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Contemporary Basque Horror: *Legado en los huesos* (2019) and the Value of Regional Readings within National Traumas

Rebecca Wynne-Walsh 

Some of the most significant changes to the contemporary film industry are the new screen technologies and online streaming platforms that provide global reach to distinctly local productions. One of the key dangers in the globalized contemporary cinematic landscape is the occlusion of regional specificity in favor of the mainstream marketability of singular nation or genre-based categorizations. National frameworks, though not without their benefits, conflate heterogenous intranational regional identities and, as an extension, cinematic outputs and thus place interstitial cultural groups under peril of erasure.¹ An oversubscription to the national as a singular concept triggers the silencing of the distinct and pluralistic regional cultures that exist within any given nation state. As [Mette Hjort and Duncan Petrie](#) insist, “there can be little doubt that film studies today requires models that go well beyond conceptions of the nation as a monadic entity” (1). Transnational film studies emerged as the dominant framework of studying the flows, exchanges, and hybridities across national borders and film industries. Transnationalism approaches the interstices of cinema with a large focus on multinational co-productions and distribution in an effort to “rethink” the problematic question of “world cinema.” [Stephanie Dennison and Song Hwee Lim](#), for example, desire a more “positive definition of World Cinema,” one which “moves away from the iron grip of hierarchized binarism” in an effort to “create flexible geographies with no particular cinema occupying a central position” (10).

Horror could benefit from similar conversations. The first two decades of the twenty-first century have seen a “boom” in the critical and commercial success of mainstream “quality” horror cinema, of which [Scott Meslow](#) cites *The Conjuring* (2013) and *Get Out* (2017) as key examples. As the genre has grown in popularity globally, the dominance of mainstream, that is to say

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Hollywood, productions has been increasingly challenged by the output of more liminal industries. At the same time, the early 2000s witnessed a distinct critical turn toward the recognition of national traumas in national horror cinemas. Linnie Blake's seminal publication *The Wounds of Nations* (2008) refers to horror cinema as "uniquely situated to engage with the insecurities that underpin such conceptions of the nation; to expose the terrors underlying everyday national life and the ideological agendas that dictate existing formulations of 'national cinemas' themselves" (9). Adam Lowenstein similarly presents horror cinema as the genre that "registers most brutally the legacies of historical trauma" (10). Lowenstein's 2005 publication uses the phrase "shocking representation," in reference to his attempt to "blast open the continuum of history" and offer new modes of assessing film's relation to trauma, as well as trauma's relation to film (4). Even though Blake acknowledges that "nationalism is only one" of the "narratives of identity" at play in the horror film (5), studies in horror cinema have tended to follow the precedent of a nationalist approach.

This essay proposes that a regional approach to cinema, a fluid and comparative framework that reads the horror text in relation to both its national and regional milieu, has much value to offer horror studies. As the term suggests, a regionalist approach foregrounds the periphery, destabilizes the national as a primary marker of cultural identity, and addresses the complex dynamics between the local, the national, and the global. Such a framework seeks to go beyond simply highlighting the cultural heritage of the filmmakers and performers and emphasizes regional understandings of imagery, characterization, place, and identity. Crucially, the regional is not presented in this essay as simply the "antithesis" of the national. Rather, it operates below and beyond the national, providing an adept approach to delineating the intricate nuances of intra- as well as inter-national borders and complicates contemporary horror criticism, unveiling the multiplicity and polyvocality of the increasingly ubiquitous genre.

In light of the global critical and commercial popularity of "Hispanic horror" in recent years,² I employ the horror cinema of the Basque region in northern Spain as a case study to delineate the value of a regionalist approach to twenty-first-century horror. The Basque Country, or Euskadi, is one of 17 *autonomías* (autonomous communities) in contemporary Spain. Euskadi offers a particularly rich example of a marginalized regional identity suppressed by the national center; contemporary Basque horror cinema suffers a similar critical occlusion as it is all too often situated under the wider umbrella of "Spanish horror."³ Using the 2019 film *Legado en los huesos* (*The Legacy of the Bones*), this essay foregrounds more regionally specific sociocultural concerns beyond singular notions of Spanish national identity and traumas such as the Civil War (1936–39) or the Francoist dictatorship (1936–1975). In doing so, I also sketch a methodology for regional readings of

other horror traditions that might operate according to similar historical parameters, such as the genre output emanating from Ireland, New Zealand, Brazil, or Cold War Germany.

The Basque Heritage of Horror

As scholars have argued, the notion of Spain as a unitary whole is a fallacy. Prominent scholar of Basque history [Cameron J. Watson](#) describes Spanish centralist nationalism as a “pernicious myth” that demands contemporary deconstruction (44). The often “occluded identities” of marginalized cultures, such as the Basques in Spain, must, as [Darryl Jones](#) suggests, “insist on their presence” (139), through both local production and regionalist criticism. The presentation of Basque texts as Spanish problematically promotes the drive toward Spanish cultural homogeneity associated with the Francoist regime. A regionalist approach challenges this historical occlusion and can be utilized to fill troubling gaps and oversights in established scholarship as it addresses regional or “sub-state national cinemas” as unique cultural products ([Triana-Toribio](#) 12).

The historically violent Basque-Spanish socio-political relationship has a several hundred-year history. The seventeenth century witnessed a major event in this regional-national turmoil with Spanish Inquisition-era Basque subjection to witch hunts and trials. The torture and execution of Basques during the Inquisition has historically been viewed as a Spanish nationalist campaign for the suppression of this unique regional culture. Two hundred years later saw the fall of Carlism following the Carlist wars (1833–40, 1846–49, 1872–76), during which the Basque people fought for the protection of the foral Carlist legislative system (also referred to as the “fueros”). The “fueros” are a major chapter in Basque-Spanish history as these laws had allowed Euskadi a large degree of social and economic autonomy. The defense of Carlism took on a particularly aggressive tone in Euskadi as the defense of the “fueros” was directly linked to their perceived protection of an “authentic Basque culture,” regional liberties and social harmony ([Watson](#) 35). The fueros “guaranteed that the Basques were not to be integrated into either France or Castile” ([Heiberg](#) 170).

Fears surrounding the loss of regional autonomy were violently realized during the Civil War, a great impetus of which was the defense of distinct regionalisms. During this period of socio-political unrest, regional cultures were endangered once more as, following the Francoist victory and ensuing dictatorship, all expressions of regional identity were outlawed pursuant to the promotion of Franco’s “one-nation vision” ([Watson](#) 171). The “Basque problem,” as it became known, was considered to be “anti-Spain,” a disease that must be cut out “at the root” ([Molina](#) 250). Watson details a “complete and

overpowering” sense of cultural loss, exemplified by a 1941 decree that prohibited the use of “dialects” such as Euskara and forced all place and first names to be “Castilianised” (171). The Francoist regime continued the historical precedent of progressively isolating Basque society “from the Spanish national project” (Watson 173). It was in this context of oppression at the hands of Franco’s Spanish nation that the radical separatist group Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (which translates to “Basque Homeland and Freedom,” also known as ETA) was formed in 1959. For decades, the Basque region directly suffered from ETA’s increasingly violent and polarizing campaign. Though ETA activity was at its peak in the 1980s, the organization has returned to local and global headlines with the announcement of its official dissolution in 2018 following numerous failed ceasefires and severe persecution at the Spanish government.

The repression of regional identity and history that characterized the dictatorship reentered post-Franco legislation with 1977’s Pacto del Olvido (Pact of Forgetting), which forbade the imposition of sanctions on war crimes as a way of easing Spain into a democracy. Three decades later, La Ley de Memoria Histórica (Historical Memory Law), passed by Congress in 2007, became part of a larger public effort to counter this culture of enforced silence. These two legislative measures centered on the reframing of national memorialization strategies surrounding the Civil War and the dictatorship. Recent years have concurrently seen a massive resurgence in the reclamation of cultural identity, and indeed pride, in the Basque region as it emerges from the shadow of this turbulent history. In correlation with Blake’s assertion that national horror cinemas are modes unto which traumatic cultural memories may be inscribed as wounds on narratives of “cultural, social, psychic and political life” (5), Basque horror is an ideal platform for the reflection of this cultural legacy “suffering from a crippling internal rupture” and a heritage of state-enforced suppression (Woodworth 275).

Basque cultural development discourse frequently employs notions of regionally specific language, landscape, and folkloric heritage as major symbolic markers of distinction from central Spain. Any understanding of Basque culture as truly distinct from Spain must be heavily tied to its regional language. Even the term Euskaldunak, meaning “Basque people” in Euskara, directly translates to “Basque language speakers,” foregrounding the centrality of the language in identity construction. Paddy Woodworth details the “unique linguistic status” of Euskara, highlighting “its lack of any clear structural relationship to any other language in the world, and certainly none to its immediate neighbours” (282). This imbues Euskara with a “powerful cachet as the main badge of Basque identity” (282). The Francoist prohibition of Euskara forced the language into a position of state-sanctioned subalternity and repression. Only with

the post-Franco establishment of the autonomous Basque government were public measures undertaken to reinvigorate and re-embrace this language. Part and parcel with this is the increasing incorporation of Euskara in regional filmic production and, in the case of this essay, horror cinema. Key examples of recent Basque horror cinema entirely in Euskara include *Hileta* (*Funeral*, 2016), *Errementari: el herrero y el diablo* (*Errementari: The Blacksmith and the Devil*, 2017), and *Lekaipe* (*Nun*, 2018).

Another major symbol deployed as a marker of unique Basque identity is that of regional landscape. Euskadi comprises a “complex variety of ecological zones within a relatively small area” (Watson 20). This landscape includes vast mountain ranges (e.g., The Pyrenees and the Urkiola ranges); estuaries, rivers, and harsh coastlines contrasted with golden beaches along the Bizkaiko Golkoa (Bay of Biscay); a countless number of forests; and even a desert (the Bardenas Reales in Navarre). The representation of territory and landscape are core stylistic features of contemporary Basque horror cinema.

Finally, alongside language and landscape, contemporary discourses of Basque identity development frequently return to regionally specific folktales and figures of local legends. Of such figures, none can be considered to hold a more significant place in the Basque cultural imaginary than the witch. Witchcraft has been a central feature in much of the region’s horror output —*Akelarre* (*Witches Sabbath*, 1984), *Las brujas de Zugarramurdi* (*Witching and Bitching*, 2013), *El bosque negro* (*The Black Forest*, 2014), and *La trilogía del Baztán* (2017–2020) immediately come to mind. In their essay “Theorising Globalgothic,” Fred Botting and Justin D. Edwards discuss figures such as witches as “markers of otherness,” which therefore act as “articulations of the threatening changes” to the center of power as well as “representations of personal and communal losses and traumas” (11). The Basque witch has similarly served in regional history and mythology as a symbol of resistance to sociocultural suppression, heterogeneity, and devoutly Catholic central Spain. The shadow of Inquisition-era Basque witch hunts and trials continues to linger in regional heritage narratives as both a collective cultural trauma and commercial touristic opportunity. The trials and torture of suspected Basque witches were less tied to the Catholic tradition of punishing practitioners of black magic and more closely related to Spanish state fears of growing Basque independence and this ancient matriarchal society in opposition with the patriarchal Spanish center (Stone). Local folk figures, legends, and (in the Basque case) witchcraft provide an important arena for narrative construction in regionally specific horror cinema as their local significations may be employed as a commentary on the relations between the margins and the center, the regional and the national.

Case Study: *Legado en los huesos*

This essay uses Fernando González Molina's gothic-horror-noir *Legado en los huesos* to illustrate the alternating complementary and contradictory nature of national versus regional readings of horror cinemas. I have selected this particular text owing to its depictions of regional history, transgenerational trauma, local folklore, and the use of the regional language, Euskara. This film is the second installment in *La trilogía del Baztán* (the Baztán Trilogy).⁴ The trilogy follows former FBI agent Amaia Salazar (María Etura) as she returns to her hometown in the titular Baztán Valley situated in Navarre. Though Navarre is itself a chartered community with a certain amount of independence within Spain, it borders Euskadi and Iparralde (French Basque Country) and is considered part of Euskal Herria (the all-inclusive, geopolitical border-defying name given to all seven Basque provinces). Even the tourism website for the Baztán Valley is primarily offered through the Basque language (Euskara), though Castilian Spanish (castellano) is an option. In regional horror texts, local legends naturally provide a fertile breeding ground for subject matter. Throughout the trilogy, Amaia investigates a series of disturbing murders, all tied in some way to specifically Basque folklore, history, and food. The serial killer in the first film displays a traditional local cake, the *txantxigorri*, on the body of each victim and is termed by the media *el Basajaun*, after the ruler of the forest in Basque folklore.⁵ A cluster of child murders in the third film is attributed to *Inguma*, an ancient demon in Basque mythology who kills people in their sleep and causes sudden infant death by drinking the child's breath. The second and third film both incorporate the tale of the "mairu-beso" (the Moorish arm), the severed arm of an unbaptized infant. This arm, according to Basque legend, held magical properties and was often used as a torch to illuminate witch gatherings (*Caro Baroja*). Amaia solves each serial murder case while grappling with the turbulent suppressed memories of her childhood and the deeply fractious nature of her familial dynamics.

The necessity of a regionalist approach becomes evident when we consider the contrast between Spanish national and Basque regional interpretations of this text. Foregrounding regional historical readings does not detract from the ongoing Spanish national traumas and problematics associated with the Civil War and Francoism. Rather, these regional narratives and counter-memories highlight the multiplicity of national histories. This opens the text up to more plural and holistic cultural interpretations, as well as more sources of trauma and, of course, horror. A regionalist framework introduces a level of resistance, not only to rigid categorizations of horror films as "national" texts but to the long traditions of suppressing traumatic regional histories and identitarian turmoil. Such a history of conflict, resistance, and oppression certainly characterizes the Basque-Spanish, regional-national dialectic. The very notion of

a dialectic is central to the regionalist approach as it is a framework based upon comparison, dialogue and cultural hybridity. A clear symbiotic relationship exists between the national and the regional, two inextricably linked modes of cultural definition alternatively complementary and contradictory.

A specifically Spanish reading of *Legado en los huesos*, which is certainly encouraged by Netflix's inclusion of the title in its "Spanish films" subgenre, is challenged by a regionalist reading, which offers local nuance to the broadly national themes of Francoism and Catholicism, which are often (over-) simply "copy-and-pasted" onto analyses of any contemporary Spanish horror film (see [Davies](#)). Studies of "Spanish" horror cinema often rely quite heavily on this notion of a nation haunted by the Civil War and the lingering effects of Francoism.⁶ In direct relation to this national haunting, contemporary Spanish horror films can be seen to have a certain preoccupation with ghosts—*El espinazo del diablo* (*The Devil's Backbone*, 2001) and *Los otros* (*The Others*, 2001) being obvious examples—conceptually tied to the shadow of the Civil War, a far less prominent theme in Basque horror.

Legado en los huesos is not itself set during the Civil War. It moves between the twenty-first and the seventeenth centuries, though many of the aforementioned associated themes may still be gleaned from the narrative. The film opens with a title card establishing 1611 and the Inquisition-era Basque witch trials as the context in which we hear the screams of young women being burned at the stake by Inquisitors. A Spanish reading of this opening sequence introduces several interconnected themes prominent in this national cinema: the role of Catholicism, the obsession with violence, and the "Black Legend" of Spain. The Black Legend is a grotesque legacy of "cruelty and violence dating back to the Inquisition and the Conquest [of much of Southern America]" ([Kinder](#) 1). Marsha Kinder has identified an obsession with "sacrificial violence" as central to Spanish history and cinema "glamorized through the national art of bullfighting, the neo-Catholic revival, and the Fascist aesthetic, all of which glamorize blood and death" (142).⁷ This element of barbarism is apparent in the notions of Black Spain and Francoist Spain, which manifests in this opening sequence as the viewer witnesses young mothers accused of witchcraft and burned at the stake.

This "absolute power of Franco" served to color Spanish gender and familial relations in a manner that is apparent throughout *Legado en los huesos*. In a Spanish reading of the text, the family becomes a site for the interplay of Francoist, patriarchal gender dynamics. Kinder notes a general sense of the infantilization of Spaniards under Francoism as something that manifests in patriarchal mothers and impotent fathers, whose influence stunts the emotional and intellectual development of their children (214–18). [Ana Vivancos](#) articulates it well as she describes the "obsessive insistence" of Francoist state

propaganda on the “symbolic function” of the “traditional patriarchal family,” with an “all-powerful father and a submissive mother” as its locus (877). The survival of the Francoist national model relied on the conception of a powerless, infantilized, Spanish populace, ruled by the “all-powerful, incontestable masculine dictator” Franco, “often portrayed as a strict father for the Spanish people” (877). As a result of decades of such propaganda, there is a longstanding history of father figures depicted as emasculated failures in Spanish cinema. This can be observed throughout *Legado en los huesos*: from the absent fathers in the opening sequence, to Amaia’s own father’s inability to protect her from her murderous mother, to the portrayal of Amaia’s husband, James (a stay-at-home father and artist), as somehow weak or unable to handle her career obligations.

In contrast to these disempowered father figures observed in traditional readings of Spanish cinema, the patriarchal mother is “idealized and explicitly linked to the Virgin Mary as the embodiment of sacred law” (Kinder 200). A nationalist reading of this text may well consider Amaia within this category because as a police investigator she is a literal embodiment of the law. Her baby, from the outset, is aligned with the fascination with violence Kinder earlier cemented as central to the Spanish history of “blood cinema” as she goes into labor at a blood-spattered crime scene. Amaia’s investigation further leads her to search for stolen and murdered infants, clandestinely taken from their families. This plot point holds a deeper significance in the Francoist context. Under the dictatorship, countless infants were illegally taken from single mothers and suspected socialists. As these examples illustrate, a “Spanish” reading of *Legado en los huesos* centers a cultural fascination with violence connected to both rigid Catholicism and oppressive Francoism in terms of their political and ideological effects on wider Spanish society and familial relations.

The analyses of characters and settings are altered when their Basqueness is privileged. When viewing *Legado en los huesos* through a regional lens, Amaia’s fractious family relations enact the transgenerational transmission of trauma as engendered by a local and personal history of stigma and suppression. The text thus becomes a significant contribution to the promotion and preservation of a marginalized regional cultural group. A regional Basque perspective pulls into focus the transmission of suppressed regional memory and identity narratives, with the family and the home as crucial sites for this diegetic trauma process.

The permeability of borders and the vulnerability of the home space are central concerns in any regionalist approach to horror owing to the inherent regionalist opposition to and entanglement with the associated nation. This is particularly prominent in cases such as that of the Basque Country where issues of home space and “homeland” are highly contested. While Basque horror does ruminate on past traumas through the familial site and home

spaces in a manner not dissimilar to Spanish horror, this regional iteration of the genre is based in deeper anxieties surrounding language, heritage, and territory rather than straightforward ghostliness or hauntings.

The homes in *Legado en los huesos* are quite traditionally Basque; what comes immediately to mind is the abandoned Salazar family home, recognizable with the application of a regional lens as a baserri homestead. The idyllic baserri (a partly timbered, partly stone family home and rural farmstead) is a crucial image of Basque identity landscape; it “enjoys a central position within rural Basque society as a primary focus of identity, blending social, economic and cultural factors in its character as a ‘total institution’ or unit of production or social organization in rural Basque society” (Watson 53). In the Basque imaginary, the baserri has traditionally been lauded as “the citadel of traditional culture” (Heiberg 180). In the region’s horror-based filmic impulse, however, this icon of transgenerational tradition and cultural stability is repeatedly undermined in a manner congruent with accented cinema’s “continually tested” relationship with homeland and territory (Naficy 12).⁸ The recurrent foregrounding of the baserri is indicative of the regional desire to return to its traumatic past in an effort to reconcile it with a contemporary sense of self. This is the case in Amaia’s return home: she seeks to uncover the mysteries of her violent family heritage and missing secret sibling as part of her desire to solve her current murder case (as well as her own mother’s involvement in it).

Prominent sources of fear in regional horror films include notions of the home and family, of course, but also external Others, invasion, memory (and its contestations), and the incursion of the past into the present. These sources of fear naturally appear in many national iterations of the horror genre, but in regional horror they take on a deeper meaning as they highlight the relations between the regional and the national, the margins and the center. As is suggested by Hamid Naficy, home spaces offer a significant source of contestation and concern in regional horror, particularly evident in the Basque case with its history of territorial conflict. Films such as *Legado en los huesos* can be considered representations of the intersection between personal and collective trauma.

I consider Basque regional horror cinema to be an accented and therefore “deterritorialized” cultural product, which is, by definition, “deeply concerned with territory and territoriality” (Naficy 5). The distinctive Basque landscape continuously resurfaces in Basque cinema in general. That said, within the parameters of the horror genre, this landscape becomes imbued with an element of danger, foreboding, and uncertainty. The unmistakably accented “border consciousness” of *Legado en los huesos* asserts the fluid transregional status of the film’s setting, simultaneously taking place in Spain, Euskadi, Navarra, and Baztán (Naficy 31). The obsession with regional landscape is signaled in this film from the outset with the title of the trilogy referencing the

Baztán Valley. Montages of the Baztán Valley punctuate *Legado en los huesos*, bookending key sequences with expansive panning shots of fog-covered hills, rivers, and forests and acting as a Basque expression of the sublime. The constant rain, which characterizes the regional climate, builds steadily through the film until the climactic moment where the Baztán river begins to cause flooding in the town of Elizondo, the area's capital city, just as Amaia is chasing down a key suspect. The fetishization of the regionally unique landscape of Euskadi consistently recurs throughout *Legado en los huesos*, such as Amaia's son being called Ibai, which means river in Euskara. The signature estuaries, rivers, cliffs, mountains, and forests that uniquely characterize the Basque landscape are all significant visual components of *Legado en los huesos*. As mentioned earlier, the landscape in the Basque consciousness is a great source of pride and sublime wonder, and its prominence in the narrative of *Legado en los huesos* can only be fully appreciated with the application of a regional lens. This lens also reveals local territorial subtleties and nuances.

Although landscape is heavily represented in this text as a key feature in Basque identity definition, it is not the most significant; the construction of Basque identity most certainly hinges on the regional language of Euskara. While *Legado en los huesos* is largely in castellano, at certain key points characters interact in Euskara in a manner indicative of place and cultural identity. The first words of dialogue in the film are in Euskara, uttered by a rural midwife aiding childbirth in a scene immediately preceding the Inquisition sequence. The women burned at the stake are also heard speaking in Euskara. The recognition of Euskara in this scene urges a powerful consideration of the historical stigmatization and legislative prohibition to which Euskara has been subjected. The Basque "witches" speaking their regional tongue in contrast to the castellano of the Inquisitors is obviously a significant depiction of regional cultural resistance to an oppressive central nation-state. The deployment of regional language in this case acts as a mode of defiance to the national center, thus overturning "Spanish" readings of this text. The dynamics between regional and national languages or dialects are central in any regionalist approach to horror cinema; the display of resistance shown by the Basque women can only be fully realized when the sequence is viewed as a depiction of regional, rather than solely national, trauma. Later in the film, we also hear Amaia speaking in Euskara. She rarely employs the regional language in her professional sphere but reserves Euskara for family-based interactions with her sisters and elderly aunt. Amaia, it seems, wishes to locate her Basqueness solely in her private sphere.

Although Amaia does not speak Euskara at work, her regional identity refuses to be suppressed, insisting on its presence as Amaia is forced to reckon with the Basque folktales and figures that permeate her cases. In this sense, Amaia is further forced to reckon with her Basque heritage and develop a culturally hybrid reconciliation between her regional versus her national

identity. *Legado en los huesos* interpellates two key Basque folk figures, that of the Tartalo and that of the witch. The incorporation of folk heritage in this manner serves to directly territorialize the horror text in question, not in terms of the broader national but in terms of the highly specific local. The Tartalo, a giant cyclops creature also known as Torto or Anxo, supposedly resides in the woods, luring young people and children to their deaths in its cave (Barandiarán 78). The connection between the Tartalo and the infant deaths in *Legado en los huesos* is immediately legible.

By contrast, the figure of the witch holds deeper connotations not simply within the diegesis of the film but in its relation to the tumultuous Basque-Spanish history of socio-political violence. As observed in the 1611 opening sequence, the shadow of Inquisition-era Basque witch hunts must be considered a defining trauma in regional heritage narratives which lingers in cultural productions, in this case Basque horror output. This thematic preoccupation highlights a concern in regional horror with a heritage of state-enforced sociocultural stigmatization. The witches in the opening sequences are both empowered and victimized because of their Basque identity. They refuse to compromise their regional linguistic expression and traditions to appease the Spanish soldiers and thus, in their murders, become martyrs of a sort to the cause of Basque exceptionalism in the face of Spanish suppression. The memory of this opening sequence recurs in flashback for assorted characters throughout the film. Witchcraft repeatedly enters Amaia's private sphere as her mother and aunt are both engaged in occult practices while it is further revealed that Amaia's deceased twin was sacrificed as a newborn in a mystic ritual. In this manner, the film performs the transgenerational transmission of collective cultural trauma that I determine to be central to the "social, cultural and political function of horror cinema" (Blake 5).

Conclusion: Reclaiming the Regional

Regionalism prioritizes cultural groups whose identity serves to challenge the "national" borders within which it exists. As mainstream horror continues to be "internationalized"—*Cordes (Ropes)*, José Luis Montesinos 2019), *A Ghost in my House* (Okey Okoh Zubelu 2016), *Gokseong (The Wailing)*, Na Hong-Jin 2016), *Under the Shadow* (Babak Anvari 2016), *The Babadook* (Jennifer Kent 2014), *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night* (Ana Lily Amirpour 2014), *Herutâ sukerutâ (Helter Skelter)*, Mika Ninagawa 2012), *Låt den rätte komma in (Let the Right One in)*, Tomas Alfredson 2008), and *El orfanato (The Orphanage)*, Juan Antonio Bayona 2007) are excellent examples here—and national horror cinemas come under critical address, that same address must itself be nuanced, finessed to achieve a more holistic understanding of twenty-first-century redefinitions of the limits of the national and the broader possibilities of cultural polyvocality. It is only in grappling with the language and narrative

structures accepted by the center, in this case the horror genre, that the margins may truly “insist on their presence” on a platform with global reach (Jones 139). This allows contemporary horror to become a truly “glocal” (global yet local) cinematic product. Glocal horror cinema embraces cultural and commercial interstitiality. Rather than the promotion of cultural singularity, the national and the global are incorporated into the local. Any understanding of the genre itself is inherently affected, indeed altered, when approached first and foremost as a regional product. This regional lens undermines the centrality of, while engaging in a constant dialogue with, the national. These alternately contradictory and complementary identitarian prongs function best in tandem. Again, I am not suggesting the abandonment of the national framework of approach. Rather, I am making a case for the inclusion of the historically marginalized to allow for a more holistic and multilayered cultural approach to this mainstream genre. The regionalist lens thus facilitates and promotes the incursion of the margins into the center and the destabilization of cultural “certainties.”

This essay thus acts as part of a larger endeavor in regional identity reconstruction. Such an endeavor is particularly pertinent in cases in which regional identities have been oppressed and marginalized at the hands, and in the shadow, of the nation. Ann Davies uses the term “penumbra” (the partially shaded outer region of a shadow or, a peripheral or indeterminate area/group) to describe Euskadi. The concept of a Basque penumbra is an intriguing one in the context of cultural silencing and regional filmmaking practices; Euskadi is literally situated as an outer region of central Spain, its filmic output often shrouded by traditional, holistic models of studying Spanish “national” cinema and indeed Hispanic horror (see Aldana Reyes; Davies; Lázaro-Reboll). The Basques are a peripheral group existing in “the interstices of culture and film practices” (Naficy 4). The development of the horror genre within Basque filmmaking offers the ideal mode of expression for this regional cultural identity defined by states of suppression and resurgence. The regional perspective here expands existing research on Basque as well as Spanish contemporary horror, ultimately helping redefine the limits of Spanish “national” cinema by considering the challenge that Basque horror mounts to rigid holistic cultural models of the Spanish nation-state. This is particularly crucial in cases, such as in Euskadi, of severe cultural persecution. Basque regional identity has historically existed in a state of flux, alternating between states of transgression, persecution, separatism, and hybridity. Regionalism, by definition, should be taken to reject the rigidity of boundaries both identificatory and geopolitical. This essay introduces the limitations of an oversubscription to the national framework and an exploration of what is lost in the ascription of the national on regional horror output. A regional framework sheds light on local dialects, customs, folktales, and landscapes that are overshadowed or indeed totally ignored by the nationalist one. Using this framework allows

Legado en los huesos to be viewed as a regional (Basque) text in dialogue with the national (Spain), thus presenting a vision of cultural identity that is simultaneously fractal and fluid.

Hjort and Petrie were cited earlier in their assertion that “there can be little doubt that film studies today requires models that go well beyond conceptions of the nation as a monadic entity” (1). The nationalist approach, though not without its benefits, conflates heterogeneous intranational regional identities and, as an extension, cinematic outputs. This essay offers one such model by which horror cinema studies, which has historically fallen victim to singular national frameworks, may be expanded to establish a more polycentric approach to global cultural production. A regionalist understanding of the film and its relation to Basque horror, both within and without regional cinema, contrasts with certain conclusions drawn through a national reading. The thematic preoccupation with horror in contemporary Basque film texts is indicative of the diagnostic and pedagogical value of regionally produced cinemas as major contributions to the wider public reflection and discourse required for the promotion and preservation of otherwise, often violently, interrupted historiographical transmission. A regionalist framework requires more research and a deeper consideration of the markers of cultural identity in a manner that actively strays from, without losing sight of, the national. The regional is in constant, highly fluid, dialogue with the national. This framework witnesses the incursion of the past into the present and of the margins into the center in a manner that destabilizes often problematically singular approaches to “national” horror cinemas. The regional approach recognizes the landmark studies of national horror cinemas, transnationalism, and accented cinema, seeking to take such approaches a step further. In observing the interstitial, marginal “dark and shadowy contours of a new world order that . . . offers no clear image of itself” (Botting and Edwards 18), regionalism contributes to the development of a more holistic and polyvocal approach that is necessitated by the transnational, transregional modes of production and distribution utilized in twenty-first century horror cinema.

Notes

1. Many marginalized or “interstitial” cultural groups must be understood as religious or ethnic minorities as well as regionally specific cultures. Examples of such groups can be located in Northern Ireland, Indigenous or First Nations peoples in North America, the Irish traveling community, the Romani people, the Cornish people, and, of course, the many autonomous communities throughout Spain (including but not limited to Euskadi, Galicia, and Catalunya).

2. The academic journal *Horror Studies* released a special issue on “Hispanic Horror” in 2019; Antonio Lázaro-Reboll published the book *Spanish Horror Film* in 2012; films such as *Verónica* (2017), *La piel que habito* (*The Skin I Live In*, 2011), the [*REC*] series (2009-2014), and of course *El orfanato* (*The Orphanage*, 2007) continue to find global success at the box office and on streaming platforms such as Netflix.
3. Spanish cinema studies tend to subsume regionality into the “national,” often literally referring to prominent Basque filmmakers as Spanish in a manner which directly emphasizes the limitations of the nationalist approach to contemporary Spanish culture. Certain studies relegate the entire concept of Basque cinema to a single chapter in the history of Spanish cinema (see Davies; Kinder; Olney; Triana-Toribio; Zunzunegui). The Spanish national approach ignores Basque settings, filmmakers, funding, and cultural markers both intra- and extra-diegetically thus threatening to misunderstand the meaning of a film entirely.
4. González Molina’s trilogy is based on Dolores Redondo’s book series of the same name. *Legado en los huesos* is preceded by *El guardián invisible* (*The Invisible Guardian*, 2017) and followed by *Ofrenda a la tormenta* (*Offering to the Storm*, 2020).
5. The Basajaun, or Baxajaun, is the lord of the forest, a large humanoid creature covered in dense fur. He alternately uses his power and strength in gentle or terrifying ways. He is ultimately devoted to protecting nature and wildlife (Barandiarán 76).
6. Such studies (see Ajuria Ibarra; Brinks; Davies; Marot Camino) are largely influenced by Jo Labanyi’s seminal theorization connecting Derridean notions of “hauntology” to Spanish horror and Gothic texts that deal with the Civil War and the dictatorship. Labanyi articulates the lingering presence of the “ghosts” of Spanish history in the contemporary democratic period. Labanyi calls attention to the processing of national traumas through horror texts that obsess over the presence and the need to exorcise these ghosts of violent Spanish socio-political history.
7. Kinder further notes that such a “baroque” national fascination with sacrificial violence and death served to “empower both the religious orthodoxy of the church and the absolute power of Franco” (142). Spanish literary icon Federico García Lorca further asserts this in relation to the “liturgy of the bulls”: Lorca declares Spain to be “the only country in the world where death is a national spectacle” (qtd. in Kinder 143).
8. Hamid Naficy’s concept of “accented cinema” privileges the authorship of marginalized filmmakers or film industries in relation to the representation of interstitial identities in narrative, mise-en-scène as well as themes of home, trauma, and loss.

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