⁴⁹ Verstraten, 2009, p. 103.

⁵⁰ D’Lugo, 1983, p. 37. He refers to Ana as the “spectator-in-the-text”.

⁵¹ Verstraten, 2009, p. 112.

⁵² D’Lugo, 1983, p. 37.

⁵³ Verstraten, 2009, p. 114.

⁵⁴ D’Lugo, 1983, p. 37.

the film palpable. Sometimes the viewer perceives the real world from an outside perspective with external focalization when there is a sudden shift to her imaginary. Ana's dreams and hallucinations express her inability to let her mother go and her desire to bring her back. This way, Ana's imaginary constitutes a fantastic element because "[...] fantasy characteristically attempts to compensate for a lack [...] it is a literature of desire which seeks that which is experienced as absence and loss".⁵⁵ The traumatic event of losing her mother opens up a space of absence which is emphasized through Ana's focalization. The constant juxtaposition of presence and absence, which is represented through María (dis-)appearances, situates the narrative in-between something that is and something that has already passed and establishes what is an essential characteristic of the fantastic in which "[...] The reader's hesitation between natural and supernatural explanations of apparently supernatural events must be sustained to the end".⁵⁶ The introduction of an element that the viewer identifies as unreal in contradiction to reality causes "[...] that *hesitation* experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event".⁵⁷ The eroding reliability of what is shown on the screen due to the constant focalizing shift between a real diegetic world and the imaginary vision of Ana manifests its influence in the hesitation it produces in the viewer. Although the audience is able to distinguish between the different levels of focalizations over the course of the film's duration it does not imply that the hesitation is dissolved. Instead it enforces the eerie atmosphere of the film which does not decide on one focalizing perspective over another one but instead prefers to remain in an insoluble in-between space of two merging perceptual modes.

⁵⁵ Jackson, 1981, p. 3.

⁵⁶ Brooke-Rose, 1976, p. 150.

⁵⁷ Todorov, 1975, p. 25. Emphasis by the author of the thesis.

2.3. Film technical aspects in *CC* and their narrative relevance

2.3.1. *Mise-en-scène*

One of the most striking achievements of the film is the imaginary world Saura conjures and that belongs exclusively to Ana in which María, Ana's mother, and the adult Ana are played by the same actress, Geraldine Chaplin, and in which

The two Chaplins also collapse the timeline of Ana's life, her past and her future - her mother and her adulthood-into one image co-projected in a perennial present, the synchronous atemporal melancholically stagnant world of the vast isolated house of Ana's childhood depicted in a successive film that plays itself as an illusion of diachrony, of narrative- [...].⁵⁸

The oscillation between past and present/future indicates how the different time levels are symbiotically connected to each other and that the past is still present in Ana's life as an adult. The spatio-temporal gap that opens up between 1975 and 1995 poses furthermore the question if Ana as an adult will become like her mother who through her husband's "[...] coercive treatment of her mother as a child who must obey [...] sees herself growing into the spitting image of that childishly treated mother".⁵⁹ The fact that the adult Ana looks exactly like María or vice-versa emphasizes the uncanny atmosphere of the film and poses the question whether Ana will really come to look like her deceased mother in 1975 or whether she imagines her mother looking like herself caused by her traumatic loss. Again, the audience sees themselves confronted with questions that are impossible to answer but are impossible not to ask at the same time. The film does not provide any solution and so the viewer is left to wonder about the possible meaning behind Saura's choice. The lack of a clear motivation or explanation is typical for the modern art film. It is obvious that the reasons for using Geraldine Chaplin as the adult Ana as well as María are psychologically motivated but for what specific end remains unclear. The hesitation caused by knowing that the reason for using the same actress lies in the traumatic event of María's death which will constitute Ana's being (classical) but the omission of definite knowledge of the outcome of that being (modern) leaves the viewer, again, in-between a classical and a modern art film and the viewer is "[...] left to infer, with the required hesitation, either that it was all a dream [...] or that it all occurred as a supernatural event [...]".⁶⁰ The fact that Ana grows into the spitting image of her mother pushes the question to the foreground whether this is due to the fact that Ana was so

⁵⁸ Rodríguez-Romaguera, 2016, p. 5.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 6. Interesting in this context is that Geraldine Chaplin was dubbed by Spanish actress Julieta Serrano to coincide with Ana Torrent's Spanish accent, p.6.

⁶⁰ Brooke-Rose, 1976, p. 154.

traumatized by her mother's death that she projected her adult self on her mother as shown in her memories or whether she really became like her mother. Kinder remarks on that

[...] Ana fails to see how she herself, in identifying so strongly with her mother, has become her most potent rival. Saura reinforces this nuance through casting, having Geraldine Chaplin play both the dead mother and the grown-up Ana [...] We are left uncertain as to whether the cherished image of the mother has shaped the development of the daughter, or whether Ana's own image has been superimposed over that of the absentee.⁶¹

It is exactly that 'uncertainty' that demands constant attention from part of the viewer who has to ask him/herself what kind of film he/she is watching.

One of the most striking choices of the *mise-en-scène* is the cast of Ana Torrent as little Ana in 1975 which expresses how "[...] casting, has a narrative impact [...]" if "[...] physical features correspond to the character traits of those the actors are to portray".⁶² In the case of Torrent this refers obviously to her eyes through which "The child's perception of adult realities [...] is so convincing because, without fully comprehending all of the events, she intuits the emotional reality".⁶³ Torrent does not talk much throughout the entire film and communicates much of how she perceives her surroundings through her gaze. The dreams of little Ana feature in all cases the presence of her dead mother; something the viewer is unaware at the beginning of the film.⁶⁴ Instead of revealing this surprising fact at the end of the film, Saura chose to convey this crucial piece of information at the beginning of his film.⁶⁵ As a consequence, the spectator does not focus foremost on the disguise that made him/her believe in the trick of the plot but rather the focus shifts to the effect this trick has on the narrative. Thus, it becomes of more importance of *how* things are told than of *what* is being told which is a typical feature of the art film. The viewer sees him-/herself constantly confronted with two different perceptions of reality and since none is declared as the truthful version in comparison to the other one they do not undo but rather complement each other since both are equally valid. The essence of Saura's disguise lies in revealing it in order to let the audience *know* that there is an oscillation between the adult diegetic world and Ana's imaginary and so the viewer does not have to trouble him-/herself with finding missing pieces in order to solve the mind-tricking puzzle but can instead focus on the oscillation itself. A

⁶¹ Kinder, 1983, p. 65.

⁶² Verstraten, 2009, p. 57.

⁶³ Kinder, 1979, p. 23.

⁶⁴ Kinder, 1983, p. 65. She states "When we learn that the mother is dead, we realize it is the girl's obsessive hallucinatory wish fulfillment, perhaps based on a reconstructed memory from the mirror phase when she first recognized her own imaginary signifier situated next to that of her mother".

⁶⁵ Klecker, 2013, p. 132. She writes furthermore "And this discovery is of such magnitude that it changes our understanding of the entire story and forces the viewer to reinterpret the entire film".

sequence that juxtaposes the real diegetic world with Ana's imaginary is the sequence in which the children are getting ready for the wake in the bathroom.⁶⁶ During the sequence a medium frontal shot shows how Rosa, the handmaid, is combing Ana's hair as a reflection in the mirror. Suddenly, María is walking into the frame. She takes over Rosa's place and starts combing Ana's hair. Both, mother and daughter, are united in a two shot while the camera slowly comes closer, losing its distance. Ana keeps fixating the mirror whereas her mother looks at her, giving her loving kisses. Then María faces the mirror too as if something was going on the audience is still unaware of. Then there is a cut to a POV shot of Ana who is facing the mirror and Rosa is brushing her hair again bringing Ana and the audience as well back to the real diegetic world. The trauma that her mother's death caused to Ana lies at the heart of the film's narrative. The mirror then becomes also a reflection of what Ana wishes to see and not necessarily of what is real. María as Ana's mother is "[...] necessarily one-dimensional and idealized union rather than a true character" and turns her into a general representation of the repressed Spanish woman under the Francoist regime. By uniting mother and daughter through the use of the same actress though, the film poses the question if Ana will become a more independent woman than her mother.⁶⁷

Another important aspect of the *mise-en-scène* is the location of the film. Most of the film takes place in Ana's house. Paul-Julian Smith describes it as follows: "The house itself, claustrophobic in spite of its ample size and extensive garden is a transparent metaphor for the regime, which even at the late date of *CC*, was still frantically putting up barriers to life beyond its bunker".⁶⁸ Despite his allusions to the allegoric meaning behind the location used in the film, his statement can also be applied on a diegetic level. The house then becomes a metaphor for Ana being restricted and held back by the rules that the adults impose on her. A sequence that reveals that Ana knows exactly what society expects of her and that she is very much aware of her 'childish' behavior is when she is sitting in the pool playing with her doll.⁶⁹ There is an establishing shot of the traffic of Madrid and then the camera slowly pans over the right into the garden. The camera shows the garden via an aerial shot in which consequently everything looks small and trivial. Then, the camera stops at a shot of the empty swimming pool showing Irene cycling on a bike around it and Ana climbing into the pool. After that there is a cut to a long shot out of the pool on eye level with Irene. Next, the camera tilts downwards into the pool and shows Ana in a high angle and long shot playing in the

⁶⁶ Saura, 1975, 00:08:50-00:11:26.

⁶⁷ Koresky, 2011.

⁶⁸ Smith, 2007.

⁶⁹ Saura, 1975, 01:04:46-01:06:38.

pool. By observing Ana from such a high angle the viewer gets the feeling of superiority and of being the adult. While watching her playing, the camera slowly zooms in and gets closer but still from within a high angle. Ana talks to her doll about her rude and bad behavior against aunt Paulina. This reveals that she knows that she is expected to obey and she actively resists this expectation. In relation to the location of the swimming pool Smith notes that “[...] the house even boasts an empty swimming pool, a symbol of sensual pleasures lost or unfulfilled”.⁷⁰ Placing Ana then inside the swimming pool represents her longing to be a child by creating her own rules. A longing that is suppressed by the adults and by that, her longing is reverted into rebellion.⁷¹ The empty swimming pool and the big, empty house become a constant reminder for Ana which point to the absence of her mother as well as her unfulfilled desire of retaining her. Instead of representing a solid, safe home, the space surrounding Ana has quite the opposite effect on her and on the viewer alike. It creates an atmosphere that makes palpable what is not there which importance increases throughout the film in contrast to what is there. The desire of reversing the absence into presence is neglected. This represents a modern art film characteristic in which the story does not follow a clear, safe path but becomes fragmentary and hard to grasp. The location has a major impact on Ana’s inner world and on how she perceives her surroundings while it simultaneously constitutes a unity with time and causality. Her stay in the house is confined to the time of her childhood, that is to the past, and the audience also knows from the film that she is staying a weekend at Nicolás’ house whose location is not explicitly given but is known to be somewhere outside Madrid in the countryside from the way it is shown in the film. The spatial frame, following the schemata of classical cinema, overlaps with the temporal continuity of the film as well as is causally linked to the narrative. The restricting and enclosing walls of her home are one of the reasons for Ana to act and imagine things the way she does. Although it is not clearly stated psychologically how and why the space interacts with Ana it is nevertheless obviously that it does.

⁷⁰ Smith, 2007.

⁷¹ Kinder, 1979, p. 7.

2.3.2. Cinematography

The cinematography, like the *mise-en-scène*, has a great impact on how the story is narrated and therefore influences its meaning. Saura employs long and contemplating shots which give the viewer time to observe. The camera movement adapts to Ana's perception and "[...] has a contradictory sense of movement that creates a lot of tension: the camera moves seem tentative but also relentless, childlike in the best possible way".⁷² Furthermore, he avoids many cuts and often uses the technique of 'invisible editing'.⁷³ The editing throughout the entire film emphasizes its contemplative character. There is nearly no cross-cutting or parallel editing to increase the tension.⁷⁴ All the tension emerges from the narrative of the film itself. One sequence that represents a slight version of cross-cutting is when Ana plays in the garden.⁷⁵ In this sequence, Irene cycles into the frame from the left, the camera takes up her movement and follows her for a second until it stops and focuses on Ana and her grandmother in a frontal long shot. Cut to a medium shot of Ana with her grandmother. The camera remains static while Ana approaches it and comes closer. Suddenly there is a cut to the subjective perspective of Ana observing the trees from a low angle which makes the spectator identify and bind him/her to the girl's perspective, followed by a reverse medium shot of Ana on eyelevel showing her how she looks up to the trees. There is constant diegetic traffic noise. Cut back to low angle again when the camera starts panning over to the left until it stops with a subjective shot from Ana's perspective on the roof of the building on the opposite side of the garden where she detects a small figure on the roof top. The low angle emphasizes that the audience is still looking through Ana's eyes. While observing the person on the other side from Ana's point of view the camera zooms in until the viewer is able to recognize that it is Ana herself. The camera now employs shot/reverse shots between the Ana on the ground looking up to her doppelganger and the Ana on the other side looking down in a high angle from the rooftop. Suddenly, the Ana on the rooftop jumps. While flying a subjective shot of her perspective shows Madrid from above from an aerial shot and links the viewer thus to her perspective and letting him/her feel as if flying with Ana. The use of shot/reverse shot used in the aforementioned sequence "[...] is crucial for the filmic process of narrativization. In this way, the character can function as a stand-in for the viewer who seeks to identify with him or

⁷² Callahan, 2007.

⁷³ LoBrutto, 2009, p. 43. He writes in regard to this technique "Invisible editing is a cut that is hidden by strategy—a match cut where a prominent action within the frame is continued over the cut so the event is embraced by both Shot 1 of this moment through Shot 2".

⁷⁴ Verstraten, p. 80.

⁷⁵ Saura, 1975, 00:14:46-00:16:41.

her”.⁷⁶ Therefore, the viewer sympathizes with Ana and experiences the world through her eyes. The use of shot/reverse shot in *CC* is mostly use to either observe an action of one character and the reaction of another character or to reveal what a character sees. This way the film makes builds up what Bordwell called an “[...] organized succession of hypotheses and a secure rhythm of question and answer [...]” which is typical for the classical narrative.⁷⁷ In the above mentioned sequence the viewer sees Ana who is looking at something which cannot be seen and then the reverse shot answers the audience’s question what she is looking at. By using this technique the film gains a classical cinematic trait while what is shown is focalized by Ana. An important aspect that has to be taken into account is that although the film offers a rich imagery the main focalization of the internal narration through Ana (both adult and young) is still a restrictive perspective and therefore also deceptive. This gets apparent through the fact that the adult Ana narrates her memories. Christopher Lane refers to this in his review in regard to Freud’s concept about childhood memories when writing “[...] Freud could advance his argument only by *relinquishing* the assumption that childhood memories are conscious; the argument develops incisively once Freud entertains the role of unconscious influence, substitution, and distortion”.⁷⁸ Therefore, one cannot trust the visual representation but it is exactly this visual ambiguity that enhances the imagery with such an emotional force. One example that stands out is the shot of the chicken feet Ana is seeing when she opens the fridge.⁷⁹ The meaning of this shot is at no time revealed throughout the film and poses the question whether it is not aimless after all only representing a random shot taken through Ana’s eyes. Another sequence in which the cinematography plays a little trick on the understanding of the viewer is when at the end of the film a voice-over starts to narrate a story while Ana and her sisters get dressed to go to school.⁸⁰ At first, the viewer does not know who is talking since the images do not correspond to the story that is being told. Therefore the audience gets confused about how the voice-over is connected to the images. After a cut to the next sequence, the audience sees Irene sitting at a table having breakfast while the voice-over continues. The tension grows slowly because the viewer wants to know who is talking and how to integrate the voice-over into the narrative of the film. It is only after a slow pan to the right that the camera reveals Ana how she listens to her sister’s dream from last night and it is then that the spectator realizes that s/he was listening to Irene’s voice-over in the prior sequence. Only then the viewer is able to fill in the gap the voice-over created. These

⁷⁶ Verstraten, 2009, p. 87-88.

⁷⁷ Bordwell, 2006 [et. al.], p. 44.

⁷⁸ Lane, 2009, p. 22.

⁷⁹ Saura, 1975, 00:07:06.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 01:40:18-01:41:45.

sequences, among others, show how the film deviates from the classical norm; something in which it can only succeed because *CC* remains classical in its fundament. The contrast between classical and modern art film traits reflected through the cinematography makes the viewer aware that he/she is actually watching a film. The audience is reminded hereby that a film is not only a construct but also stumbles upon their own need for coherence to follow the narrative. Ultimately, Ana's memories and imaginary belong exclusively to her, rendering the film in this aspect towards a rather modern than classical cinema since it is in the art film that the psychological and inner conflicts are standing in the foreground instead of the aims behind the protagonist's actions as pointed out in the beginning of this chapter. The slow pans, long takes and little cuts emphasize the focus on observation and duration instead of on action and reaction leading towards a specific goal as preferred in the classical cinema.

2.3.3. Narrative role of the voice-over

Ana remains the auditive focalizer along with the filmic narrator whose "[...] function is to regulate the interaction between sound [...] and image. This interaction takes place on a sliding scale that runs from exact correlations between the auditive and visual track to the complete divergence of those tracks".⁸¹ Michel Chion states about the connection between sound and the depicted images on screen "[...] each audio element enters into a *simultaneous vertical relationship* with narrative elements contained in the image (characters, actions) and visual elements of texture and setting".⁸² One sequence that expresses Chion's statement shows an adult Ana on the screen while she is talking to the audience. The photos that interrupt the visual track show her mother as a child until becoming an adult woman⁸³. This way, they relate to what Ana is telling the viewer; namely the story of her mother. Ana is sitting in front of a grey, naked wall wearing a shirt which matches the color of the wall behind her. Her body becomes one with the environment up until the point of nearly disappearing. As a consequence all focus lies on Ana's face and the story she is recounting. Instead of a cut the camera slowly pans to the right back into the year 1975. Both time levels are sutured seamlessly as if being interwoven in a circle while Ana's voice continues talking but now as a voice-over. The camera shows how the girls are having lunch with Paulina and the grandmother while Paulina tries to teach the three girls how to eat properly. While the visual narrator is showing how the girls are forced to behave in an adult way, the auditive

⁸¹ Verstraten, 2009, p.131.

⁸² Chion, 1994, p. 40.

⁸³ Saura, 1975, 00:18:18-00:20:30 and 00:20:31-00:24:34.

track elucidates how this social pressure to live up to certain expectations never stops. Ana's voice-over narrates how her mother despite of her talent as a pianist chose to become a wife and mother which ultimately led to her decay. Chion states in this regard "In countless films [...] the textual speech of a voice-over narrator engenders images with its own logic [...] just long enough to establish the film's narrative framework and setting [...] Then it disappears, allowing us to enter the diegetic universe [...]"⁸⁴ His statement highlights an important aspect in relation to the sequence. The voice-over in combination with the visual track gives way to a new meaning of what is shown in comparison to the meaning of the sequence without a voice-over. By juxtaposing past and present Saura shows what might happen to Ana when she will get older, namely that the social pressure will define and impose a role on her related to her status as a woman in society which will be similar to the one of her own mother. Meanwhile, the voice-over reminds the viewer of the two different temporal levels displayed in the film and re-enforces the classical fundament of the film's narrative. The audience knows where to locate the flashbacks and flash-forwards and is reminded that they are witnessing Ana's memories. What causes speculation is the fact that the film is being told from the year 1995, which, since it was produced in 1975, was still ahead in the future. This setup defies the "[...] essential traits of classical narrative: chronology and closure"⁸⁵ It is exactly this closure that the film cannot offer since in 1975 it was impossible to determine what would happen in 1995. The influence of flashbacks and flash-forwards differ insofar that "Similar to our relative knowledge of the past and ignorance of the future, we perceive flashbacks as fairly reliable and flash-forwards as mere speculations"⁸⁶ Therefore, the memories/flashbacks recounted by the adult Ana trick the viewer into perceiving them as more 'real'. The case of the flash-forwards is more complex since the year 1995 represents the present in the diegetic world of the film but the viewer is very much aware of the fact that Saura is imagining a future that he could not possibly have known back in 1975 and become therefore rather unreliable.

⁸⁴ Chion, 1994, p. 172-173.

⁸⁵ Klecker, 2013, p. 126.

⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 126.

2.4. The ghost as a trace of an in-between space

The fact that the film's narration is strongly influenced by the imagery of little Ana, points to the role of children in the film as an important factor in regard to its narrative structure.⁸⁷ Furthermore, the death of María has constituted a loss that Ana has not been able to process which results in a "[...] the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available".⁸⁸ The loss of her mother represents Ana's 'wound' that can only be represented in her imagery as displayed in the film. However, her imagery is only accessible to herself because the adults are not able to understand children because they represent "[...] strange creatures and [...] individuals with autonomy and equal rights, [...] in effect, nonrepresentational subjects".⁸⁹ Saura tries to depict Ana as such a 'nonrepresentational subject' and the actress of Ana, Ana Torrent, succeeds in expressing these emotions more so through her eyes than by her facial expressions that "[...] reveal the otherness of children, the challenges this notion presents, and children's need for spatial articulations of love and protection from parents and other adults".⁹⁰ He relies on Ana's imaginary and "Her precocious curiosity in questioning the adult world is ironically paired with an ingenuous acceptance on her part of the validity of a world she sees with her own eyes".⁹¹ Ana's imaginary world expresses her resentment and unwillingness of accepting the world constructed by the adults around her. In equal measure, she accepts without reservations her own imaginary. This attitude displays a deeply rooted distrust in how adults like to present things to Ana. She senses the lies behind what she is been told by the adults. Furthermore, it shows in a disarmingly revelatory way how significantly different children perceive the world around them in comparison to adults. A sequence that expresses how much Ana misses her mother is when Ana, after having one of her hallucinatory dream downstairs, in which her parents have argued, goes back upstairs to bed but cannot sleep.⁹² While Ana is lying in bed the camera shows her in a medium shot from a high angle as if someone was standing in front of her looking down on her. The room lies in darkness whereas the light is cast on her eyes and face to emphasize the power of her gaze as well as to invoke her imaginary world. The cinematography employs shot/reverse shots between the door from a

⁸⁷ Kinder, 1983, p. 65. She notes "[...] it is the child's consciousness that dominates both the central character and the film [...] by demonstrating what happens when one can see oneself as a child, long after both parents are dead".

⁸⁸ Caruth, 1996, p. 4.

⁸⁹ Jones, 2013, p. 11.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁹¹ D'Lugo, 1983, p. 38.

⁹² Saura, 1975, 00:58:11-01:04:45. It is interesting to note that María always wears the same dress in all the sequences. This is an indication that this might be the dress in which Ana last remembers her mother and therefore emphasizes subtly that her mother only exists as a ghost in Ana's fantasy.

subjective perspective of Ana and Ana's face from the perspective of an external narrator. Ana closes her eyes only to open them again and then the camera cuts to a long shot of the illuminated doorway again. Suddenly, Ana's mother walks into the frame from the left in a long shot. This game between shots of the door and reverse shots of Ana continues; each time she closes her eyes and opens them again her mother passes the doorway. The third time Ana closes her eyes and María walks past the doorway, the camera does not cut back to Ana's face but stays focused on the doorway. This way, the editing indicates that something will change the dynamic of the sequence. Now María walks into the frame from the right (and not from the left as in the cases before) and waits in the door frame. Reverse shot of Ana who pretends to be asleep. She then enters the room without causing any camera movements. When her mother sits down on the bed, the camera shows Ana from an over-the-shoulder of María's perspective. Consequently, the scene is focalized by María, alongside an external narrator and maybe an adult Ana. In comparison to María, Ana is shown from a more neutral position from somewhere behind Ana's bed through an external focalizer. Suddenly the external narrator shows Ana's face in a close-up how she looks into the camera. Turvey notes on the close-up in reference to Balázs that "[...] it isolates and magnifies whatever it films, the close-up reveals details that are invisible to sight [...] and that it [...] can reveal the inner expressed unintentionally in those details-details that the naked eye cannot see unaided".⁹³ Especially in this case, the close-up expresses Ana's melancholy because of the sudden realization that she is only dreaming. Usually "The implicit filmic description characterizes itself by such an excess of visual details that the specific qualities of those details are in danger of going unnoticed" but through the use of this close-up the visual narrator is able to restrict the 'excess' and leads the viewer's attention to Ana's facial expression, with emphasis on her eyes.⁹⁴ Still, this close-up renders Ana a nonrepresentational subject because as close as the spectator gets there is still a barrier that makes it impossible for the viewer to fully understand and enter her head.⁹⁵ The reverse shot which reveals that María is not longer sitting on Ana's bed does not only represent the absence created off-screen in the diegetic world but moreover

⁹³ Turvey, 2008, p. 41.

⁹⁴ Verstraten, 2009, p. 55.

⁹⁵ Jones, 2013, p. 8-9. He writes in reference to some films he analyzed that "There is a triangulation between the child subject, the camera and the viewer. The camera shows the child from the outside, not getting in the head completely (like a first person narrator), but offering careful, imaginative, empathetic *witnessing* of child in space and in narrative". Although, there is a first person narrator, at least constantly on the auditive track (adult Ana), the visual narrator, in the cases where little Ana is not the narrative focalizer, could also be the adult Ana looking back from 1995 but nevertheless, the internal narrator always implies an external narrator who even is superior to the vision of the older Ana.

the absence of María who is a ghostly appearance in Ana's imaginary.⁹⁶ The fact that only Ana can see the ghost of her mother poses the question whether María belongs exclusively to Ana's mind or if there exists a parallel world of ghosts which haunts the living. The film does not offer any final solution and therefore leaves the viewer in constant hesitation, even after the film has ended. But it is exactly this hesitation that causes the viewer to question everything represented in the film. Since *CC* makes a distinction between Ana's perception as a child and as an adult, there might arise the impression that the more objective and adult point of view of Ana in 1995 offers a safe, orderly world in contrast to Ana's imaginary which inhabits ghosts and therefore cannot be trusted. Nevertheless, Ana's imaginary not only makes the viewer hesitate about the supernatural events occurring in her hallucinations but also challenges the 'real' diegetic world to such an extent that the viewer has to ask if s/he can rely on anything shown in the film.

Saura's film focuses heavily on the child actress Ana Torrent and the impact of her eyes reflect "An emphasis upon invisibility [...]" which "[...]" points to one of the central thematic concerns of the fantastic: problems of vision. In a culture which equates the 'real' with the 'visible' and give the eye dominance over other sense organs. The un-real is that which is in-visible".⁹⁷ The focus on Ana's eyes emphasizes how her perception renders visible the invisible and creates an eerie atmosphere. The problematic connection between vision and reality is also central to modernism that tries to dismantle the artifice instead of concealing it. Modern films show distorted visions or play tricks on the viewer's eyes so that the audience wakes from the dreamlike state of believing everything the camera shows them. *CC* plays with the viewer's vision and understanding of the world as well but not only in order to follow the vein of the modern art film in contrast to the classical film. The film addresses the shifting not only on a structural level, between the conclusive classical film and the de-fragmented modern art film, but also on the thematic level by rendering the co-existence of different subjective perspectives. It is the Otherness of being a child, as described above, that sets Ana apart from the adult world and which alters her subjective feeling about the world. It is explicitly because she is a child that her world remains unreal and invisible to the adults. *CC* evokes brilliantly this at times discomfoting Otherness and shows something other-worldly that opposes the neatly structured world of the adults. This causes the spectator not only to re-consider one's own perception of reality but in addition to take into account

⁹⁶ Verstraten, 2009, p. 89. He notes on the concept of suture that "Suture refers to the ongoing process of supplementation in which each reverse shot presents itself as to a missing perspective while at the same time summoning a new absence".

⁹⁷ Jackson, 1981, p. 45.

how different children understand things. Ana's imagery and childhood, from which she herself states that it was a time of fear of the unknown, indicate that she did not live through childhood as a time of innocent happiness as commonly provided by the adults. The ambiguous focus on vision in *CC* reflects the aforementioned notion in which "Uncertainty and impossibility are inscribed on a structural level through hesitation and equivocation and on a thematic level through images of formlessness, emptiness and invisibility [...]".⁹⁸ The viewer is confronted with a constant flow between two different perceptual levels. The juxtaposition of both levels provokes confusion and hesitation about which representation to trust. Furthermore, it puts on display the human need of establishing coherence with one's own understanding of the reality when encountering something unreal. The film defies this need because of its deliberate un-willingness of dissolving the hesitation and because Ana remains a non-representational Other whose singularity will always exist alongside but unattainable to the adult world. The attempted murder on Paulina shows that "She needs to be displaced from her family which she recognizes as the source of her imprisonment; to assume a position of control over adults; finally, to somehow end her entrapment in the defenseless body of a child".⁹⁹ Ana as a child tries to build up a counterbalance which then in turn allows her to act on her own terms. The film also poses the question whether Ana really is that defenseless puts or if it is not again an adult perspective in which the child is seen as the weaker one in opposition to the supposed superior adult. Nevertheless, *CC* can reverse Ana's helplessness as a child insofar that the narrative leaves the viewer in the dark about her motives and feelings. Consequently, Ana's disadvantage is outbalanced by the viewer's disadvantage that she remains a nonrepresentational subject. Saura avoids [...] to admonish the strangeness and even 'wickedness' the children [...]" and is instead able to "[...] celebrate their wildness and strangeness – what I take to be the otherness of children".¹⁰⁰ Her murderous and rebellious plans and acts then do not equal the same thoughts of an adult but stand apart, forming part of another world; the world of the child as the Other without idealizing or condemning her. Saura does not pass a judgment since Ana as a child is not capable of understanding the concept of death in an adult manner.

The 'hesitation' and 'equivocation' caused through the plot is not only expressed through the eyes of Ana as a child on the 'thematic level' but also through the incurring appearances of the ghost of her mother, María. She stays invisible for the rest of the family and it seems as if Ana is the only one who can see her. Furthermore, "[...] the ghost which is

⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 49.

⁹⁹ D'Lugo, 1983, p. 38.

¹⁰⁰ Jones, 2013, p. 11.

neither dead nor alive, [...] is a spectral presence, suspended between being and nothingness. It takes the real and breaks it”.¹⁰¹ The ghost becomes a hollow and empty signifier that challenges the real by threatening the reality which the viewer took for granted. María as a ghost situates the film’s story in-between what is real and unreal as well as in-between life and death. As Giorgio Agamben points out in his essay *Playland* the ghost becomes “[...] a signifier of synchrony which appears threateningly in the world of the living as an unstable signifier [...] which can assume the diachronic signified of a perpetual wandering [...], and the impossibility of attaining a state of fixity.”¹⁰² The ghost enters the world of the living without forming part of it but simultaneously, it does not form part of the world of the dead, neither. As a consequence, the viewer gets confused and is not able to locate this spectral apparition anywhere. María becomes a constant reminder of something that has been and is not anymore. At the same time, she cannot be dead because the audience can see her clearly on the screen, evoked through Ana’s memory or as a supernatural event. As a consequence she embodies the point where life and death, being and not-being are intertwined with each other. She becomes the in-between. The viewer is permanently doubting where to locate her in order to understand her (non-)existence. If she really *is* there her existence ‘breaks’ reality. If she is *only* an imagination of Ana she still eludes visibility and shows how children process and perceive reality differently than adults. The dream Irene tells Ana at the end or the fact that Ana has to come to terms that the white powder she believed to be poison was not poisonous at all when she sees her aunt alive after her attempted murder point to the possibility that she was only imagining her dead mother all along as well as that she will start to become more adult from now on. But since the film does not state that clearly by omitting anything that happens after the summer vacation and by showing the adult Ana only in short sequences but without adding any information about her future life, it could as well be possible that Ana continues to see the ghost of her mother and that the film only plays a trick on the viewer’s mind. Did the film not prove that one should not trust vision and that things only because being invisible do not cease to exist? After all, the film could just choose not to show Ana’s imaginary anymore but she could still continue to see things the way she did before. *CC* ends with this question and leaves the viewer in the hesitant state in-between of what is real and unreal in relation to what is visible and invisible.

Concluding, it can be said that the film is built on classical narrative pillars and “[...] remains [...] a narrative film in structure and content. Its details are there out of narrative

¹⁰¹ Jackson, 1981, p. 20.

¹⁰² Agamben, 1993, p.82.

necessity”.¹⁰³ Simultaneously, it employs some techniques that distinguishes it from the classical cinema and puts it into the tradition of the European art film. The classical elements in the film represent then a chronological frame for the viewer whereas the wild imaginary of little Ana is an element that represents a modern element which lack chronology, causality or closure. The constant flow between the point of view of the adult Ana and her younger self’s imaginary is reflected in the oscillation between classical and modern art film elements which makes it impossible to characterize the film as one of the two. The oscillation itself then becomes the center of the film’s narrative showing that a film does not necessarily have to be either classical or modern but can also be both at the same time. Furthermore, the modern aspect of the film is also reflected in the fantastic in which the “[...] relation of the individual subject to the world, to others, to objects, ceases to be known or safe, and problems of apprehension [...] become central to the modern fantastic”.¹⁰⁴ Her point of view as a child becomes the point of view of the Other who challenges the perspective of the adults. Through her eyes the rules established by the adults start to become less and less reliable and reasonable. Suddenly, things get a different meaning when seen from a different angle. Meaning becomes then something that is established through the relation between the subject-object-relation. The world stops being a fixed authority which determines the subject in relation to it. Reversely, Ana shows how this connection also functions the other around, not only does the objective world define the subject but the subject also influences and determines the world outside of oneself. Not only does reality cease to be a pre-given unit to which the individual can only react but moreover each person forms his/her own reality. The fantastic serves as a complement that should emphasize the hesitation caused by “[...] the more general feature (at least two contradictory readings) which can and perhaps should be found in all sophisticated (complex) narrative, at any time, which varying degrees of predominance and various types of manifestation according to the period [...]”.¹⁰⁵ Therefore, the hesitation ceases to be an attribute attached exclusively to the genre of the fantastic and becomes a trait that is inherently present in nearly any text. The meaning of *CC* depends on its narrative, as shown in this chapter, but furthermore also on the social context in which the film was produced, namely the Franco regime. This way, the film creates two meanings that are mutually dependent on each other because they are produced by the same text but simultaneously, they mutually exclude each other because they depend on different factors, the narrative diegetic world or the extradiegetic social discourse.

¹⁰³ Arata, 1983, p. 31.

¹⁰⁴ Jackson, 1981, p. 49.

¹⁰⁵ Brooke-Rose, 1976, p. 156.

3. Allegory in CC

3.1. Allegory: a brief terminological introduction

This section will give a brief description of the term of allegory and how it is used to create textual ambiguity. Paul de Man describes the allegory as follows: “[...] this model cannot be closed off by a final reading, it engenders, in its turn, a supplementary figural superposition which narrates the unreadability of the prior narration [...] Allegorical narratives tell the story of the failure to read [...]”.¹⁰⁶ The allegory manifests itself in the impossibility of establishing the definite meaning of a text. An allegorical reading of a text always excludes another way of understanding it and therefore implies multiple readings of one and the same text. Apart then from adding a complementary semantic level to a text, the allegory, following the rules it postulates, is itself excluded reciprocally by another way of reading. De Man continues writing

Allegories are always ethical, the term ethical designating the structural interference of two distinct value systems [...] The passage to an ethical tonality does not result from a transcendental imperative but is the referential (and therefore unreliable) version of a linguistic confusion. Ethics [...] is a discursive mode among others.¹⁰⁷

The fact that he calls the referential ‘unreliable’ is due to the fact that the ethical, and therefore also the allegorical, are always part of an always changing discourse. The allegorical reading does not transcend time untouched but has to be put into a new discourse each time and gains this way a new meaning that might differ from the previous one. Furthermore, the allegory is not implicitly moral even though it is ethical. This way, the allegory does not become a ‘transcendental imperative’ which follows a moral value system. Craig Owens points out in his post-modern approach to allegory that there is “[...] a shift in elocutionary mode, from history to discourse [...] This shift from history to discourse, from third- to a second-person mode of address, also accounts for the centrality which postmodernist art assigns to the reader/spectator [...]”.¹⁰⁸ The post-modern understanding of allegory implies a more active reader whose role in deciphering the text becomes increasingly important. The meaning of a text lies not encoded in its historical moment of production but rather in the relation between the reader and the text which is constructed each time anew. Furthermore, Owens points out that the distinction between modern and postmodern art is crucial when it comes to the definition of allegory when writing “Modernist theory presupposes that mimesis,

¹⁰⁶ De Man, 1976, p. 205.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, p. 206.

¹⁰⁸ Owens, 1980, p. 67.

the adequation of an image to a referent, can be bracketed or suspended, and that the art object itself can be substituted (metaphorically) for its referent” in comparison to postmodernism’s ‘deconstructive impulse’ that “[...] works instead to problematize the activity of reference”.¹⁰⁹ His statement reflects on the self-reflexivity many modern art works tried to achieve. In this process the art work itself became the center of their own meaning to disguise their own artifice without the need of referent. The postmodern approach instead focuses on the relationship between the work of art and its referent and the space in-between where meaning is established through the inversion of the reader or spectator. Consequently, meaning does not lie in art itself as presupposed by the modernists but rather emerges through embedding the work of an artist in the world surrounding it. The allegorical impulse equals then the deconstructive impulse which instead of looking inwards, leads outwards of the self-limited work of art and finds its meaning in a specific context. Meaning is then not encoded in the text but rather in the in-between of text and a referent. Ernst van Alphen compares the allegory to the symbol which was privileged over the allegory by classicists and the romantics “Whereas the symbol relates organically to what it means, allegory does the same thing by means of convention, that is, artificially”.¹¹⁰ Therefore, the heart can be a symbol, but not an allegory, for love and consequently explains “[...] the fact that the symbol can be more than a rhetorical figure and thus does not belong only to the sphere of language [...]” which “[...] is one of the explanations for the privileging of the symbol over the linguistic figure allegory”.¹¹¹ The heart, being a symbol, forms part of language as an abstract system but simultaneously it points to the biological heart that is beating in every person’s chest. There is a clear relation between the signifier and the signified. The allegory, however, does not establish a meaningful connection to the world outside of language by being naturally bound to a referent but is created through language itself and enters the world outside of the text as an artificial construct. This argument is countered by Walter Benjamin on which Knaller notes “Benjamin’s conception of allegory implicates an ontologization of language and its differentiability [...] Divine meaning is indeed shattered once and for all, since writing is a convention in its arbitrary relation of language, subject, and object”.¹¹² This way, the symbol loses its reliability founded on its organic relation to its referent. The ‘arbitrary relation of language, subject, and object’ is similar to de Man’s idea of unreliability of the referential since both approaches express how a text always produces multiple ways of reading and

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, p. 79-80.

¹¹⁰ Van Alphen, 2016, p. 5.

¹¹¹ Knaller, 2002, p. 83.

¹¹² Ibid, p. 86-87.

understanding it. Since *CC* was produced in a time of political tension in Spain, the relation between allegory and history is particularly interesting and “In its allegorical standstill, it opposes history, the leap into the past is directed against continuity and allows for a current truth-content (*Wahrheitsgehalt*) to be produced”.¹¹³ This is crucial in the case of *CC* because the allegorical interpretation enables the viewer to analyze the film in reference to a historical background but also in reference to the present. Therefore, the allegory has the “[...] capacity to rescue what threatens to be forgotten”.¹¹⁴ It is this quality that makes an allegorical analysis of *CC* so interesting in addition to its narrative understanding. It gives the viewer the possibility to reflect on the importance of the film in 1975 as well as today. Furthermore, an allegorical analysis makes sure that the past, in this case the oppressive Francoist dictatorship, will not sink into oblivion. However, “Only as a fragment and in isolation and decontextualization can the particular be functionalized, as a moment of knowledge of the whole, which can be experienced as a messianic standstill, as a nomad”.¹¹⁵ Whereas the symbol, as pointed out above, is characterized by its ‘organic’ connection to the idea it is referring to the allegory performs the opposite. It marks the separation between word (image) and its referent so that the relation between those two becomes arbitrary instead of natural “[...] in this decentralization and constant differentiation of the “allegorical impulse” of contemporary art, meaning is determined [...]”.¹¹⁶ The ‘allegorical impulse’ is then the decontextualized quality of any (filmic) text that can be re-integrated into different contexts. But whereas the symbol transcends language because it relies upon a clear referent the allegory does not aim for such transcendence but rather “[...] describes language as a solipsistic rather than a transcendental medium”.¹¹⁷ The allegory accepts that it will never be able to overcome the limits of language and therefore it also acknowledges its ever changing meaning. In reference to van Alphen’s use of the horizontal and vertical axis, the horizontal, symbolical axis is characterized by continuity whereas the allegorical operates as a vertical movement that intersects the horizontal linear axis only punctually and out of context, each time entering and creating a new meaning.¹¹⁸ Consequently, the ‘allegorical impulse’ generates a momentarily fragment that becomes each time part of a new totality but because language is arbitrary and its meaning changes throughout different discourses, the allegory allows to reflect on that totality every time from a different perspective.

¹¹³ Knaller, 2002, p. 85.

¹¹⁴ Van Alphen, 2016, p. 5.

¹¹⁵ Knaller, 2002, p. 86.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, p. 88.

¹¹⁷ Van Alphen, 2016, p. 10.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, p. 14. Van Alphen refers to Kellendonk and his allegorical use of Jacob’s ladder.

3.2. Family as the allegorical nucleus of *CC*

Family and childhood represent an important factor in regard to the allegorical reading of the film. Keene notes in regard to Saura's own childhood during the Civil War and later under the fascist regime that "[...] as a result of these experiences he has never agreed with the 'widespread idea that childhood years are the golden years of one's life' ".¹¹⁹ A telling sequence that expresses this idea verbally is when Ana in 1995 tells the viewer that she does not understand how many people consider the childhood to be the happiest time of their life.¹²⁰ From her point of view it seemed like an infinite, long and sad period in her life full of fear of the unknown which made her disbelieve in the innocence and natural good heart of children. Ana gives the audience the possibility not only to experience childhood through the eyes of a child but also delivers Saura's personal idea of childhood. Hereby, it becomes impossible for *CC* not to be political: if Saura brings in his own perspective on childhood in his film then this childhood, lived under a Francoist regime with all the consequences this can entail for a child, will be tainted with the social and cultural impact this regime had on Saura himself. The audience sees the 'Francoized culture' then through Ana's eyes which also could have been Saura's children's eyes and "Though it [the film] might struggle against the limits of this context, often being articulated upon that very struggle, it cannot be understood in isolation from it [...]".¹²¹ The film then does not become a self-referential, self-reflexive piece of art which sustains itself but rather is created in co-dependence with a given societal system at a given time. As already pointed out in the first chapter about Saura's work, it is crucial to take into account the specific discourse of the time of the Francoist regime if one considers the film's production.

Another allegoric trait of the film is the role of the family who on a micro-cosmic level represents the Spanish state at that time.¹²² Gwynne Edwards writes in regard to the patriarchy displayed throughout the Francoist regime that "The flaunting of a sense of male superiority is, moreover, something which slips easily into the domination and exploitation of others, from a mere display of a male muscle into the channeling of that muscle into violence, not

¹¹⁹ Keene, 2016, p. 103. On the same page she refers to his family background when writing "He was 4 years old at the beginning of the civil war that split his family. His father, a state employee in the Republican administration, was relocated from Madrid with the government and Carlos was sent to live in Aragon with his aunts and grandmother: stout supporters of the 'Franco Crusade' ".

¹²⁰ Saura, 1975, 00:43:28-00:44:07.

¹²¹ Jackson, 1981, p. 3.

¹²² Kinder, 1983, p. 59.

least in a situation in which there are winners and losers”.¹²³ His statement represents the figure of Anselmo who in turn stands for the Franco’s military. Therefore, he epitomizes the idea of a repressive, patriarchal system in which “[...] Saura’s Ana boldly acts out the latter [patricide] with her father, who compresses all three figures and whose identity as a high-ranking officer strengthens the political connection with the dying Franco, the ultimate Spanish patriarch”.¹²⁴ It is interesting in the context of the film to observe how Anselmo dies already at the beginning of the film which does not diminish the influence he had on Ana but it is the role of the mother and her bond with her daughter that Saura focuses on who said about his film “I have been obsessed with the image of a mother and her daughter for a long time [...]”.¹²⁵ Saura opts to emphasize how those who were oppressed influenced society. This is reflected in the mother-daughter relationship between Ana and María. On the diegetic level María dies of cancer but seen as an allegory, it is the regime and all that it entails that provokes her death.¹²⁶ The relation between her deteriorating health and the relationship to her husband is represented in a very impressive sequence during the film. One night Ana wants to go upstairs when she hears and then sees her father coming back home late at night.¹²⁷ An argument between the married couple arises when María instead of going to bed wants to talk to her husband and asks him where he was. She gets more and more upset. Her husband tells her that she should leave the house and distract herself to which María only replies that she is sick and wants to die. Anselmo does not take her seriously and tells her to leave him alone. Margarita Pillado-Miller argues in her essay that Saura uses illness to stigmatize the Other in order to reveal the rules that the ones in power impose on the inferior when writing

Mediated through the of the illness, the narration reveals the mechanisms of control that the healthy impose on the sick in order to control and insert him/her into the healthy or ‘normal’ community. These therapeutics attempts reflect themselves in the power discourse which generates images of disease with the aim of isolating and controlling.¹²⁸

Since María does not want to submit to the system that Anselmo wants to impose on her, the repressive apparatus must get rid of her. Moreover, the sickness then is not only provoked by

¹²³ Edwards, 1997, p. 192. He also states on p. 193 that “[...] *Cría Cuervos* is a particularly good example-the theme of men as predators and women as victims points to attitudes which are deeply ingrained”. This comment shows how men under Franco were seen as superior to women to such an extent that they could use violence against them. Saura does not show any physical violence of Anselmo against María but rather the psychological effect, his cold and deprecating behavior towards his wife has on her health.

¹²⁴ Kinder, 1983, p. 65.

¹²⁵ Ibid, p. 62.

¹²⁶ Pillado-Miller, 1997, p. 130.

¹²⁷ Saura, 1975, 00:55:10-00:58:10.

¹²⁸ Pillado-Miller, 1997, p. 130. Translation by the author of the thesis.

Anselmo, and therefore the Francoist regime, but also by María herself. Since there is only the binary discourse of those who are ‘normal’ as opposed to those who are ‘ill’, there is literally no other way for María than to perceive herself as the alienated other and to consequently get sick. Her death represents all those who became victims of the Francoist regime and stands for the metaphorical elimination of all undesired and potentially subversive elements. The fact that Ana is seeing the ghosts of her parents confronts the viewer also with a fantastic element which “[...] traces the unsaid and the unseen of culture: that which has been silenced, made invisible, covered over and made ‘absent’”.¹²⁹ Ana’s eyes reveal what has been repressed and vanished, namely the desire and voice of Ana’s mother, representing the role of the woman and wife in Francoist Spain. Since Ana’s imaginary as a child does not understand events in the same way rational way of her adult self, as pointed out in the second chapter, her perspective on things reveals hidden nuances that escape the adult’s eye as well as it denounces a different meaning to what is happening. Her way of seeing things enforces aspects that to an adult might like a normal fight between a married couple without giving it too much of importance. Ana’s imaginary does not manifest itself in the creation of a complete new, supernatural world but the world she is constructs is a “[...] natural, secular economy [...]” in which “[...] otherness is not located elsewhere: it is read as a projection of merely human fears and desires transforming the world through subjective perception”.¹³⁰ Ana’s own world then does not escape reality but re-thinks and re-shapes it in order to emphasize how her mother and she represent the Other who does not conform to society. The sequence that alludes to the allegoric meaning underlying María’s death is when Ana goes into her mother’s room and finds her mother lying in pain in her bed.¹³¹ While observing her mother, María suddenly starts talking and says “Everything is a lie. There is nothing. They lied to me. I am scared. I do not want to die”.¹³² Her fear of death and her exclamation that she does not want to die question the mechanisms used by the Francoist regime, or any other repressive regime, which marginalized the Other through stigmatization. The Other not only serves as a description of the opposition but also as a projection surface that becomes a mirror of the ideological apparatus behind the dictatorship. By exerting pain and cruelty over the Other it reveals its own repressive character that fears everything that does not fit its narrowed down system.¹³³ The fact that María does not simply disappear after her death but is summoned as a ghost by Ana expresses the idea of how “[...] ghosts are the return of the

¹²⁹ Jackson, 1981, p. 4

¹³⁰ Ibid, p. 24.

¹³¹ Saura, 1975, 00:44:40-00:49:00.

¹³² Translation by the author of the thesis.

¹³³ Pillado-Miller, 1997, p. 138.

repressed of history-that is, the mark of an all-too-real historical trauma which has been erased from conscious memory but which makes its presence felt through its ghostly traces".¹³⁴ The ghost leaves behind palpable and physical signs in society and so does María. Something that, if society chooses to ignore, remains hidden until it comes up as a haunting ghost of the past. María then becomes a constant reminder not only for the traumatic event that her death constitutes for Ana but moreover for the traumatic event that the civil war represents. The figure of the ghost does not only apply to the film's narrative but also to its allegorical reading since "Allegorical art can show that memory always constitutes a remembering of the Other, that the Other only exist as memory, in another place, another time, and that they can always only be encountered as phantasms/displacements".¹³⁵ If on the narrative level María's appearances as a ghost point to Ana's trauma and incapability of letting her mother go, on the allegorical level it reflects on how the past can interfere the present as a ghostly trace that never really leaves. The ghostly appearance challenges on the thematic level the fixity of the world represented in the story because the ghost indicates that there is more than just one world. On a structural level, the allegory points to the fact that there is more than one version of understanding the film and of understanding history as well as politics. Like the ghost, it offers the chance to shift between various ways of reading. Furthermore, the ghost constitutes a fantastic and therefore, possible, supernatural element. The relationship between allegory and fantasy is a rather complicated one because, from Todorov's point of view, "The (fictional) "truth" of the story would then be the "literal" level in allegory ("literal" her in its older sense of the story as opposed to its allegorical [...] and this literal level tends to be destroyed by the allegorical meaning".¹³⁶ This statement shows how for Todorov the allegorical interpretation of a text undoes the hesitation that is typical as well as essential for the fantastic. But like the allegory the fantastic is defined by a "[...] lack of *hierarchy*, the constantly equal weight of the two interpretations in the pure Fantastic [...] and secondly, the fact that the two levels are mutually exclusive yet, in the pure Fantastic, unresolvable, constantly held in the tension of the paradox".¹³⁷ Crucial here is that the fantastic does not favor one interpretation over the other and that, although one meaning contradicts the other one, both co-exist without diminishing the other's value. A fantastic text holds the reader in a permanent state of in-between of two or more possible readings and points, like the allegory, to different levels of understanding a text which contradict each

¹³⁴ Labanyi, 2002, p. 6.

¹³⁵ Knaller, 2002, p. 98.

¹³⁶ Ibid, p. 154.

¹³⁷ Ibid, p. 155.

other. María as ghost can therefore be seen as an allegory against repression and forgetting the past but also as a fantastic element which enforces the ambiguity of how to read the text.

3.3. *Cría cuervos y te sacáran los ojos*: the child as Franco's legacy or as a clean start?

After the role of the child on the diegetic narrative level has been discussed extensively in the previous chapter, it will now be embedded into an allegoric meaning in order to highlight its ambiguous meaning. Kinder states in regard to the role of the child in cinema during the Francoist regime that “Through their infantilization is imposed on them by their parents and by history, it fails to protect them against complicity with the crimes of their devouring mothers and murderous fathers [...] They are children of Franco, who bear the crippling legacy of Francoist cultural and political repression”.¹³⁸ The children absorbed the ideas and concepts conveyed during the Francoist regime without being able to ascertain their moral impact and as a consequence, even after the death of Franco and his regime, they carried its inheritance into a democratic Spain. In the normative and restrictive system depicted in the film “[...] the child Ana becomes a living alternative to the ‘masochistic fetishization of suffering and death’ of patriarchal Catholic Spain”.¹³⁹ Ana is able to give back singularity to the individual and shows that subjectivity is inherent in every human being. She acts like counterbalance to the dictatorship and reminds the audience that there are alternatives to the existing system. Labanyi notes on that “The texts that avoid realism and focus on the past as a haunting, rather than a reality immediately accessible to us, retain a sense of the difficulty of understanding what it was like to live that past, as well as making us reflect on how the past interpellates the present”.¹⁴⁰ The viewer takes in the filmic text as one of multiple ways of perceiving reality and has to confront the lack of homogeneity that the recall of the past provokes. Consequently, the past becomes a cryptic puzzle the viewer has to put together in the present time and thus past and present get interwoven.

Finally, the only way for Ana to start a life without the poisonous influence of Franco is on the one hand the death of Anselmo who as a patriarch is represents Franco. The death of the father (Franco/Anselmo) seems an obvious constituent for the end of the fascist regime. However, his death does not erase the social rules and ideas that were indoctrinated and institutionalized during the Francoist regime and so “Although the mother may be physically absent, her emotional and historical burden cannot be avoided [...] Getting rid of the mother, with all the past legacies that she implies, does not guarantee a clean start in democracy

¹³⁸ Kinder, 1993, pp. 214-215.

¹³⁹ Thau, 2011, p. 137.

¹⁴⁰ Labanyi, 2007, p. 112.

[...]”.¹⁴¹ Since 1995 was yet lying ahead of Saura and the Spain of 1975, it remains unclear whether Ana as a “[...] metonymic future adult, as child that was, and child as film protagonist [...]” will be ever able to “[...] disentangle herself from the deeply etched impact of a childhood that took place during the desperate times of civil war”.¹⁴² CC then poses the question whether Ana alongside her generation was really able to cut with Francoist Spain and its traditions. Consequently, even though María is dead a ‘clean start’ is not granted to Ana and metonymically for the new generation of children that were about to become adults in a post-Franco era. Thus, Saura gives the adult Ana in an unknown future the possibility to reflect on her education in 1975 and how this might affect the future. Only through the death of *both* parents is Ana able to re-position herself as an adult in regard to her childhood trauma and re-think her role as an adult in connection to her childhood in which “[...] weapons are the two things left to her by her parents”.¹⁴³ This refers on the one hand to the soda that Ana mistakes for poison, and to the gun her father inherited her. Two sequences in the film highlight what impact the violent legacy of the Francoist regime has on its ‘children’. The first one is when Ana and her sisters help Rosa to clean the rooms and the following one in which Ana enters the living room with a gun where she surprises Paulina with Nicolás.¹⁴⁴ Rosa and the children are packing away old stuff of their father. A medium shot shows Ana how she fishes out a gun between some old books. The fact that Ana has inherited a gun from her father, being here a metonym for Franco, reveals the legacy of ‘Franco’s children’ and what harm this legacy could do in the hands of someone who does not know its danger. This shows how deeply ingrained ideology and idealized violence were under Franco. The tension finally culminates when Ana enters the living room and points the gun to her aunt. Obviously, she is not fully aware of the danger, being a child. The reaction of the adults on the other hand shows clearly what danger is emanating from the gun. With Anselmo’s/Franco’s death the children are left behind, guideless, with a legacy that implies a high degree of violence to which they seem disturbingly unaware. The mother, being seen and treated as the weak inferior, was thus not able to provide Ana with a moral guideline opposed to the Francoist ideology. The film offers a way to cope with violence and trauma caused by the Franco regime because “The cure for trauma is the successful narrativization of the violent event, such that the person who suffered it is able to situate himself or herself in relation to it as an agent and not as a thing stripped of personhood”.¹⁴⁵ Only through the relation between past

¹⁴¹ Gámez-Fuentes, 2009, p. 40.

¹⁴² Keene, 2016, p. 109.

¹⁴³ Thau, 2011, p. 136.

¹⁴⁴ Saura, 1975, 01:26:57-01:28:10 and 01:28:11-01:29:41.

¹⁴⁵ Labanyi, 2007, p. 106.

and present/future she becomes active by recalling what has traumatized her that might only become clear to her through narrating. Saura does not assume to know all the answers for a Spain without Franco but he gives the voice to the oppressed ones during the Francoist regime.¹⁴⁶ His subtle but strong subversive voice that guides the narrative of the film opens up an allegory and, even if a fictitious one, lets the victim of the traumatic experience of growing up in a suffocating fascist environment speak back from the future, which will become the present someday. Labanyi locates the unresolved ghostly haunting trauma in the “[...] failure of others to listen”.¹⁴⁷ The future Ana becomes then a mirror for those who were traumatized during the Francoist regime and gives them a voice which the regime did not. Instead of identifying with them, Saura gives the women and children depicted in his film the space to position and re-position themselves again in regard to the regime that controlled and shaped them. By doing this he acknowledges and respects the victims of the dictatorship and frees them, at least in his film, from being confined to the role of a passive, repressed spectator wavering slowly into historical oblivion through the prevalence of the imposing version of the historical winners. Respectively, “She/he [Ana] may reinforce societal values, displace the prevailing attitudes, offer transcendence to a political impotence felt by the public or compensate for qualities the viewer feels lacking in him or herself.”¹⁴⁸ Apart from offering the point of view of the losers of the Francoist regime and challenging the monolithic assumption that there only exists one version of history, Ana serves as an opportunity for the viewer to question their own principles and make them realize how values can be fostered and cultivated by states and regimes. Those values do not represent natural laws but rather they are created by institutions. *CC* then might create a chance for the audience to reverse their political impotence into its opposite through the realization that no person is inherently politically impotent. The resistance and disobedience, including her murderous aspirations, of little Ana shift from representing the child as the Other on the diegetic level to a subtle allegorical resistance against repressive state mechanisms that challenges the audience to reflect each time anew on how to put its allegorical meaning into a new context.¹⁴⁹

However, Saura is careful about being too optimistic and drawing too many conclusions about a future Spain without Franco. The fact that both, Ana’s mother and the adult Ana are embodied by the same actress, Geraldine Chaplin, gives way to a “[...] cyclical

¹⁴⁶ Stone, 2002, p. 71. Respectively, he states “*Cría Cuervos* [...] avoided the tradition of female suffering on behalf of all marginalized people in Spain, and focused instead on the particular trauma of women.”

¹⁴⁷ Labanyi, 2007, p. 111.

¹⁴⁸ Thau, 2011, p. 139.

¹⁴⁹ Knaller, 2002, p. 84.

aspect to the film that withholds hope about the post-dictatorship future even as it assumes the death of Franco, the patriarch of Spain”.¹⁵⁰ The ambiguity caused by the allegorical reading of the text is hereby enforced by the question “The moral is, as ever, ambiguous. If mother and daughter are indistinguishable [...] how can Spain move on? Will it be locked into a cycle of repetition and repression?”.¹⁵¹ The film expresses its concerns for the future in which the same mistakes might happen as happened in the past. The last two sequences reflect on the aforementioned questions and so the film offer an open end through which Saura avoids to take any stance to make comments on the future apart from stating *that* there is a future which is intrinsically tied to the past. In the second last sequence, the girls are woken up by Rosa and Paulina.¹⁵² Suddenly, a voice-over interjects the visual track, telling a story that seems completely disconnected from the visual track. Then there is a spatial cut, from the girls in their bedroom getting dressed to the kitchen where they are having breakfast. The camera shows Irene sideways in a medium shot while she is telling a story to someone. The viewer realizes now that Irene is the voice from the voice-over and that the auditive track started earlier than its corresponding visual part. The camera slowly pans over to the left to a medium shot of Ana who is carefully listening to the frightening dream her sister is telling her. Irene’s dream consists of being abducted by two men who hold her prisoner until they receive money from her parents. For some reasons her parents were not paying the money so the men decided to kill her. Just in the moment they were about to shoot her, she woke up from her dream. Afterwards the three girls go together to school but “Despite that she is visually identified with her two sisters in this last scene, the narrative has brought the spectator to recognize that only Ana, of the three, has achieved true growth, not in outward appearance, but in perceptual consciousness”.¹⁵³ However, Irene’s dream could also hint at her having a similar imagination as Ana and that she and younger sister Maite reflect on the adult world surrounding her. In that case not only Ana would have ‘grown’ but also Irene. Again the viewer is left uncertain whether Ana’s sisters feel similarly to her and how they might perceive their environment. Furthermore, her dream points to the allegorical layer of the film. Interestingly, the last bit of her story is narrated as a voice-over overlapping with the last sequence of the films before the credits start rolling.¹⁵⁴ The camera observes the three girls from a very high angle leaving their house on their own for the first time throughout the entire film while Irene is closing her story. Her imaginary end of her dream overlaps with the

¹⁵⁰ Stone, 2002, p. 71.

¹⁵¹ Smith, 2012.

¹⁵² Saura, 1975, 01:38:26-01:41:45.

¹⁵³ D’Lugo, 1983, p. 39.

¹⁵⁴ Saura, 1975, 01:41:46-01:43:21.

beginning of a new school year. The girls do not look conspicuous from the outside. This might be a hint that the traumatic events are only visible on the inside. Irene's dream then would be a metaphor for the psychological imprisonment of the girls; although they left the enclosed and suffocating space of their house, they have not escaped the walls of their mental cage from Francoist ideology.¹⁵⁵ Towards the end of the film "[...] Ana is forced to come to terms with the reality that her rituals and magic are ineffective. Her submission to the repressive authoritarian structure of her world is represented by the Catholic school uniform she and her sisters don for this, their first day back at school".¹⁵⁶ Reversely, Ana's evident smooth re-integration back into the Francoist and Catholic institution of the school might not coincide with her own belief. This goes hand in hand with what has been analyzed in the previous chapter where the child remains a mysterious Other to which the adult has no access. Therefore, it stays unclear whether she accepts the rules imposed on her as given or if she only seemingly gives in. Rob Stone has a more positive outlook on the end of Saura's film when he writes Ana "[...] faces up to the future with some of the optimistic pragmatism with which her aunt has faced up to hers".¹⁵⁷ Following his argument, Ana's literal step into the world hints at the possibility that she has no other chance than to accept things as given. At the end of the film when Paulina enters the girls room to wake them for their first day of school, Ana has to realize, much to her surprise, that the 'poison' she put in her aunt's milk has not harmed her in any way.¹⁵⁸ In other words, her imaginary thinking has no effect on the real world and Ana has to come to terms with this fact. Her sudden awakening from her dreamlike imaginary works on a narrative as well allegorical level so that "[...] she [Ana] realizes that the powder is harmless and that her murderous deeds have been confined to the realm of the imaginary—a restriction of action undoubtedly applied to most of the children of Franco".¹⁵⁹ But it is only at the end by seeing her aunt alive instead of being dead that Ana has no other choice than to admit the clash between her fantasy and the real world. Her rebellious, murderous and even monstrous acts are then an allegory that a repressive state such as the one established under Franco cannot be beaten by imaginary 'poison'.

¹⁵⁵ Keene, 2016, p. 104.

¹⁵⁶ Thau, 2011, p. 136. His idea is similar to Gubern's when he writes on p. 37-38 "La película concluye con el fin de las vacaciones y con el retorno al nuevo curso en el colegio (es decir, al orden de la disciplina cotidiana e institucional) [...]" [The film concludes with the end of the holidays and with the return to the new school year (this means, the order of everyday and institutionalized discipline)] (translation by the author herself).

¹⁵⁷ Stone, 2002, p. 102.

¹⁵⁸ Saura, 1975, 01:38:26-01:40:17.

¹⁵⁹ Kinder, 1983, p. 65. On p. 65-66 she continues on this argument "Although the death of the patriarch helps to expand the consciousness of his children, meaningful action is still only imaginable, not performed".

Concluding, this chapter offers a perspective on the film in which the family, and especially Ana, becomes an allegory against repression. While the allegorical reading shows that reference is not a stable unit which can be trusted but rather has to be reflected on critically each time, the fantastic, which at first might seem to build up a safe relationship between what is real and unreal starts to erode slowly over the course of the film. It can threaten the security of what is understood as real because “Fantasy re-combines and inverts the real, but it does not escape it: it exists in a parasitical or symbiotic relation to the real, the fantastic cannot exist independently of that ‘real’ world which it seems to find so frustratingly finite”.¹⁶⁰ The fantastic element in *CC* feeds from the reality it deforms, and the ghostly appearances within the space the diegetic reality open up a new space. This in-between space points to the infinite other worlds that possibly exist by bridging the gap between what is real and unreal. Once this in-between is established there is no other way than to admit that visibility always implies something that remains invisible which is equally valid. It shows that perception is always subjective and that it always represents *only* one way of making things visible while, like in the allegorical reading of a text, it excludes another way of seeing things. Both, the allegory and the fantastic, do not claim transcendence and both acknowledge different meanings of one and the same text. The allegorical because it always excludes the text’s previous reading and defies definite meaning and the fantastic because it creates a hesitation that makes it impossible to establish the text’s true meaning. Owens writes in regard to allegory that “Allegory can no longer be condemned as something merely appended to the work of art, for it is revealed as a structural possibility inherent in every work”.¹⁶¹ If allegory is ‘inherent’ in every text then this means then it can also be embedded within a fantasy without destroying it and so “Inversely, on Todorov’s own ground, if his first condition (the sustained hesitation of the reader) is truly fulfilled, does not this automatically produce a text with two meanings (at least), two levels, both present at every moment?”.¹⁶² Like the allegorical reading, the fantastic reveals the ambiguity of every text that is always shifting between various meanings. A fantastic text holds the reader in a permanent state of in-between of two or more possible readings and points, like the allegory, to different levels of understanding a text which contradict each other.

¹⁶⁰ Jackson, 1981, p. 20.

¹⁶¹ Owens, 1980, p. 64.

¹⁶² Brooke-Rose, 1976, p. 155.

4. Conclusion

The third chapter showed how the allegorical meaning of the film leads to ambiguity by excluding other ways of reading in which “[...] two *clearly defined but mutually incompatible* readings are engaged in blind confrontation in such a way that it is impossible to choose between them”.¹⁶³ A reading of the film in regard to its mode of production that is as a classical or a modern art film expresses an ambiguity which makes it impossible to define the film as neither. However, it is the allegory which exclusively defines ambiguity as a feature inherent in every text. Consequently, the film’s interpretation becomes a product of a certain mode of reading the filmic text which

[...] tells of a desire that must be perpetually frustrated, an ambition that must be perpetually deferred; as such, its deconstructive thrust is aimed not only against the contemporary myths that furnish its subject matter, but also against the symbolic, totalizing impulse which characterizes modernist art.¹⁶⁴

As a consequence, the film opens an in-between space in which different ways of understanding are held in constant hesitation of how to read the text. By proving that the reality always gives way to un-realities Saura’s version itself becomes a product of the reality he himself tries to disentangle since

There is thus a danger inherent in deconstruction: unable to avoid the very errors it exposes, it will continue to perform what it denounces as impossible and will, in the end, affirm what is set out to deny [...] But this very failure is what raises the discourse [...] from a tropological to an allegorical level [...].¹⁶⁵

The film’s failure then in conveying a definite answer to the repressive system it denounces is its final success. It is precisely the in-between and the constant state of ambiguity the film creates that turns in it into such a powerful statement. Instead of perceiving this as a failure it is the true achievement of the *CC*. In their reciprocal relationship both readings become equally valid. If the allegory understands itself as a reading of a text that excludes another meaning it consequently has to apply this to itself as well, and thus *CC* deliberately accepts the deconstruction of its own allegorical deconstruction.¹⁶⁶ The emphasis on ambiguity and in-between expresses the incapability as well as the unwillingness of the film to conform to one meaning. The end of *CC* asks the viewer to accept that every end is open because there is

¹⁶³ Owens, 1980, p. 61.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 80.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 71.

¹⁶⁶ De Man, 1976, p. 202. He writes in relation to the reading and understanding of a text “There can be no writing without reading, but all readings are in error because they assume their own readability. Everything written has to be read and every reading is susceptible of logical verification, but the logic that establishes the need for verification is itself unverifiable and therefore unfounded in its claim to truth”.

no solution that reality has to offer. Of greater importance than the absolute state of things, meaning, reality, etc. is the relation between those terms. Consequently, *CC* opposes any oppressive, normative system that restricts its individuals in their natural behavior and postulates these systems as unethical due to its allegorical meaning. The recurrences of Ana's dreams, either stemming from supernatural or natural origin, express that any repressive system inherently produces its opposite and represent a trait of the fantastic because "Instead of an alternative order, it creates 'alterity', this world re-placed and dis-located".¹⁶⁷ Thus, the film does not create a new world that the viewer can either acknowledge or dismiss relying on the fact that the world surrounding him remains safely intact. *CC* rather brings to life a world that has existed all along. It is Ana in her non-conformity and Otherness who is able to lift the veil from the adult, normative system which postulates its own visibility as the only possible reality and shows another way of perceiving reality. Ana becomes a stand-in for those whose perception is pushed into invisibility and apparent invalidity by the dominant systems. The film states clearly that every way of understanding is equally valid and can differ from person to person, from system to system, etc. This gives way to an allegorical interpretation which denounces the repressive Francoist regime but can also be applied to and integrated into various discourses at different times. The unreal will remain unreal because it will always stand in contrast to reality. *CC* acknowledges the (non-)existence of each other mutually excluding readings by creating an in-between in which the real and unreal are held in an ambiguous, reciprocal flow whose dissolution is constantly deferred by the hesitation caused by its narrative. It is the allegorical perception that the film, and concluding any text, has multiple meanings that makes it possible to understand it as a constant in-between space and it is this ambiguity that the film needs to unfold its narrative as well as allegorical meaning thus giving the film a non-political and, simultaneously a political dimension.

Questions for future readings of *CC* could ent a more thoroughly theoretical approach to its allegorical meaning including a deepened investigation of the term of the allegory. Furthermore, the generic elements of the fantastic and how the film fits the genre could be analyzed in combination with an elaborate discussion of the rather problematic connection between the definitions of allegory and fantasy which could not be compressed within the space of this thesis. In reference to its political meaning, an embedding of the film into a present socio-cultural context in Spain seems interesting since the film poses the question how

¹⁶⁷ Jackson, 1981, p. 19. She continues to describe the interesting term of 'paraxis' in which "[...] on either side of the principle axis, that which lies alongside the main body. Paraxis is a telling notion in relation to the place, or space, of the fantastic, for it implies an inextricable link to the main body of the 'real' which it shades and threatens".

a future Spain might look like after Franco's death. This way, the question of how Spanish society *really* developed afterwards can be posed taking the film as point of departure.

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