

THE LOST GIRLS OF DARK FANTASY CINEMA (1984-2009)

Submitted by Yana Kalcheva, to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Film, November 2022.

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ABSTRACT

The thesis will research girlhood and lostness in the young main characters of ten fantasy films directed by Del Toro, Jackson, Gilliam, Henson, McKean, Singh, Jordan, Selick, and Miyazaki in the period 1984-2009. The research will focus on adolescent traumas relating to girlhood and specifically identity and society, sexuality and repression, abandonment / isolation and fantasizing. The research will investigate the filmmakers' paralleling of those issues with archetypes and tropes originating from myth and fairy-tale traditions as nostalgic and/or subversive representations of girlhood.

The research will investigate the journeys of ten 'lost girls' in ten films which epitomise the cycle of the 'lost girls' genre. Each of these films focuses extensively on the figure of the lost girl and the implications lostness and girlhood, investigating issues of isolation, suppression, sexuality and coming of age. Each of these issues are confronted through imagination and through a clash between fantasy and reality. The chapters are each focused on a pair of two films, in which the lost girls are both at a similar age and they explore the type of imaginations and worlds that the writers and filmmakers envisage girls at that age would generate and inhabit. Investigating the similarities and shared tropes in each pair of films, the chapters explore the filmmakers' take on what imagination and fantasy can accomplish as a genre and as a coming-of-age engine for different age groups and in different cultures.

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THE LOST GIRLS OF DARK FANTASY CINEMA (1984-2009)

INTRODUCTION

This research project will explore the cinematic archetype of the 'lost girl'. Like the origin myth of the lost boys in Mathew Barry's *Peter Pan and Wendy* (1911), who go to Neverland if their parents lose sight of their wheel-cart and are not found within seven days, these female protagonists fall into vivid fantasy worlds as the result of neglect, trauma and abuse. These are mostly haunted, darker fantastical universes, addressing issues of girlhood, such as sexuality, social roles and identity. Through a comparative study of the fantasy films of Guillermo Del Toro, Peter Jackson, Terry Gilliam, Tarsem Singh, Neil Jorden, Jim Henson, Dave McKean, Henry Selick and Hayao Miyazaki ranging from 1984 to 2009, this project pairs these ten films into five chapters, each focusing on a particular age group and a type of problematised girlhood, all aiming to reach catharsis through the fantastic. I will investigate what the lost girl archetype has meant for fantastic v/s realistic notions of girlhood and in what ways it has built on the fantasy genre, discussing what the fantastic can accomplish on and beyond the screen.

I am going to argue that cycle of films has shaped itself into a subgenre of darker fantasy, intended mainly for adolescent and adult audiences, while featuring young girls at the centre of its narratives. While some of the early films explored in this research have included children in their promotion (*The Adventures of Baron Munchausen* (1988), *Labyrinth* (1986)), over the scope of 20 years they become increasingly more 'adult' and dark (*The Fall* (2006), *Tideland* (2005)) until they entirely

turn to adult spectatorship and play on the idea of the lost girl as an increasingly more problematic and traumatic phenomenon. This concept may be perceived as peculiar for genre-cinema such as fantasy – the exclusion of child spectators from the target audience group of a fantasy film featuring lavish sets, feeding from fairy tale traditions, and focusing on children immediately implies a cinematic ambition reaching beyond the predominantly commercial appeal of fantasy film, as it has been regarded by a number of critics, such as Thomas Schatz (1993: 23), or S.C. Fredericks (1973: 43-44). As summarised by Lucie Armitt:

Fantasy' is a word commonly disparaged by literary and nonliterary voices alike. Summed up in the dismissive phrase 'castles in the air'... Where fantasy is 'airy-fairy' then, realism is 'grounded' (the recent colloquial meaning of this phrase underlying the positive implications of the distinction). (2005: 1)

This juxtaposition between realism and fantasy, and reality and imagination, is confronted in the fantasy films analysed in this project. The narrative frames set in reality (which in this project is a word used to refer to the fictional sequences set in 'the real world' as opposed to the fantasy worlds) often serve to suppress and constrain the female protagonists and their 'castles in the air'. Whether through familial values that are overly conservative and anti-sexual (*Heavenly Creatures* (1993), *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006), *The Company of Wolves* (1984)), through neglect and the nostalgia from moving away (*Spirited Away* (2001), *Coraline* (2009)) through parental abuse (*Tideland* (2005), *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006)), through normative and conservative social norms (*The Company of Wolves*, *The Fall*) or through trauma (*Labyrinth*, *Mirrors* (2005), *Tideland*), 'reality' puts its weight on the girls' imaginations in a way which burdens and refashions it, until it becomes satirical, gothic or sexualised. The filmmakers use various set and costume tools from fantasy, fairy tale, early cinema,

theatre and puppetry in order to illustrate how the female child's imagination aims and/or fails to incorporate the normalities and abnormalities of reality in its spectrum. This cycle of films addresses the ways in which the imagination of the female child correlates and/or fails to correlate to reality, but more than that, it displays the juxtaposition and fusion of two girlhoods: the dream of girlhood that a girl accumulates through various child cultures, commercial or historical, and the 'reality' of girlhood that she sooner or later needs to be faced with. Alex Worley argues with regards to escapism and fantasy:

If this survey could banish any single misconception about the fantasy genre (and there are dozens to choose from), it would be the idea that fantasy amounts to nothing but meaningless escapism... Fantasy is inextricably defined by reality; how else can one define what doesn't exist except by what does? (2005: 4)

Reality and fantasy are, Worley argues, innately connected by a contrast which serves as a mutual definition; in these fantasy films the two alternative worlds co-exist on a similar principle, mutually defining and influencing each other with the lost girl caught in between, trying to author her girlhood, instead of having it authored for her by her culture.

In this research project I will focus on exploring why, in the work of these filmmakers, girlhood aims to reach resolution through fantasy, exploring the ways in which these young girls' imaginary universes can renegotiate real-life issues concerning the tensions between adult society and child/adolescent identity. In each chapter this lostness is aiming to reach a resolution through various approaches adopted by the filmmakers in order for the lost girl to come of age and rediscover her identity, culture, values and agency. I explore how different fairy-tale and fantasy

structures are appropriated by young female characters versus the different historical/cultural social structures within which they need to negotiate their transforming identities and agencies.

The Lost Girl

There has been an increasingly popular tradition in film criticism to identify and explore cinematic archetypes, both contemporary and historical, such as Katie Newstead, researching 'crones' and the problematic social implications surrounding the notion of the monstrous woman (2019) or Alexandra Heatwole and Catherine Driscoll exploring the 'speculative girl hero' (2016), as well as an ongoing investigation of the recent refashionings of classical fairy-tale characters and archetypes. Heatwole and Driscoll open their discussion of the speculative girl hero archetype with a description of 'her' characteristics:

She is brave, resourceful, and in the end powerfully effective when seeking her own ends; where she is self-sacrificing, she chooses action for the greater good comprehending what it costs her... she is the agent of her own aspirations and seeks to modify the actions of others to suit her own. (2016: 261).

Unlike the speculative girl hero, the lost girl is not always a hero, but often the victim, the sister, the sidekick or the daughter – nor can she be easily defined by 'her' own characteristics. She is defined, rather by the circumstances that surround her and her identity is often partly the result and the reaction of the world that surrounds her. She is, however, the (co-)author of the imaginary world and can therefore be partly defined by a vivid imagination. She also sometimes attempts to embody the heroic

role in some of the films explored in this project (*Pan's Labyrinth*, *Mirrormask*, *Labyrinth*), which can however in certain cases lead to her downfall, like in the first two examples; she also sometimes temporarily inhabits other archetypes, like Rosaleen (*The Company of Wolves*) inhabiting a remodeled archetype of Little Red Riding Hood or Jeliza-Rose (*Tideland*) falling down the rabbit's hole, like a dark Alice in Wonderland. She is therefore an archetype harder to define, which can also be argued to hint towards her search for an identity:

These female protagonists, often characterised by a vivid imagination, are frequently living in situations of parental neglect or oppression. These are female characters whose age varies between young childhood to adolescence and, who in most cases grow at the end of each film, entering a subsequent stage of life. All these young girls are experiencing a sense of being lost in their real-life situations – whether neglected, abused, abandoned or misunderstood. Upon discovering the dark universe which provides a rich, thrilling and dangerous escape from their suffocating environments, the lost girls begin their journeys through imaginary mindscapes. In there, their real-life situations can be translated, renegotiated and accepted. These fairy-tale and myth-inspired universes offer the contemporary fantasy filmmakers the opportunity to investigate the identity of their young female characters through and against tropes and archetypes from myth and fairy tale, which both inform issues of adolescent identity and address fairy-tale cultures, transforming, deforming and re-incarnating archetypes prominent in these old narrative traditions. Equally, issues of adulthood are addressed, whether of a larger socio-political scale (like *Pan's Labyrinth* or *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen*) or addressing adult phobias, fetishes, suicide behaviours and other psychological issues that preadolescent girls find harder to fully grasp (*Tideland*, *The Fall*, *Mirrormask*).

The Lost Girl Origins

The lost girl finds her early origins above all in the novels *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) and *The Wizard of Oz* (1900), both later adapted into films (1951,1939). *Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll is a ground-breaking classic, appearing at a time when there was a discernible shift in the perception of the child as something more than an uncompleted adult. A yearning and nostalgia emerge in the Victorian and Edwardian period for the lost innocence of childhood and the faded vivacity of youth. There is a shift in literary and cultural perspective on childhood, 'a sentimental construction of childhood that came to be valued not as a means to an end, but rather as an end in itself' (McGavock, 2009: 86). Alice's character, whose dreaming, i.e. inner world, becomes the world of the novel, is the first step in the lost girl literary tradition, in which the young female protagonist authors as well as acts with a strong sense of agency and her environment is an extension of herself, a mindscape of her psyche.

While the child itself came into focus as a young being in its own right that was precious and of interest (including academic), the relationship between a child and their imagination was not always perceived as a non-problematic one. In 1860, the celebrated British psychiatrist Sir James Crichton-Browne also published a ground-breaking work: his essay "Psychical Diseases in Early Life," in which he 'denounced the "pernicious practice" of "castle building" or imaginative flights of fancy in children, urging his readers to prohibit children from engaging "airy notions" brought about by daydreaming' (S.L. Schatz, 2015: 93). He writes:

Impressions, created by the ever fertile imagination of a child . . . are soon believed as realities, and become a part of the child's psychological existence. They become, in fact, actual delusions. Such delusions are formed with facility, but are eradicated with difficulty, and much mental derangement in mature life, we believe, is attributable to these reveries indulged in during childhood (Crichton-Brown, 1860: 303)

The child's imagination was already not regarded warmly during the Age of Enlightenment, also known as the Age of Reason (which will be discussed in more detail in chapter one), with instructions on the upbringing of children and how to protect them from an overly active imagination, such as: 'For the most part, fairy tales answer no better part than to amuse the fancy, and not infrequently at the hazard of inflaming the imaginations and passions of youth.' (Sarah Trimmer, 1805). Lewis Carroll was therefore working against the prominent backdrop of educators, scientists and philosophers who did not support the notion of a child's rampant imagination. Stephanie Schatz argues that the *Alice in Wonderland* is self-aware of these debates on the children as young minds, endangered by their own imagination. She claims that Carroll attempts to reinstate the validity of the imagination of the child through its detailed exploration via worldbuilding and symbolism:

Because the 1865 publication of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland coincides with the emergence of child psychology as a specialty field, the strangeness of the Wonderland terrain is compounded by its pioneering subject matter. Both the rabbit hole and the looking glass metaphorically reflect the reader's immersion in the dual frontiers of dreams and the child's mind. (2015: 94)

The lost girl literary and film tradition follows Carroll's example, both in terms of the 'strangeness' and surrealism of the dream-like worlds, which can be designed similarly with reference to geometry, time and mathematics (*Mirormask*), animal holes (*Tideland*, *Pan's Labyrinth*, *Coraline*) and falling asleep (*The Company of Wolves*). The allegorical dream of Alice, which in its book form plays with speech, double-entendre, nonsense and semiotics (Holmes, 1959: 147), has been translated into surreal visual experiences in the film adaptations, which have had to tackle the challenge of verbal nonsense and convert them into an unique aesthetic (Young, 1915; McLeod, 1931, Geronimi, 1951). This dreamlike, childlike aesthetic was further inspired by Tenniel's widely commended illustrations, which, alongside the verbal style, incorporate the absurd and the illogical within the journey/quest narrative of Alice. This is something which will be repeatedly encountered in the worldbuilding of the case studied films, which, in the *Alice in Wonderland* tradition, aim to externalize and celebrate the phantasmagorical and even the ridiculous aspects of a child's imagination. Visualized by Tenniel, this dreamlike aesthetic has inspired many of the lost girls' films in my view – this will be especially prominent in this thesis's exploration of *Baron Munchausen*, *The Fall*, *Tideland*, *The Company of Wolves* and *Heavenly Creatures*.

The Wizard of Oz (1900), along with presenting the world with a second lost girl going through a journey narrative, is also topical for this research especially due to its allegorizing of dysfunctional adulthoods through the figures of the lion, the tinman and the scarecrow, which is especially clearly indicated in the appraised film adaptation (Fleming, 1939), where the three friends are cast as male actors wearing anthropomorphized disguise. The majority of the films explored in this thesis will feature artistic distortions of various 'adult' shortcomings, flaws, and absurdities,

sometimes friendly and moving, sometimes ridiculed as enemies. They each serve unique, albeit comparable roles in the worldbuilding of the fantastical universes. In the case of *The Wizard of Oz* the implication is that, still unspoilt, the female child rescues the dysfunctional male adult through her innocence and empathy and helps him restore his identity as both a male and an individual. In *Baron Munchausen* adults are ridiculed as megalomaniacs, misogynists, sadists, and hygiene-maniacs as a form of playful vengeance against their neglect towards little girls. In *The Fall* the crew of renegades that Alexandria joins in Roy's epic narrated adventure are each representative of a heroic manhood typical of the late 19th century adventure stories – a spiritual mystic, an explosive expert, a genius creationist, a warrior Indian – but each one's skill is also a mania and a flaw, as a way of critiquing and ridiculing male adventure archetypes from the period.

Since *Alice in Wonderland* and *The Wizard of Oz* the lost girl archetype takes an even more psychological turn – the adventures of Alice eventually get reworked by Tim Burton in the lost girl tradition, with Alice as an adolescent (2010, 2016). The groundwork that Lewis Carroll's novel provides for the exploration of other worlds and of a girl's mindset simultaneously gradually establishes itself into a subgenre in cinema, with classical films such as Jim Henson's *Labyrinth* and Neil Jordan's *The Company of Wolves* in the 1980s. The subgenre's popularity peaks in the 2000s with *Spirited Away* (2001) *Mirormask* (2004), *Tideland* (2005), *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006), *The Lovely Bones* (2009), *Coraline* (2009) and Tim Burton's adolescent interpretation of *Alice in Wonderland* (2010). This thesis will explore the trope of the lost girl briefly in terms of its origins and in more detail through case-studies between the 1980s and to the subgenre's peak in the 2000s.

The Lost Girl Film

Normally, these films all feature a narrative frame within which the fantastical universe is first incepted and then unfolds, gradually overtaking reality, as the lost girl gradually becomes more and more involved with the imaginary sequence as opposed to reality until the two collide in the end. Sometimes the girls literally can't escape the worlds they have entered, like in *Labyrinth Mirrormask* and *Spirited Away*. In *Tideland* the fantasy world is, according to the structuralist divisions of Tzvetan Todorov, 'psychotic', fully in the mind of the female protagonist, and is not on a separate plane from the real world. Jeliza-Rose gradually loses her grip of reality, as her dolls start talking, culminating in the staging of a wedding with her mentally impaired neighbour. These dark fantasy films are provocative, and even mischievous as they offer unreal escapes from real problems – they offer unreal identities, unreal adventures, unreal friends – and the question remains, even more prominent, of the function of the fantastic and of what the fantastic can accomplish on the screen and beyond. This repeated narrative structure suggests that the filmmakers acknowledge and are interested in exploring how imagination intertwines with reality, including in ways that are more problematic and 'counterproductive'. Nevertheless, I want to argue that escapist experiences are suggested to be equal to real experiences in many of these films and serving real functions in the coming of age of the protagonists. In the case of *Tideland*, as I will argue in chapter two, Jeliza-Rose's imagination shelters her from the actual dysfunctional nature of her surroundings and helps survive the death of her father which she fails to recognise and thinks of as sleep. Falling into their dark wonderlands, these Alice-like girls all struggle to find their way through confusing places, sometimes through quests, never short of monsters and dangers, replacing

real dangers, which are something that the girls are arguably unable to digest at this early stage in life. Therefore, these real-life dilemmas and traumas are replaced by fantastical tasks and quests that they can face and vanquish, as a form of sublimation, in order to reach a sense of resolution or catharsis. The reality sequences of these films are all dead-end situations – constraining de-sexualised environments (*Heavenly Creatures*, *The Company of Wolves*) or warfare and illness (*Baron Munchausen*, *The Fall*), etc. – all circumstances that can in no way be surmounted, especially by ‘little girls’. It is therefore implied that it is only through these haunted, self-authored narratives, that the young female protagonists can reach a sense of identity, agency and resolution.

Thematically, this subgenre expands on the protagonists’ issue of feeling alone and misunderstood by externalising their fantasies and expanding them into visual universes. This serves to both give a voice to (pre-)adolescent girls who are otherwise considerably voiceless and invisible and to use their voices to echo issues of adulthood and society through as seen through the prism of girls’ haunted imaginations. The imagination of the girls becomes a form of an enhanced reality, despite being escapist. In *Pan’s Labyrinth* the Spanish Civil War is metaphorically intertwined with Ofelia’s journey, to the degree that her own figure can be perceived as a metaphor for the rebellion, as argued by Karin Brown: ‘Spain is made flesh, a character that exists in two time zones that need to be reconciled before it can heal, recover and move forward’ (2015: 55). In Del Toro’s film, therefore, the heroine herself becomes an allegory for the social situation that she finds herself in. This notion of an enhanced reality is also prominent in *Mirromask*, where the protagonist is dealing with the potential loss of a parent – after an argument with her daughter Helena’s mother falls into a coma and Helena lapses into a universe inspired by her drawings, in which

her mother is separated into the White Queen and the Dark Queen. She needs to find a cure for her mother, while protecting herself from the Dark Queen. The White Queen however is always asleep, while the Dark Queen seeks her Dark Daughter and wants to imprison her in her palace. It could be argued that Helena can only fully miss her mother when she is 'asleep' and passive, while when 'awake' she becomes the Dark Queen. All of Helena's 'fears and longings' with regards to her mother come to the foreground in her fantasy universe, in a way which is impossible in reality, which is another way in which the lost girl film functions.

In terms of perspective, the lost girl film makes a discernible step forward towards embodying the young girl's point of view on the screen. As Vicky Lebeau writes, investigating early cinema and the child's role within:

Child as spectacle, child as subject: cinema can appear to offer unprecedented access to both, its impression of reality combined with its capacity to deliver points of view that help to put the (adult) audience back in the place of a child. (Lebeau, 2008: 14).

The presence of the child as a body on screen, combined with the opportunities of cinematography (POV shots, low/high angles) certainly provides the filmmaker with the toolkit to engage with a child's interiority. In the case of the lost girl film, the subjective experience of the young girl is consistently reflected in the cinematographic decisions of the directors and her subjective experience and worldview are brought to the foreground of the story, both visually and narratively. Taking a step further in terms of putting the audience back in the place of a child, her interior world, i.e., her imagination, unfolds on the screen, occupying a position equal to that of the real world, mapping her mind through reality and reality through her mind.

In terms of gender roles, the films further address aspects of girlhood, since most 'lost children' narratives, although written and directed by male directors, feature a young girl as the films' central character. In the case of *The Fall* (2006), which is adapted from the Bulgarian film *Yo-ho-ho* (Zako Heskyia, 1981), the original male child character is actually replaced with a female one. One is propelled to wonder what type of creative thought goes behind this choice, by male directors of different nationalities, of a lost female child as opposed to a male one. Further, what concept lies behind revisiting the same narrative of the young girl lost in another world? I would suggest that on the most visceral and direct level, the domesticated female child might feel to a spectator (and male director) more exposed, threatened and vulnerable, and for films that operate on the level of fear and thrill (*Pan's Labyrinth*, *Tideland*, *Coraline*, *The Company of Wolves*, *Spirited Away*) a female child might be immediately the more tempting choice. However, I am inclined to argue that there is something beyond this stereotypical gender-role choice at play. I would argue that these directors aim to tap into issues of girlhood and female coming of age, colliding a young girls' dreams and expectations of her identity and future, as opposed to the reality of how society expects the female child to be shaped. The young female child, therefore, serves as a catalyst for society's shortcomings, particularly in terms of gender-roles and social taboos. Critics like Vicky Lebeau would take this argument even further, suggesting that 'the child in film has ultimately been used to embody the anxieties and aspirations of modern life' (2008: ix). Undoubtedly an evocative and strongly reflective figure, the female child is vehicled to represent aspects of both reality and imagination. I want to propose that these films are discussions on girlhood, exposing the limitations and repressions of society when it comes to the perception and upbringing of young girls.

The imaginary sequences serve as a celebration of the girls' imaginations and their temporary, unreal liberation from these repressions, while being simultaneously coming-of-age journeys. However unreal, they provide the female child with the adventure and the identity that the real world fails to offer. The lost girl films are therefore critiques on perception of girlhood in society as well as a celebration of the multivalent functions of the imaginary.

Main Objectives

The thesis will focus on adolescent traumas relating to girlhood and specifically identity and society, sexuality and repression, abandonment / isolation and fantasizing. The research will investigate the filmmakers' paralleling of those issues with archetypes and tropes originating from myth and fairy-tale traditions as nostalgic and/or subversive representations of girlhood. I will explore in what ways the girls in the ten films are 'lost' and how their real-life situation corresponds to their fantastical universes. I will research in what ways the fantastical world is a way for the girls to explore questions of maturing that their society and family fail to address. Investigating the similarities and shared tropes in each pair of films, the chapters explore the filmmakers' take on what imagination and fantasy can accomplish as a genre and as a way of coming of age for different age groups and in different cultures.

A leading research question for this thesis is whether and in what ways the girls can 'author' as well as 'act in' these new fantastical worlds and how that speaks to the relationship between real-life trauma and make-belief. I will look at how the fantasy reality can allow the young female characters to inhabit, renegotiate and transform female archetypes from fairy-tale traditions and how set design, costume and creature

design display the protagonist's state of mind. I am going to explore the ways in which worldbuilding affects the lost girls' real-life situations, specifically on what principles the fantastical worlds are built and how they correspond to reality. I am also going to investigate what the fantastical worlds are trying to 'do' to the lost girls – are they escapist worlds or are they 'teaching' worlds, and how they speak back to girlhood.

Further, I am going to look at how the filmmakers use the notion of 'imagination' to explore the girls' circumstances and their identities. What does the clash between the real and the fantastic explore with regards to identity and society? I will finally examine whether the fantastical can help to confront and potentially resolve the girls' issues and alter their circumstances in tangible ways.

I will look at how specific fantastical elements address the girls' real-life situations and whether imagination can 'shape' girlhood - is girlhood a period to imagine and fantasise and is imagination an integral part of developing a girl's sense of identity according to these filmmakers?

Finally, I will argue how this sub-genre of films about lost girls connects to wider research on fantasy as a genre, leaning on the research of critics such as Catherine Driscoll, Emma Wilson, and Carol Lury.

I argue that through the figure of the 'lost girl' oscillating between fantastical structures and socio-cultural structures, these fantasy films 1) reinstate the role of fantasy as a form of art and self-reflection; 2) discuss girlhood and the drama of the collision between a female child's expectations and reality and 3) reinstate the female child's agency, perspective and voice on cinema screens. I discuss the 'lost girls' fantasy film as being unique in offering a narrative and visual alignment with the lost girl, not only as a protagonist, but also as an author. I discuss this traumatic female-

child as a trope and this type of fantasy film a sub-genre in the context of genre criticism on fantasy and pre-existent discussion on girls and girlhoods on screens.

While this research acknowledges the potential paradox of discussing girlhood on screen via exclusively male directors and will address this theme, it is not the main focus of this thesis to explore the 'male' take on child and adolescent girlhood, except in the context of specific discussions within the chapters, such as hyperbolising the vulnerability of the endangered female child on screen, certain gendered choices of costume, etc. The paper will remain more focused instead on analysing and close reading the 'lost girl' as a peculiar and indicative cinematic occurrence between 1980-2010 signalling to the renewed interest in how imagination and the imagination of the female child can intertwine with themes of both fantasy and a coming-of-age genre.

Methods and Methodology

The research questions will be explored firstly through close analysis of specific sections of the films, sometimes matching reality sequences with fantasy sequences to highlight the ongoing negotiation between the two contrasting worlds and the girls' transforming identities. This research method would place this specific kind of fantasy film at the threshold between two realities and between two genres, conflicting with each other and reflecting the adolescent girls' internal conflict. Genre theory (with a focus on criticism on the fantasy genre and its increased multivalence since the early 2000s) will be most relevant to this research project, which investigates the existence, origins, and implications of a darker fantasy subgenre, driven by 'lost girls'. Further, contextual research on fantasy film criticism, studies on girlhood on fantasy screens, child trauma and neglect in contemporary cinema (both fantasy and otherwise) will

also constitute a part of the literature review and analysis of these productions. The research will also use critical film reviews, alongside some interviews with directors, screenwriters and lead actors. The research will explore the ten lost girls in these fantasy films from a cultural/historical perspective, given the transnational comparison between Mexican, British-American, Irish, New Zealand, Japanese and Indian directors, who frequently work off their own cultures' fairy-tale heritage (*The Fall*, *Pan's Labyrinth*, *Spirited Away*) for the narratives / tropes / aesthetics of their fantasy worlds. The other primary critical approach to engage with is studies on childhood and girlhood, focusing especially on the role of child-play and make-belief, and later on adolescent fantasizing as a part of the process of growing up (or refusing to). Child culture and girlhood studies are further essential to this research in sections concerning the real-life frame of the fantasy worlds, i.e. parent-child relationships or child-society conflicts.

Finally, worldbuilding, or production design/costume/creatures will be used to compare the two contrasting worlds the lost girls inhabit – colorful fantasy mindscapes versus 1910s American clinics, 1940s European military bases, 1950s New Zealand high-schools or modern-day rural Texas hillsides. These fantasy films are analysed in this study with a focus on how the lost girl's psychology correlates to set and costume through visual design, in order to develop their themes. The analysis looks at how the fantastical worldbuilding reflects psychology, exploring the lost girl as author-like figure, and discusses how she engages and reacts to her environment as a character. In these films, a lost girl falls into a vivid fantastical world that borders on her reality, through various narrative schemes of worldbuilding. This world then becomes intimate and transformative. The scheme of incorporating fantasy into the real world, or coming up with an appropriate point of interception, is a where many of the lost-girls films

connect. Their schemes vary, feeding from Todorov's structuralist approach, from 'uncanny' (psychotic), to marvellous (surreal), to fantastic (imagined). These schemes predetermine the nature narrative and visual design of the fantastic worldbuilding – e.g. gothic, satirical or fairy-tale. These are mostly surreal, haunted, aesthetically extravagant and original, as well as psychologically impregnated fantastical universes. The girls' quest or trial-centered plots often reference questions of girlhood, such agency, sexuality, social norm and identity.

Contribution to knowledge

Aside from proposing the emergence of a new subgenre in dark fantasy cinema, this research will offer a detailed exploration of ten prominent examples of the cycle of 'lost girl' films, which have not yet been placed in direct dialogue with a new focus on the concept of lost girls as the center of the research. This project will therefore offer a new critical study identifying a mid 1980 – early 2000s sub-genre centred around the idea of exploring childhood and adolescence in girls through dark fantasy narratives. The thesis will consist of five paired comparative studies of the works of Del Toro, Jackson, Gilliam, Singh, Jorden, Selick, Miyazaki, Henson and McKean investigating the filmmakers' artistic fascination with lost girls. The study will argue that the young female protagonists' fantastical journeys through haunted imaginary mindscapes paradoxically address and resolve questions of girlhood and lostness. Combining these filmmakers in a detailed formal study will also facilitate a transnational comparison, embedding a parallel discussion on the fantasy subgenre within and across specific cultural contexts.

Research Context

The research will make a contribution to genre and authorship studies and will build on existing critical writings around the selected auteurs and their engagement with young female characters (e.g. Vargas, 2014; Lindsay, 2015; Scahill, 2021). The paper will also address and aim to contribute to research on lost children in cinema (Wilson, (2003) and Lury (2010)) and within the fantasy genre especially (Heatwole, 2015; Bellas, 2017). I will engage into the ongoing discussion on fantasy's disputed claim to artistic and academic gravitas (Amrit, Worley) and, this research being a genre study, explore critical endeavours to (re-)define fantasy (Butler, Walters, Amrit). Further, from the standpoint of studies on childhood and girlhood, these narratives centred around child/adolescent female characters inhabiting the border between fantasy and reality will engage with research like Emma Wilson's study on missing children in cinema (2003) and Caren Lury's book *The Child in Film: Fears, Tears and Fairy Tales* (2010). The latter also discusses Guillermo Del Toro. The research will aim to add new insight to debates surrounding these filmmakers' works through a comparative study focused on the ways in which child trauma and girlhood identity is addressed in these new and engaging dark films which inform issues of identity and society by clashing fantasy and reality. The project will aim to answer the question of how imagination can / can't impact reality – much like the social position of the lost girl herself, often rendered irrelevant and constrained.

CHAPTERS OUTLINE

1. Chapter 1: LITTLE GIRLS IN PLAYFUL WORLDS: Terry Gilliam's *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen* (1988) and Tarsem Singh's *The Fall* (2006)

Chapter one explores two young children (6-8) in historical war periods and is most extensively concerned with the figure of the lost girl in terms of isolation. Abandonment and neglect result in the figure of the silenced wandering child, explored and nurtured through the fantastic. Employing the whimsically satirical and the pretend-epic two older male narrators introduce the two little lost girls to playful fantasy worlds, which ultimately reinstate the young female child as a figure endowed with active agency, even if only through the act of imaginative play.

2. CHAPTER TWO: YOUNG GIRLS IN IN-HOUSE WORLDS: Hayao Miyazaki's *Spirited Away* (2001) and Henry Selick's *Coraline* (2009)

This second chapter pairs two animated films, one of which adapted from a novel by Neil Gaiman, tracing the journey of two young girls (8-10), Chihiro and Coraline, into immersive and uncanny in-house worlds, representing monstrous motherhoods and, in the case of *Spirited Away*, an appraisal and critique of Japanese culture. The chapter discusses the film from the standpoint of anti-motherhood and the concept of the uncanny and the interplay between the Heimlich and the Unheimlich (familiar and unfamiliar) in both films, linking this rite-of-passage quest to the girls' evolving sense of identity and belonging as they move to a new town and a new house. The chapter concludes with a discussion on how the fantastic can educate and 'grow' children into heroes in their own right, overcoming anxieties surrounding both the domesticity of

motherhood and the fear of the uncanny, learning to assimilate them into their own worldviews.

3. CHAPTER THREE: GROWING GIRLS IN MONSTROUS WORLDS: Guillermo Del Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006) and Terry Gilliam's *Tideland* (2005)

In the third chapter the focus is on growing girls (10-12): dislocation remains a prominent theme, as the chapter allegorizes the wild exteriors permeating the two films, juxtaposed with the dysfunctional new households, in which the two girls are confined by traditional familial and cultural notions of childhood and girlhood. The fantastic is employed here as a posttraumatic journey that begins in the wild outdoors and transcends into a fantasy universe. Constructed through encounters with monstrous and fantastic creatures, this journey helps the lost girls break away from the claustrophobic interior of their household, where psychological disorders result in physical violence. The girls' journey is explored through an allegorical discussion of child-play and disobedience represented through mud and physicality and social norm and control through excessive hygiene-obsessive rituals.

4. CHAPTER FOUR: PRE-ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN MISCHIEVOUS WORLDS: Jim Henson's *Labyrinth* (1986) and Dave McKean's *Mirrormask* (2005).

This chapter explores worlds which ensnare the girls in their universes on the principle of the girls' own flaws and mischiefs. The chapter focuses on exploring how this mischief is externalised and personified, and how it ultimately is used as a

mischievous teaching method. The allure of the primary antagonists is discussed in more depth through the close analysis of worldbuilding as a visualisation of the issues surrounding identity during the early adolescent period. The close reading section focuses on the temptation of mischief and on the allure of darkness, exploring coming of age as a form of transformation and a period of vulnerability in terms of identity, which can easily go astray through the manipulation of anti-parent figures, such as the Goblin Prince and the Dark Queen. The chapter concludes that mischief sometimes needs to be committed in order to be overcome.

5. CHAPTER FIVE: ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN BLOODY WORLDS: Peter Jackson's *Heavenly Creatures* (1991) and Neil Jordan's *The Company of Wolves* (1984).

The fourth and final chapter focuses on female adolescent sexuality and the issues of its assimilation into society in the correspondent time periods of the two films. In these last two films the research will explore how fairy-tale structures are appropriated by two pairs of fantasising companions to supplant late-20th-century re-conceptualizations of girlhood, particularly in terms of sexuality and power. These multivalent transforming notions of each girl's identity fail to be reconciled with each other and can only resolve themselves through violence – the patriarchal fairy tale structure fails to support the girl's attempt to explore her sexuality and betray her back to reality, where she is forced to attempt to reconcile her sexual identity with the norms of society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Film Genre, Auteurism and Fantasy

Establishing the notion of genre in reference to fantasy is central to this research, which will explore generic convention versus innovation in a series of comparative case studies. The discussion of generic convention is a layered and multivalent debate, at its roots in the 1970s as well as in contemporary academic writing. While frequently examined in juxtaposition to auteurism and authorship theories, as genre tends to be regarded as relying on repeated patterns and familiarity, rather than self-expression, in this study authorship and genre will be discussed not as antithetical entities, but as mutually enriching and enabling vehicles of visual storytelling and expression.

Genre studies in cinema are an ongoing debate that began establishing itself more firmly in the early 1970s, despite certain key figures touching upon the subject as early as the 1950s. This early work is relevant, as it has set up both a definition and a perceived standard of what high art means in filmmaking. Andre Bazin's critical work on cinematic concepts, including genre, in his collection *What is Cinema?* made an early case for realism in filmmaking, as did the New Wave film director Claude Chabrol whose studies on film genre *The Evolution of the Thriller* and, more specifically, his work *Little Themes* argued that little and often mundane, but consistently realistic subject matter ought to be the key focus of the auteur filmmaker and should receive 'the big treatment'. The work of Chabrol and Bazin supports realism or an "objective reality" in cinema, postulating, for example, that a lack of montage, which Bazin also refers to as "the true continuity" as a paradoxical joke, is the much preferable approach

to cinema, as it leaves the freedom of interpretation in the hands of the spectator. Supporters of neorealism, these film critics see the concept of 'realism' not only as a preferred filming style, but also as the much stronger standpoint regarding content.

The less 'realistic' genre of fantasy has been held up against this high-set 'ideal' of both filmmaking approach and subject-matter, receiving sporadic academic attention and beginning to come into critical focus only in recent years (discussed in the following section).

Despite an increasingly elaborate genre debate beginning in the 1970s, this pre-existing academic work had already established a standard for the 'serious' kind of cinema: the films endowed with gravitas were those bearing self-evident relevance to reality and hence – to real-life concerns, that realism engages with through a direct mirroring of the familiar and known reality. This earlier, European standard is often seen in direct juxtaposition with the mass-production genre films, in which, as Barry Grant writes, the word 'genre' acquires a predominantly audience-expectation, profit-driven meaning, as well as a quite derivative one:

Stated simply, genre movies are those commercial feature films which, through repetition and variation, tell familiar stories with familiar characters in familiar situations. (...) They have been exceptionally significant in establishing the popular sense of cinema as a cultural and economic institution, particularly in the United States, where Hollywood studios early on adopted an industrial model based on mass production' (Grant, 2015:264).

According to Christine Gledhill's research it is precisely this academic treatment which led to the development of genre criticism in the 70s for two reasons: a desire to engage with these previously dismissed genres of US and Britain films in a more serious manner and a desire to counterbalance, challenge or replace the dominant

approach to cinema criticism – auteurism. The influence of the French film journal, *Cahiers du Cinema*, had grown significantly, beginning to permeate the critical approach to cinema with the idea, coined by Francois Truffaut, of ‘la politique des auteurs’ (1954), centring the film’s creation around the figure of the director and seeing the film above all as their own self-expression. As Steve Neale observes:

Intellectuals, critics and reviewers had been at best patronising and at worst overtly hostile to Hollywood and its films — on the grounds that they were commercially produced, aimed at a mass market, ideologically or aesthetically conservative, or imbued with the values of entertainment and fantasy rather than those of realism, art or serious aesthetic stylization. (Neale, 2000: 8)

Here the idea of fantasy as something frivolous, light and immaterial in terms of appropriate subject-matter – and closely linked to the term ‘entertainment’, – stands directly against the idea of the higher art form with an aesthetic which offers its own stylized comment on reality. This research aims to argue that the contemporary fantasy films explored in this case study offer just that – an aestheticized commentary on reality.

Yet, as auteur theory was both a respected and fruitful approach to investigating cinema in terms of form, style, theme and mise-en-scene, it has leaked into the academic discussions of Hollywood cinema, without necessarily being particularly well tailored to it. Auteurism was, however, a way for those who wished to ‘analyse – and validate – Hollywood cinema’ to acquire a valued and ‘valuable critical stance and... a valuable set of critical tools’ (Neale, p.9). However, jumping as little as a decade ahead, ‘classical’ auteur theory begins to be perceived as something of a ‘a dead language’ and ‘an escape into the romantic aesthetics of bourgeois criticism, away from the actual conditions of production’ (Caughie, 1981: 11). The idea of auteurism

as a hopelessly 'romantic' approach to cinema is consistently stressed by critics such as John Caughie, for example (1981: 11, 21, 38, 264).

This research will engage with further predominant ideas of authorship, such as those of Sarris (1962) and Wollen (1969), aiming to maintain a balance between the practical realities of film production and the still existent individual vision of an artist-filmmaker within a collaborative production. The study's exploration of four of the established leading figures in contemporary fantasy filmmaking, Guillermo Del Toro, Peter Jackson, Hayao Miyazaki and Terry Gilliam, will look at these directors' works as aligning and contrasting case studies pushing the boundaries of the fantasy genre forward, by both breaking generic conventions and engaging with them creatively. The research lends itself to both theories of authorship and genre, as Del Toro, Jackson and Gilliam work within a very strong generic framework, fantasy often being perceived as highly archetypal (and borderline stereotypical) genre; nevertheless, with a strong sense of intertextuality within their respective films, these filmmakers all explore innovation through an individual re-tailoring of fantasy's conventions.

As mentioned earlier, genre writing provided an alternative to auteur theory, however, 'genre' is a concept notoriously complex to define. The art critic Lawrence Alloway, for example, 'resists the temptation to establish "classic" timeless dimensions in popular forms. He insists on the transitional and ephemeral character of genres, of cycles and of any individual popular film' (Gledhill, 1985: 64). A contrasting work on genre, Tom Ryall's research, adopts a structuralist and taxonomic approach, focusing on the classification of specific genre components. He offers a definition of genre:

The master image for genre criticism is a triangle composed of artist/ film/ audience. Genres may be defined as patterns/ forms/ styles/ structures which

transcend individual films, and which supervise both their construction by the film maker, and their reading by an audience (Ryall, 1976: 27).

While genre can dominate not only audience expectation or the critical eye of the academic, but also film creation, this research is more in agreement with the ideas of Alloway or the work of Steve Neale. While the majority of critics readily recognise the elusive and transient nature of generic research, many Hollywood-based productions embrace this essentially artificially crafted phenomenon – the genre – and its formulaic and ‘ritualistic’ (as argued by Lukow and Ricci in 1984) guidelines, creating a generic audience expectation, both repetitive and commercial in nature, thus closing down the prospect and opportunity in filmmaking, predetermining what a film of a specific genre can be ‘allowed’ to consist of. This view will be addressed further in this research when investigating the films of Del Toro, Jackson and Gilliam in terms of the contextual film background against which they have been crafted, within an industry, which often pigeon-holes productions, in particular through the marketing value of genre.

Lukow and Ricci construct an argument detailing the notion of ‘intertextual relay’ in Hollywood cinema. The term, as explained by Steve Neale, refers to:

...the generation of expectations, the provision of generic images, labels, names, and hence the provision of evidence as to the existence of genres, as to their prevalence in Hollywood’s output at any particular point in time, and as to the meaning, application and use of genre terms. (Lukow & Ricci, 1984: 36).

What ‘intertextual relay’ exposes, is the generation of what essentially becomes a restricting set of expectations in the audience and an appetite for a self-limiting product, constructed largely from repeating patterns. This research will use this idea of genre as an insightful and practical notion meant to accompany the critic, more so

than to navigate or predetermine the work of the filmmaker; however, as observed by Rick Altman 'genres provide the formulas that drive production', they are 'defined by the film industry and recognized by the mass audience' (Altman, 1999: 1). Altman perceives genre as a practical tool of cinema production, which fulfills multiple functions: genre is simultaneously a formula that precedes, programmes and patterns industry production; a formal framework on which individual films are founded; a label central to the decisions and communications of distributors and, importantly, a contract – 'the viewing position required by each genre film of its audience' (Altman, 1999: 15).

While Altman's observations on the nature of film production in Hollywood, but also worldwide, are undeniable, it may also be argued that there are, nevertheless, certain films, such as those which this case study will explore (*Pan's Labyrinth*, *Cronos*, *Heavenly Creatures*, *The Baron of Munchausen*), which engage with their respective genres in a creatively metaphysical way and deliberately break the 'genre contract', generating some generic friction, but also offering new insight both into their experimental subject-matter and the boundaries of fantasy's generic framework. Steve Neale recognizes two types of films in terms of their way of engaging with their genres:

...there is a difference between films which are designed to conform, however broadly, to pre-existing categories, expectations and models, and those, like *Un Chien Andalou*, which are not. The latter may encounter expectations and those expectations may be based on previous films or on the tenets of a movement or a group. They may conform to labels or descriptions circulated in advance by critics, distributors, reviewers, perhaps even film-makers themselves. And they may all establish their own internal norms... But many of these norms are often unique to the films themselves. Thus the films are less predictable in advance, and at more or less every level. That does not

necessarily make them better. But it does make them different. (Neale, 1986: 24).

While acknowledging that every film necessarily exists within a cultural, industrial and artistic context, Neale also draws a distinction between genre conformism and non-conformism. He establishes that films and filmmakers make a deliberate decision on how they choose to engage with genre and have an individual attitude towards existing frameworks. This distinction is a useful one for this research, which will argue that the fantasy filmmakers explored are all extremely conscious of pre-existing frameworks and their films are designed to not conform, but rather to readily investigate, play with and sometimes fully break their generic conventions.

Fantasy Criticism and Theory

Research focusing on ideas of mythology/folklore archetype and reimagined history, concepts of psychology, as well as on theory aiming to draw parallels and differentiations within the generic frame will be informative of this study.

One of first landmarks in fantasy criticism, Tzvetan Todorov's book on the fantastic (1975), adopts a structuralist approach, dividing fantasy into three categories: the uncanny, the fantastic and the marvellous. The uncanny, frequently measured in terms of the audience's anticipated response (fear), occurs when a character has a subjective experience of the unfamiliar, confusing, or impossible within a fictional universe that does not embrace the supernatural (fiction on madness, hallucination, obsessive fantasizing). The 'marvellous', contrastingly, is a fantastical occurrence perceived as normal and the norm of its universe, with no overarching 'reality' beyond it. What Todorov calls the 'fantastic' is the oscillation between these two extremes, a

proposed subdivision, where neither the character nor the audience are certain whether the fantastical element is 'real':

The fantastic occupies the duration of this uncertainty. Once we choose one answer or the other, we leave the fantastic for a neighbouring genre, the uncanny or the marvellous. The fantastic is that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event. (Todorov, 1975: 25).

Contemporary criticism on fantasy and its sub-distinctions tends to consider Todorov's theory as insufficiently inclusive and nuanced in its handling of the genre. As Walters writes, 'Todorov's book refers to a very particular type of story that 'hesitates' between natural and supernatural explanation, and as a consequence leaves out whole swathes of other fantasy works.' (Walters, 2011: 101). Other critics, like Lucie Armitt, with whom this study agrees, regard Todorov's theory as a useful categorisation, and constricted mainly by the limitations embedded in structuralism itself. Armitt argues Todorov aimed at dividing the genre on the basis of one specific angle, without the ambitious goal of crafting an all-encompassing genre theory (Armitt, 2005: 31).

This research will be referring to Todorov's work, which informs a couple of elements brought into focus, such as the shifting levels of authenticity, credibility and 'realistic' visual renderings of the fantasy universes. *The Lord of the Rings* (a 'marvellous' fantasy) is a universe meticulously constructed without the juxtaposition of an overarching 'reality' beyond it, which its aesthetical style reflects.; *The Adventures of the Baron of Munchausen* engages with obsessive daydreaming – or, some critics argue, with darker undercurrents of psychosis (Hamel, 2013: 55), – and the worldbuilding of this alternately uncanny and fantastic universe is flamboyant,

frivolous and unstable; *Pan's Labyrinth* oscillates between the fantasy element/the realistic world and the spectator, like the protagonist, is never certain whether the fantasy universe is a figment of her imagination or a paranormal occurrence – the definition of a 'fantastical' fantasy; this conflicting collision of fantasy and reality is clearly mirrored in the film's production design. Therefore, Todorov's research will be helpful for this research.

Rosemary Jackson, often seen as a leading landmark in fantasy criticism, explores fantasy in terms of psychological implications. She argues that 'fantasy characteristically attempts to compensate for a lack resulting from cultural constraints: it is a literature of desire, which seeks that which is experienced as absence and loss' (Jackson, p 1981: 3). Jackson explores fantasy's relationship to desire in terms of an (occasionally simultaneous) manifestation or expelling:

Fantasy can tell of, manifest or show desire or it can expel desire, when this desire is a disturbing element which threatens cultural order and continuity. In many cases fantastic literature fulfils both functions at once... In this way fantastic literature points to or suggests the basis upon which cultural order rests, for it opens up, for a brief moment, on to disorder, on to illegality, on to that which lies outside the law, that which is outside dominant value systems. The fantastic traces the unsaid and the unseen of culture: that which has been silenced, made invisible, covered over and made 'absent' (Jackson, 1981: 4).

Jackson argues that fantasy becomes a socio-political engine through its psychological and social relationship to a desire to expel certain aspects from civilization and manifest others that either no longer exist, or never have. This research will similarly argue that the perception of a number of issues that intrigue or trouble society (the past, the future, politics, femininity, masculinity, coming of age, phobias,

regimes, ideologies and more) are seen at a highly crystalized form in fantasy, through the manifestation not only of desires, but visualisation of any kind of internal perception, shaped symbolically and at times acquiring a personified active agency through tropes of national and transnational history, mythology and folklore.

The work of Jack Zipes, a prolific figure in critical fantasy research, writing with an emphasis on fairy tale and the folklore tradition, will inform this study. In *Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk and Fairy Tales*, Zipes writes on the ideology of early fairy tales originating from the oral folk tradition and their gradual transformation into consumerist products (a devolving he traces back from the Enlightenment period to contemporary film adaptations (Zipes, 2002: 1548 (these citations are given in kindle pages)). Zipes stands for the belief in the educational value of fairy tales and their ability to open up 'alternatives' to human existence:

Insofar as [fairy tales] have tended to project other and better worlds, they have often... provided the critical measure of how far we are from taking history into our own hands and creating more just societies. Folk and fairy tales have always spread word through their fantastic images about the feasibility of utopian alternatives, and this is exactly why the dominant social classes have been vexed by them, or have tried to dismiss them as "Mother Goose" tales, amusing but not to be taken seriously (Zipes, 2002: 179).

This research will address Zipes' concept, arguing that fantasy is a confrontational genre, apt for exposing the imperfections of society through visualisations of real dreams, as well as fears and anxieties. Zipes further comments in subsequent chapters of *Breaking the Magic Spell* on the degrading process of adapting fairy tales into mass products, critiquing 'an industry which seeks to make the masses into automatons not autonomous beings' (Zipes, 2002: 1566). In *Fairy*

Tale Films Beyond Disney: International Perspectives (co-edited by Zipes) Laura Hubner comments on the intricacy and national awareness in Del Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006), using it as an antithetical example to Hollywood's more commercial adaptations of the fairy tale genre: 'emphasising — particularly in the face of ongoing adversity or entropy — the importance of the internal journey or return, linked allegorically to a national return, to a lost or forgotten identity' (Hubner, 2016: 262). This research will similarly argue that in fantasy's frequently stereotype-dominated fantasy genre the film directors explored provide a meaningful alternative to what fantasy can signify and entail, opening up, rather than closing down, the fairy tale/fantasy tradition.

In her book *Managing Monsters* Marina Warner draws a distinction between the implications and reactions to monsters created by nature and those monsters originating from men or man-made (Warner, 1994: 484 (kindle pages)) – a concept relevant to the analysis of films like Del Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth*. Warner also discusses the idea of the nature of monsters and monstrosity as something defining human nature, 'especially the role of men' (Warner, 1994: 466). This concept will be of help to this research, which will attempt to examine the coming-of-age transformations of characters like Juliet (*Heavenly Creatures*) and Rosaleen (*The Company of Wolves*) through their encounters with the monstrous, as well as those of three young female characters, inhabiting the liminal time of girlhood, in which, being under-feminised and still children, they can partly embody the roles of heroes (*Pan's*, *Baron Munchausen*, *The Fall*).

Focusing on archetype, trope and symbol, concerned with addressing their psychological and socio-cultural significance, this research will argue a point similar to Ursula Le Guin's theory that:

‘The great fantasies, myths and tales... speak *from* the unconscious *to* the unconscious, in the *language* of the unconscious – symbol and archetype. Though they use words, they work the way music does: they short-circuit verbal reasoning, and go straight to the thoughts that go too deep to utter... They are profoundly meaningful, and usable – and practical – in terms of ethics; of insight; of growth.’ (Le Guin, 1979: 62).

This citation by the fantasy writer and critic Ursula Le Guin is probably among the most useful to both this study’s visual and psychological approach to fantasy and girlhood, lostness. The citation from *The Language of the Night* does suggest, as I read it, a dream-like ‘symbolism’ imbedded within its fantastical nature – however she also appears to suggest this ‘symbolism’ acts upon the psyche in a subconscious manner which is more evocative than allegorical. Furthermore, this quotation zooms in fantasy’s capacity to enable ‘growth’ – as it appears both intellectual and ethical. This argument will be referred to in this study in the later sections, discussing the case-studies together, in critical alignment with the concept of fantasy like ‘a language of the unconscious’, which I would argue, has common roots. ‘Imagination’ without being a collective phenomenon, does share a similar language with another imagination and shared fantasy mindscapes are therefore possible (between a fantasy director and a spectator, as well as between an adult narrator and a young listener, as in chapter one). This research will argue that fantasy bridges the inner-self language of the subconscious with reality through the collective language of national and transnational imagination in a meaningful collision.

Undefining Fantasy

In this project 'fantasy' as a genre will be explored as it has been referred to by Lucie Armitt, David Butler and James Walters, being in itself an 'umbrella term'. Walters describes it as 'a fragile, ephemeral and volatile element in cinema, prone to emerge in unexpected places as well as shaping itself into the dominant facet of certain fictional worlds' (Walters, 2011: 52). The concept of fantasy as a multivalent engine, or an 'impulse', is also focused on in David Butler's definition: 'fantasy is an impulse rather than a single coherent genre; there are, of course, a number of genres and sub-genres in which the fantasy impulse is pushed to the core. It is a range that continues to expand as new types and trends appear (Butler 2009: 43). Fantasy can be used to encompass a great variety of genres: 'utopia, allegory, fable, myth, science fiction, ghost story, space opera, travelogue, the Gothic, cyberpunk, magic realism; the list is not exhaustive' (Armitt, 2005: 1) - which makes defining its nature an elusive and a constantly transforming process. As this study's exploration on fantasy and worldbuilding is centred on films that deal with imagination in a surreal way and are concerned with the nature of imagination, this loose generic convention is what the study will use to define fantasy.

Relevant Definitions of Fantasy

In terms of establishing some generic borders of this genre, this thesis will use James Walters' research: 'Building upon the nature of fictional worlds to contain a series of facts and events particular to that world and distinct from our own, fantasy cinema expands the terms of credible occurrence, reshaping the world into new, and uncharted, extremes.' (Walters, 2011: 423). Walters' observation of fantasy as a visionary expansion of visual (im-)possibilities is something that I would like to return

to during my analysis of fantastical worldbuilding in Chapter One. I would like to build on this observation by arguing that this 'probing of the visual frontier' is one of the main aesthetical benefits of fantasy, and it is one of the strongest characteristics of fantasy worldbuilding as an aesthetic. Fantasy worldbuilding as a unique and probing aesthetic further enhances the visceral impression of being admitted into the private individual imagination of a 'lost girl'.

Lucie Armitt observes: 'Fantasy sets up worlds that genuinely exist beyond the horizon, as opposed to those parts of our own world that are located beyond that line of sight, but to which we might travel, given sufficient means (Armitt, 2005: 2). Fictional film universes that the viewer perceives as being 'imaginary' or 'impossible worlds on screen', as David Butler calls them, is how this research will approach the idea of the 'lost girl' fantasy film.

Hans Richter's identification of the fantastical film as a genre whose function is to confront, distort and change reality, 'allowing the impossible and the most nonsensical to become visible' (Richter, 1986: 53) is a definition which strongly informs this study. In my reading, this identification depicts the genre's style as a visualization of the impossible and proposes that its engagement with reality is one of confrontation/ distortion/ change. This research project is very relevant to this definition, but in this study the idea of fantasy's function to 'confront, distort and change reality' would be best discussed alongside the argument this study makes on fantasy as a form of the imagination at play in Chapter One.

Commercial and Other Definitions of Fantasy

The word 'fantasy' can also carry a number of less positive connotations. Steve Neale's (though not expressing himself specifically on fantasy) division of films into conforming and non-conforming is applicable here. Neale argues that 'there is a difference between films which are designed to conform, however broadly, to pre-existing categories, expectations and models, and those, like *Un Chien Andalou*, which are not' (Neale, 1999: 24). Thomas Schatz for example writes on fantasy as a genre:

...we see films that are increasingly plot driven, increasingly visceral, kinetic, and fast paced, increasingly reliant on special effects, increasingly "fantastic" (and thus apolitical) (Schatz, 1981: 23).

I want to dissociate from the idea of fantasy as being required to function a symbolic medium through which the real world has to be explained. While critical writing on fantasy as an educational allegorizing of the real world is frequently more case-specific, in my opinion this approach to academic writing on fantasy can sometimes place the idea of fantasy, fantasizing and playfulness specifically, in a conceptual frame which indirectly invalidates them as an end itself. E.g. Ofir Hairvy on Terry Gilliam argues that the three main characters in *The Brothers Grimm* (2004, discussed later in the chapter) each epitomise one of three political views in Germany. James K. Hamel writing on Terry Gilliam's *Baron Munchausen* is thematically engaged with obsessive daydreaming and psychosis. For this research project I would be much more interested in building on approaches to fantasy listed below.

Fantasy Defences

Most critical writing on fantasy tends to open with an awareness of this dismissive line of thinking about the genre and a desire to engage in a debate, where they attempt to validate fantasy as a noteworthy genre. Alex Worley identifies an urge to overthrow these academic attitudes as the primary goal of his fantasy survey: 'If this survey could banish any single misconception about the fantasy genre (and there are dozens to choose from), it would be the idea that fantasy amounts to nothing but meaningless escapism... Fantasy is inextricably defined by reality; how else can one define what doesn't exist except by what does? (Worley, 2005: 4).

This rhetorical question implies that fantasy serves as topical and multi-layered way of engaging with the real. It is inevitably a comment on what does exist. This research will suggest that fantasy allegorically reflects human concerns by mapping out visualizations of dreams and anxieties through the genre's imagined universes, which are both intertwining, as well as pre-defined by reality.

The debate on whether realism is indeed endowed with more academic gravitas and socio-political relevance as an art-form is one inevitably encountered in academic fantasy writing. It is not a particularly simple one, often resorting to the observation that all fictional writing is equally 'unreal' (Armitt, 2005: 3). While such an argument is somewhat theoretical and, one could argue, complex to sustain, some time ago T.E. Apter makes a persuasive attempt to assert the relevance of the fantasy genre, through the idea of psychologically suggestive 'surroundings':

As practised readers of fiction we can gauge the point and legitimacy of conclusions drawn from fantastic as well as realistic premises... The fantastic circumstances can be viewed as economical and effective means of revealing characters' interests and emotions which would be disguised or modified in

surroundings well ordered by comfort or custom; in this way they would be seen to have the same purpose as the realist's plot. (Apter, 1982: 2)

What Apter refers to as 'surroundings', the *mise-en-scene* or the production design, is accurately described as always being an artificially and thoughtfully fabricated fictional reality, intended to hint at aspects of both character and the film's universe. This is the allegorical layer at the core of production design, as interviews and essays by leading production designers explain. This research will argue that fantasy and the films of Del Toro, Jackson and Gilliam especially use the allegorical potential of production design meaningfully and evocatively, by simultaneously othering their sets and constantly feeding from and into real-life influences. The argument that Walters makes on the subject of fantasy's relevance to reality pushes this point further:

Fantasy without mimesis would be a purely artificial invention, without recognizable objects or actions... Fantasy [has] a fundamental bond with a reality that we understand and experience as humans in the world. As Attebery observes, 'We must have some solid ground to stand on.' I would expand this by suggesting that fantasy relies not only upon a mimetic reproduction of the world's physical facets – its objects, languages, customs, for example – but also forges a sincere connection with the ways in which we experience and understand that reality: the facets of sentient human existence. In fantasy we discover not only fragments of our world, but fragments of ourselves. (Walters, 2011: 718-179 (kindle pages))

This definition will later be referenced in the next chapter's discussions on satire as a subverted mimicking of the real world. Overall, this study aims to propose, through its discussions on the fantastic through the lost girls' fictional experiences with it, that

fantasy is a public art form and as a private imaginative act, which – even when it does so – in no way required to have a political or social function, in order to have a claim to critical and artistic interest – as will be discussed in the first chapter.

Fantasy theories

Fantasy research focusing on worldbuilding and visual aesthetics, and symbol and psychology will be informative of this study. Particularly post the creative works (as well as critical essays) of Tolkien, fantasy writing has become less associated with meaningless escapism and considered increasingly to be a ‘progressive rather than reactionary’ (Baker, 2011: 457) type of fiction. According to contemporary scholars fantasy is a genre easily lending itself to psychoanalytical (Rosemary Jackson, Frederic Jameson), socio-political (Brian Attebery) gender (Bacchilega, Rieder), or historical/folklore readings (Bradford Eden, Zipes).

Fantasy Cinema Criticism

This section will focus specifically on fantasy and fairy tale cinema and the way it has been approached critically. Firstly, fantasy cinema is often approached from the perspective of world building. In his book *Film Worlds* Daniel Yacavone discusses worldbuilding from a holistic perspective, arguing that even though there are certain inconsistencies and incompletions in the making of imaginary film worlds, they should be explored from a phenomenological perspective and experienced in a holistic manner in order to overcome these incongruities (Yacavone, 2015: xxii). This thesis will employ a similar approach to worldbuilding – a phenomenological way of analysing

the fantasy worlds, where disbelief is suspended through subjective experience. The universes are viewed as a cognitive and cultural experience, in which ‘perception, intuition, imagination, reflection and interpretation all play a part’ (Yacavone, 2015: xviii). This approach to fantasy film is a very useful one for this thesis, which will focus on how girlhood and lostness are wielded through fantasy worldbuilding and that worldbuilding itself is an evocative, intuitive experience which can therefore be analysed phenomenologically to tease out its perceptual and symbolic complexities and implications to the fullest.

Further, in his book *Building Imaginary Worlds*, Mark Wolf points out that the building blocks of worldbuilding differ, to a degree, from those of other narrative media entities, which are often determined by the narrative line (or lines) they contain – and therefore their ‘success’ is determined by whether they advance the story or not. Worldbuilding does not advance the story directly, but rather has ‘a wealth of details and events, which... provide background richness and verisimilitude to the imaginary world’ (Wolf, 2012: 2). This study will preoccupy itself with discussions on set design and wardrobe as formal elements of worldbuilding, in order to analyze the ways in which fantasy intertwines with the concept of girlhood and lostness, arguing that these visual details play a pivotal part in the experience of the fantasy film and the figure of the lost girl. I will explore worldbuilding, again, as a visceral, subjective experience, in agreement with Mark Wolf, who argues that the construction of imaginary worlds should be approached not from a narrative perspective and through narrative means, but rather that ‘They are realms of possibility, a mix of familiar and unfamiliar, permutations of wish, dread, and dream, and other kinds of existence that can make us more aware of the circumstances and conditions of the actual world we inhabit.’ (Wolf, 2012: 17). This research is especially interested in the symbolic dimension of

the fantasy worlds, not only in terms of the lost girl figure and how they correlate to her 'real-life' circumstances, but also in how they correspond to the real world. In this second dimension of analysis the lost girl herself becomes a vehicle for the dreams, dreads, wishes, etc. of the individual – an especially vulnerable one, due to her age and gender, as will be further discussed in chapter one and later.

To add to the approaches to fantasy cinema, this time exploring the films as a whole, Alexander Sergeant proposes, building on some of the key pre-existent research on fantasy definitions mentioned above (e.g., Armit, Butler), that fantasy cinema should not be defined in terms of what it is, but rather on what it does. This approach, also not unrelated to phenomenology, is something that this research will also employ in order to successfully discuss the uses of archetype, genre tropes, narrative structures and their intended effects and implications. Sergeant also points out that fantasy depends primarily on suspension of disbelief and the spectator's willingness to engage in it: 'fantasy cinema seems to exist because certain films allow spectators to engage in an imaginative experience of phantasy' (Sergeant, 2021: 234). Sergeant explores the reasons why fantasy is pleasurable and why 'disbelief is exciting' or in what way can 'incongruities feel good' (Sergeant, 2021: 307). He is also investigating the value of fantasy, like his predecessors, but from a new angle, debating what fantasy accomplishes and transposing its value onto the spectator and on the fantasy film's intended effects. This research will be similarly focused on the functions of fantasy, both through worldbuilding and the interplay between archetype and novelty, evocation and symbol, and the impregnation of old tropes and motifs with new meanings.

James Walters, in his book *Alternative Worlds in Hollywood Cinema: Resonance Between Realms* focuses specifically on fantasy cinema which presents

'two (or more) divergent spaces that are dimensionally separate from each other' (Walters, 2008: 10). He lays out the contrast between the diverging worlds in terms of 'everyday' and 'imaginary', but also points out that these worlds, being each alternative in their own way, 'make that alternative important to the characters, and to us, for different reasons (Walters, 2008: 10). This latter distinction is very important to this research, which similarly argues that the choices made in the worldbuilding detail of each world correspond, directly or in an evocative fashion, to the figure of the lost girl and are indicative of her identity and emotional states. Walters then, similarly to Todorov, proposes to divide these types of divergent imagined worlds, into three categories: imagined worlds (where the character dreams or hallucinates a world away from the one they inhabit), potential worlds (where a character visits 'and alternative version' of the world they inhabit – like *Coraline*, which this study will discuss at length) and other worlds (where a character travels entirely to a different world from the one they inhabit). This distinction is very useful for this study, where the choice of what type of 'travel'/experience to have in order to connect the two worlds is directly indicative for the psychology of the lost girl figure and for the way in which we should experience her identity, girlhood and sense of lostness. In *Tideland*, where the imaginary world is fully hallucinatory, for example, the vision of imagination and fantasy is distinctly darker than, for example in the narrated dialogical universes of *The Company of Wolves*, *Baron Munchausen* or *The Fall*, or the alternative realities of *Coraline* and *Spirited Away*.

Moving on to fairytale cinema, Laura Hubner, in her book *Fairy Tale and Gothic Horror* (2008), investigates how the intertwining of fairytale tropes and motifs with gothic ones generates further horror. Her research is highly relevant to this thesis, in which a lot of the narratives take on a much darker turn, subverting classical fairy tale

and fantasy motifs in order to discuss the darker undercurrents of girlhood and lostness within society. Hubner discusses the ways in which fairytale elements can universalize the historically specific, offering timeless alternative visions beyond time and space, while gothic elements illuminate the dark and wild sensations that drive the human being between rational and irrational forces. This research will similarly investigate the ways in which classical fairy tale and fantasy motifs are wielded to a darker, more psychological purpose in fantasy films focused around (or featuring) the figure of the lost girl.

Childhood, Girlhood and Young Girls on Screen

In her book *Cinema's Missing Children* (2003) Emma Wilson discusses the topos of the missing child, observing that: 'The missing child, lost or dead, offers an ironic and painful contrast to the championing of family values and restorative nostalgia'. (Wilson, 2003: 14) Wilson analyses films in which the lost child is missed and mourned, further observing that while the dreams do not lapse into wish-fulfillments such as daydreams and hallucinations of the missing child, in these films 'cinema is used as a medium in which to play out such losses, to debate their meanings and to offer them cultural significance' (Wilson, 2003: 7). In the case of the lost girls in the fantasy films of Gilliam, Singh and the other three directors subsequently explored, it is not the parents' mourning that is played out and given cultural significance, but it is the young girls' autonomous, isolated existence that is brought into discussion and propped up as culturally significant. Instead of suspending the sight knowledge of the 'lost girl' and making the spectator mourn for her absence, like the figure of the missing child, the lost-girl as a figure operates on the basis of full

immersion into the imagination of the 'lost child' – until her mind becomes equivalent to active agency. She is discussed in the first chapter as a small wandering figure, permeating long sequences of the film. Caren Lury's research on the figure of the child as a body and an actor in films about the war is discussed in closer reference to the wandering lost girl. This chapter will aim to add to discussions on children and fantasy, like Wilson, Donald and Wright's (2017), discussing children's imagination as a way of assimilating the surrounding world and exploring their ambitions. I would further argue that fantasy, both as a narrative artform and as imaginative play (as it is dually presented in *Baron Munchausen* and *The Fall*), could be discussed as more than a universal supplement of early childhood development, but can also be a way of nurturing a neglected child back to pleasure and learning through playfulness.

A coming of age through fantasy

The films explored in this research project blend fantasy narratives with coming-of-age themes and motifs and by doing so partly subvert some conventions of the coming-of age genre. While a coming-of-age broadly defined as the journey from childhood to adulthood', some of its motifs involve love pursuits, new adult experiences and psychological disorders until the eventual relinquishing of one's childhood and acceptance of reality. In this sense the lost girl film as a genre, can be argued to claim that re-establishing one's identity in spite of external experience is at the core of coming-of-age, rather than becoming more experienced with the external world. In some other generic motifs, the lost-girl film is very like other coming-of-age cinema. As a film genre some of its leading motifs include undergoing "a journey of self-

discovery”, entering “a new age” or acquiring “a more developed sense of self” (Selbo, 2015: 290). Although loss and trauma are frequently experienced by the protagonists in the course of coming-of-age narratives (Driscoll, 2016: 29, Fox, 2017: 5) a prominent topos of the endings is “a growth, some sense of mature awareness” (Fox, 2017: 5). This is achieved through ‘a rite-of-passage *challenge* that requires bravery and overcoming one’s fears’ (Fox, 2017: 7) or through attaining a better understanding of trauma, loss, social or sexual problems through *experience* (Driscoll, 2016: 2, 29). This study will aim to identify coming-of-age as a genre and a motif and will discuss it extensively in chapter two on ‘Pan’s Labyrinth’ and ‘Tideland’. Critical writing on fantasy and maturing, such as Jessica Balanzategui, on the ‘child transformed by monsters’ (2015) or Richard Lindsay ‘Menstruation as a Heroine’s Journey in *Pan’s Labyrinth*’ (which will also be referenced for design analysis) will be informative as an approach on writing about coming-of-age within fantasy and vice versa.

Guillermo del Toro

Guillermo del Toro’s *Pan’s Labyrinth* (2006) has been subject to a lot of critical attention, often as a part of the ‘Hispanic Trilogy’, including *Cronos* (1993) and *The Devil’s Backbone* (2001). The two latter films will also be alluded to in this study, as films centred around children and monsters and often referred to critically as the Hispanic Trilogy. My project will gesture briefly towards *Pacific Rim* (2013), with regards to monster interpretation and creature design. *The Shape of Water* (2017) will be examined in a closer comparison with *Pan’s Labyrinth*, analysing the amphibian man next to the faun (both performed by Doug Jones) and also juxtaposing male figures of authority as villains both prone to types of secret fetishism and narcissism.

To aid this worldbuilding research, the study will allude to the collection of books chronicling individually the art design and production process of several of Del Toro's more known films, alongside interviews with the director and the art department leading specialists, including Del Toro's *Cabinet of Curiosities* (2013) on further establishing the filmmaker's directorial and artistic style. *Pan's Labyrinth: Inside the Creation of a Modern Fairy Tale* (2016) offers the reader a scene-by-scene analytical depiction of the filmmaking process. *The Shape of Water's* critical book (2017) interweaves a descriptive breakdown of the narrative with some close analysis of both the film universe and the characters (McIntyre, 2017: 77) and details the process and intention behind the design of the amphibian man, explaining that 'the plausibility of the story rested on the authenticity of the creation – audiences would need to believe that this curious being could win Elisa's heart... He needed to be physically attractive, and he needed to possess a beautiful soul' (McIntyre, 2017: 41) – this description ties in with a recent interview (2013), in which Del Toro discusses the connotations embedded in Pan's creature design.

There are two collections of critical essays, focusing on Del Toro as an auteur figure in contemporary fantasy cinema, which both explore a number of topics relevant to this study, such as, firstly, monstrosity. *The Supernatural Cinema of Guillermo Del Toro* (2015) is a selection of articles which concentrate in Part One primarily on the monster in terms of origins and unusual placement within the hierarchy and nature of Del Toro's fictional universes. Research like Jessica Balanzategui's 'The Child Transformed by Monsters' will inform this research more, as it deals with the relationship between the supernatural and child trauma in Del Toro's films:

Del Toro's supernatural horror films are deeply underwritten with the lingering effects of childhood trauma: a vision of trauma that exists at the interface

between personal and cultural identities, expressed via a vacillation between supernatural and material horrors. (Balanzategui, 2015: 66).

The supernatural and the monstrous here is seen as a both psychological and allegorical expression of childhood trauma encountered at a crossroad with 'material horror'. This study slightly differs in its perspective on the monstrous as a peculiar kind of progress for both the films' character and their respective worlds. Juan Carlos Vargas' article on child vision (2014) explores the constructs and significance of monstrosity and coming-of-age journey, arguing a concept useful to this research:

[Del Toro's child characters] are at once victims, witnesses, and heroes who face a traumatic journey of initiation and discovery in a violent world where fantasy and reality are intertwined... these children form strong bonds with monsters that are transformed into benevolent and liberating figures that help them along their tortuous and brutal journey. (Vargas, 2014: 183)

My research will argue that Toro's monsters serve to personify both the fantastical and 'real' concerns within the fictional worlds and can guide the young protagonists to their potential resolution.

The other dominant thematic undercurrent that this research will address in Del Toro's films is the concept of individual identity, entering into an intricate symbiotic relationship with national identity: something strongly suggested, both narratively and visually, particularly in the Hispanic Trilogy. *The Transnational Fantasies of Guillermo Del Toro* centres its essays around explorations of religion, national history and politics, thematically dividing the filmmaker's English-language and Spanish-Language Films. Articles such as Miriam Haddu's 'Reflected Horrors: Violence, War

and the Image in Guillermo Del Toro's *The Devil's Backbone*' will be looked at in this study. Haddu discusses the manifestation of the spectre/ghost as a symbol of a dual-faced mortality and representative of the boy's personal past/the national past as well, assuming 'both the form of a monstrous vision, alongside its role as representing ethereal vulnerability' (Haddu, 2014: 144). Karin Brown's article will be especially connected to this research's themes, discussing at its first part 'ghosts [as] a symbol of a breach in time, a presence that according to nature shouldn't be there — the past impinging on the present and the future' (Brown, 2015: 53).

Finally, cultural influences will be addressed in this study as a dialogue wherein folklore and visual cultural heritage is borrowed and reworked in order to craft layered, evocative universes. Dolres Tierney's essay 'Transnational Political Horror in [The Hispanic Trilogy]' investigates the workings of the horror genre reimagined by Del Toro as a new 'hybridized' artefact of national and transnational film culture, tapping into 'a shared Hispanic imaginary and explore cultural, local, and political material specific to Mexico/Latin America and Spain.' (Tierny, 2018: 163). Taking this view into account this research will focus on visual representation of monstrosity and the child's individual identity relating to national identity.

Terry Gilliam

Considerably less critical work has been written on the films of Terry Gilliam. While referring to the director's wider filmography, this research will engage primarily with *The Adventures of the Baron of Munchausen* (1989) and *Tideland* (2005). The research will explore the films' fantasy worlds as an evocative mind-space for encountering young girls encountering certain social and psychological concerns from

the adult world. The project will look at contrasts such as imagination versus reality and fraud/madness versus fantasy/magic; girlhood and potential heroism versus objectified femininity (or its attempted rejection in *The Adventures of the Baron Munchausen*); idealization of fantastical extravagance versus the grotesque of grounded reason (and vice versa); and more. Interviews with Terry Gilliam (1996, 2004, 2016) will be informative of this study, especially the filmmaker's commentary on production, vision and aesthetics in his fantasy filmography. *The Cinema of Terry Gilliam: It's a Mad World* (2013) will be the primary critical material that my research will draw from. The essay collection explores the director through a series of critical works analyzing Gilliam's films mostly separately. Ofir Haivry's article 'It shall be a nation': Terry Gilliam's Exploration of National Identity, Between Rationalism and Imagination' bases its argument on *The Brothers Grimm* (2005), arguing that there are two ways of assimilating the information of external reality – rational and imaginative – and the way they feed into national identity, which will tie into my conceptualization of fantasy as a re-working of an individual's perception of reality. The article also offers a semi-allegorical reading of the film's lead characters:

It proposes that the film inventively outlines three approaches to political identity, by associating each with a corresponding character who embodies their respective national character (Hairvy, 2013: 104).

Examining the film's characters as archetypal products of their time, or personifications of certain national characteristics, feeds into this research's interest in archetype – in this case speaking of national identity archetypes, grounding the fantastical within a psychological demographic map of the film's historical era. While the article is written on another film, it strongly connects to *Baron Munchausen* and

reflects Gilliam's revisited artistic debate with logic and rationality versus the fantastical.

In *Masters of the Grotesque* (2012), Schuy Weishaar theorizes Gilliam's understanding of the grotesque as a primarily carnivalesque 'mixing together of incomparable elements for its own sake' (Weishaar, 2012: 84) within the prism of imagination and its problematized relationship to reality in the filmmaker's cinema. Weishaar focuses on the extremity of this relationship, arguing that Gilliam's films present the spectator with a number of 'married' polarities:

intertwined polarities, each extreme of which seeming to rely upon and insinuate the other. Each is married to the other, as in this scene, where the opulence and rejuvenation of one side is only possible because of the ruination and violence of the other. Gilliam's films are particularly interested in finding the places where the poles meet (Weishaar, 2012: 85).

This assertion applies to a number of Gilliam's films – *The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus*, *Tideland*, or, again, *The Adventures of Baron of Munchausen*, which presents the viewer with an unstable world of metamorphosis, in which forms evolve and devolve according to the protagonist's mood. The universe of *Munchausen*, which my study will explore in depth, exemplifies Gilliam's understanding of the grotesque as a carnivalesque meeting point of polarities: the film mocks both the imagined for its frequent absurdity and the real for its blandness, asking which one is mocking the other more, and which one is embraced at the expense of its antithesis.

Not much academic work has been done specifically on *The Adventures of the Baron of Munchausen*. Hamel's article 'The Baron, the King and Terry Gilliam's Approach to the Fantastic' contrasts the Baron's wild and irrational imagination with

the 18th century 'Age of Reason'. This historical-cultural approach will be similarly employed in my research. Hamel interrogates the director's psychological approach to the fantastic as an experimental handling of the fantasy genre, grounding the research in Todorov's theories, complexified by the film's constant interplay and disregard for reality.

Very little has been written on Sally, the Baron's young sidekick, and this research will attempt to draw parallels between her and several other child-characters in terms of the liminal concept of girlhood in fantasy. The protagonist of Gilliam's *Tideland* (2005) will be explored in this parallel, where Katherine Laity's work on child abandonment in *Tideland* will be relevant to questions of girlhood, the child perspective and healthy or toxic attempts to resolve childhood trauma (to be examined in reference to a number of Del Toro's films, as well as Jackson's *Heavenly Creatures*, *The Lovely Bones*).

Peter Jackson

Much has been written on Peter Jackson's adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings* (2001-2003) and some on *The Hobbit* (2012-2014), both of which will be explored in this study only in reference to articles focused on Peter Jackson's production design/worldbuilding and interest in horror and fantasy as a genre. There is no published criticism on *The Lovely Bones* (2009), which this study will allude to, as well as no extensive research yet on *Heavenly Creatures* (1994) which will be explored in detail.

A film review by Mark Deming notes Jackson's shift in filmmaking style in *Heavenly Creatures*: 'After winning a cult following for several offbeat and darkly witty

gore films, New Zealand director Peter Jackson abruptly shifted gears with this stylish, compelling, and ultimately disturbing tale of two teenage girls whose friendship begins to fuel an ultimately fatal obsession. The film engages with the idea of communal imagination turning into an increasingly maniacal fantasizing, following the obsessive friendship of two adolescent girls, and blurring out the psychological border between the characters' communal imaginary universe (which the audience encounters visually) and their reality. A new study on *Heavenly Creatures* by Andrew Scahill explores ideas of the gradual sexualisation of the two teenagers' friendship and the coming-of-age element in the film (*Heavenly Creatures: Queer Fantasy and the Coming-of-Age Film*). This research will touch upon ideas of adolescent sexuality, as the teenagers' fascination with their made-up universe is in part sexually driven, but will remain more focused on the visual nature of the narrative, where the devolving aesthetic of the adolescents' fantastical shared universe mirrors their obsession and the progressively darker undertones of their friendship.

Some LOTR-centred articles can be relevant to this research, which will focus on visual associations within the aesthetic of the film universe. *Tolkien on Film: Essays on Peter Jackson's LOTR* (2005) focuses on scriptwriting and the creative process, as well as on the place of the films in cinematic history, with some work on gender roles in the films (in conversation with gender roles in Tolkien's fantasy epic). Gender research is relevant to this study, which will engage with female archetypes in fantasy in particular investigating concepts of girlhood versus female adulthood as visualizations in fantasy worlds can be useful in addressing Jackson's representations of girlhood in *Heavenly Creatures*. For example, the scene where Kate Winslet's 13-year-old character Juliet Hulme is running through a meadow in an elaborate princess gown, living out a chichish fantasy of womanhood as seen in fairy tales.

Neil Jordan

In its final chapter this research project will focus on Neil Jordan's *The Company of Wolves* (1984), based on Angela Carter's short story of the same name in her 1979 collection *The Bloody Chamber*. Co-written by her and Jordan, the film is a dark tale of horror, folklore, morality and transformation, following the path of a young girl, maturing into a figure of sexual desire and appetite. It is not a standard horror film, Rockett claims: it 'belongs to the sub-genres of the female gothic, the werewolf and the nightmare, as well as to the genres of (sexual) coming-of-age, fantasy, surrealism, expressionism and *film noir* (Rockett, 2003: 37). This mid-eighties dark modern fairy tale has been subject to more critical attention, particularly as a part of critical explorations of the tale of Little Red Riding Hood being revisited and reinvented. Sara Martin's article 'Little Red Riding Hood Meets the Werewolf: Genre and Gender Tensions in Neil Jordan's "The Company of Wolves" (2001) focuses on the adaptation process from Carter's short story to her joint screenplay with Jordan and traces the narrative further back to its folk and fairy-tale sources. The article is most relevant to this project in its explorations of class and gender threats relative to maturing girls in *The Company of Wolves*, arguing these threats peak in tales of rape and domination, requiring a behaviour which is neither 'too submissive, nor too aggressive' (Martin, 2001: 24) and exploring the historical male fetishism to 'spoil' an adolescent girl's youth. The article also analyses the fear from liberated sexualized femininity as the monstrous in women. My project will explore the complex issue of adolescent sexuality and sexual repression in maturing girls both in *The Company of Wolves* and *Heavenly Creatures*.

Sharon McCann's article "With redundance of blood": Reading Ireland in Neil Jordan's *The Company of Wolves*" argues that through Rosaleen's journey the narrative reflects 'just how uncertain that destiny was in the turbulent and terrifying years of the early 1980s' (McCann, 2000: 68), in a way which is similar to Del Toro's Ofelia dream journey also being representative and reflective of Spain's civic rebellions in the mid-1940s. Emer and Rockett's critical book *Neil Jordan: Exploring Boundaries* (2003) more central to the final chapter's theme of independence and sexuality being concerned with the complex sexual liberation of the protagonist as a coming-of-age journey. They argue that through her at once submissive and shrewd behavior Rosaleen 'repositions herself so that she can be free to seduce the wolf, not as a victim, who enjoys his seduction, but as an active agent' (McCann, 2000: 81). This reading is very useful to my project which explores the young girls' positions of power and/or independence relative to adult society and men in particular.

Carole Zucker's article "Sweetest Tongue Has Sharpest Tooth": The Dangers of Dreaming in Neil Jordan's 'The Company of Wolves' (2000) is relevant to this project, which explores the need of young girls to fall into fantasy as a mindscape of confrontation and resolution. Zucker argues that the 'anxiety-provoking' reality of Rosaleen is too much and 'must be relegated to her dream self'. (Zucker, 2000: 70). Contrary to this project, this article argues that the young girl's fantasies take her further from being able to cope with her fear from becoming a woman and relinquishing the power of a young girl – 'The sweet tongue is Rosaleen's dream of a mellifluous fusion of nature and culture, of powerful femininity and desire without reproach. The sharp tooth must then surely be the more painful reality into which Rosaleen must grow up.' (Zucker, 2000: 71). This project will contrarily argue that visceral, full-blooded

fantasy is a rite of passage, which enables Rosaleen to end her late childhood by becoming a woman through her own imaginary narratives.

Tarsem Singh

Aside from briefly partaking in critical overviews of the contemporary fairy-tale adapted for the screen (*New Approaches to Teaching Folk and Fairy Tales*, ed. Jones and Schwabe (2016); *The Routledge Companion to Media and Fairy-Tale Cultures*, (2018)), the main critical material available on Tarsem Singh's *The Fall* (2006) are online film reviews and video interviews with the director and cast.

Jim Henson

More recent critical writing on *Labyrinth* tends to oscillate between three primary topics: (1) girlhood in terms of trauma and dissociation and the ways in which an imaginary world can address these issues; (2) the craftsmanship of effects and a dark fairy tale aesthetic, and (3) the body in performance with reference to David Bowie's casting in the film and his stardom status, all of which will be explored in chapter four. S. Carrol specifically writes on the girl as a dreaming figure (2009), while Sasha Lapointe explores the journey through the labyrinth as a journey through trauma (2019), both of which are themes relevant to the exploration of lostness and girlhood.

Hayao Miyazaki

There has been a lot of critical writing on Miyazaki and Studio Ghibli, especially on the academy awarded *Spirited Away*. Some is referencing an attempt to revive

Japanese Culture in *Spirited Away*, while simultaneously critiquing it (Susan Napier, 2006; Catherine Whitehurst, 2022). This research will be relevant to the thesis's exploration of fantasy worldbuilding and the ways in which it references and feeds from reality. There are also interviews specifically on Chihiro and her coming of age, which will be discussed in the chapter, along with a study on gender by Bacchilega and Reidar (2010).

CHAPTER ONE: LITTLE GIRLS IN PLAYFUL WORLDS: Terry Gilliam's *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen* (1988) and Tarsem Singh's *The Fall* (2006)

1. Introduction

This chapter discusses how fantasy and storytelling are used to inform notions of lostness in the representation of girlhood on screen, specifically that of little girls, around 6-8 years old. I explore how fantasy as an act of imaginative play can nurture a sense of identity in a little 'lost' child through the case-studies of two fantasy films intended primarily for an adult audience – *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen* (1989) and *The Fall* (2006). Despite being oriented towards an older audience, the films are co-centered around two little girls, Sally and Alexandria, and two adult hero-narrators, who guide them through a make-belief journey in narrated whimsical, playful worlds.

These two girls are lost in the sense of parental and cultural neglect and are both dismissed on the basis of both age and gender as mere 'little girls'. They are therefore introduced to a carnivalesque adventure, where their gender is surmounted

by the heroism that they demonstrate on their quest and their early girlhood social limitations are overcome through adventure tropes borrowed from boyhood (Alexandria even trans-dresses as a bandit, with her costume mimicking that of the Bandit Prince (Roy)).

Through the story-telling abilities of their mentors, who are both undermined by their époque's cultural concept of adulthood and manhood as the result of injury and old age, the two little girls find themselves engaged in an oral fantasy narration, in which they can participate as both characters and authors. Over the course of the two films, the little girls' narrated escapist experience supersedes the mundane routine of their respective environments, where they are neglected and dismissed, and is supplanted by whimsical realities, in which the epic, the absurd and the carnivalesque are celebrated and used to satirise and subvert the normativity and pragmatism of the films' cultural periods – and of 'adult culture' as a trans-cultural concept.

The chapter aims to explore the functions of the worlds the two little girls begin to inhabit through the narration of the two male narrators and to investigate how fantasy can subvert reality and help 'little girls', who in 'adult' culture can often be perceived as impractical and unimportant, to acquire a sense of identity and self-importance. The chapter explores how the playfulness that the fantasy genre allows, such as transforming worlds with impossible sets, anthropomorphic characters and carnivalesque subversions of adulthoods, can guide the girls towards an understanding of the world, which is at once imaginary and real, whimsical and practical. The chapter argues that playfulness and imaginary worlds can subvert the typical 'role' that the little girl occupies in 'reality' as someone without a particularly active agency; the generation of a make-belief reality allows her to express herself as a hero and an author, asserting her perspective on reality through transforming it,

together with the adult narrator, into a world of her own, where playfulness and childishness supersede adulthood, practicality and reason. Fantasy thus subverts the practical take on reality that the two films open with and through the generation of a playful world satirises and overcomes the limitations of the dullness and pragmatism that adulthood embodies in *Baron Munchausen* and *The Fall*.

The chapter will look at research surrounding the two respective time-periods when the films are set in order to discuss 'the age of reason' which is antagonised and satirised in *Baron Munchausen* and briefly look at accounts of childhood during World War One, when *The Fall* is set. The chapter will rest its research more on studies like those of Karen Lury, and Emma Wilson on children (building on the idea of the impact of the child on screen), and Catherine Driscoll on girlhood and girl 'habitus'.

These two films have not yet been explored in close pairing and the chapter will aim to investigate the connotations behind their similarities, especially in terms of childhood and the state of lostness, which in this chapter especially signifies the feeling of neglect, isolation and inconsequence that Sally and Alexandria are visually displayed as experiencing at the outset of the films. The chapter will aim to answer the question how fantasy as a genre, incepted into a 'reality' setting, connects to childhood and to feeling lost. I will aim to argue that through playfulness, e.g. through worlds of make-belief which incorporate improvisation, co-authorship, whimsy and free transformations of sets and characters, childhood is nurtured and lostness is overcome through an escapist experience, generating a new identity which the child transports into reality, leading to an improved sense of agency. The chapter will focus on the concept of playfulness as an approach to the fantasy genre (particularly in oral narration) and the ways in which playfulness is employed in *Baron Munchausen* and *The Fall* to subvert normativity and pragmatism and to allow the child and the disabled

narrators to actively stand up against their antagonists and 'win the war' against reason and adulthood, which they finally 'defeat'. The chapter concludes that this 'battle' is in fact a battle of perspectives, exploring the films as a celebration of playfulness over logic and reason, and respectively – of childhood over adulthood, and fantasy over reality.

The Age of Reason and the Age of War: Ages of Adulthood

The films' opening acts, set in the 18th and the early 20th century, highlight the social neglect towards young children, particularly in terms of imagination and child-play. This tension is enhanced by the time-periods in which the two films are set offering a retrospective look on childhood and fantasy and interrogating the effects of the two specific public spaces - public establishments and public exterior town-spaces – that the filmmakers present the little girls as being confined to. Both film directors have distinctly set their films in 'serious' times during which children and imagination were invalidated or neglected. Removing both films from their adaptation sources in terms of time-period, the filmmakers choose to explore the conflict between imagination and reason retrospectively. *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen* are originally set earlier in the 18th century, and the Enlightenment period, following only several decades after the children's books publication, did not leave them with a favorable heritage, but had them satirized for flamboyance and lack of authenticity. In his 1989 film Terry Gilliam satirizes back. *The Fall* is adapted from a Bulgarian film called *Yo-Ho-Ho*, written by Valeri Petrov, which is set at a hospital at the seaside in the 1980s. However, both adapted films use an 'age of reason' and an age of war in order to frame the fantasy narratives with rigidity, normativity and pragmatism. They

further make use of these historical time-periods for the imaginary sequences, especially to satirize the villains and villainies of their made-up worlds, which closely mimic normative convention and pragmatic rationality and are what both the narrators and the fantasy worlds themselves 'fight' against.

The historicization of the films permits the two filmmakers to set their plots in time periods of cultural disillusionment with the heroic, the adventurous and, above all, the imaginary. In 'Baron Munchausen' the story is set in an unnamed city sieged by an Ottoman army. The made-up city, implied as partly Germanic through accents and 18th century Viennese public, is designed as an umbrella city to epitomize the 18th century European Enlightenment City. The artistic decision to create an umbrella city which emphasizes specifically classicism, helps the playful thematic periodization of 'Baron Munchausen' allegorizing even the 'reality' sequences in the film through set design. After the establishing shot of the made-up classicist city, the title '18th Century: The Age of Reason' fades in. Referencing the Enlightenment period in Western Europe, favouring classical measures and structures in the arts, and logic and rationality as primary individual and social virtues. These 'virtues' satirised in Gilliam's production are later re-addressed in the fantasy world and embody the follies of adulthood and is a way to reassert fantasy as both a genre and a valid approach to reality. The Age of Reason, overtly didactic in its postulates, propagandizes reason and logic as virtues not only higher, but also as juxtaposed to fantasy and fanciful whimsy. At the start of the film, in order to satirise these didactic postulates, the film shows the group of 'public servants' who are overseeing the war, as agreeing to behead an officer who risks his life beyond the call of duty, calling him a 'rebel' whose actions 'prevent other soldiers from leading normal, ordinary lives'. As Deirdre Baker discusses in their overview of fantasy with regards to children, 'in the nineteenth

century, the valorising of science and utility, as well as the exercise of prudence, moderation and reason, tussled with children's enjoyment of reading materials that some educators felt undermined rationality and proper understanding.' (Baker, p. 80). Such materials, like, as cited by Baker, *Thousand and One Nights*, the Legends of Arthur or adventure stories like *Guy of Warwick*, were considered, by rationalist educators such as Thomas Day, Maria Edgeworth and John Locke, to be 'dangerous and confusing to mind and soul': "Why should the mind be filled with fantastic visions instead of useful knowledge?" (Maria Edgeworth, 1796) or "For the most part, fairy tales answer no better part than to amuse the fancy, and not infrequently at the hazard of inflaming the imaginations and passions of youth." (Sarah Trimmer, 1805). This then, is the backdrop against which Terry Gilliam brings to life 'The Adventures of Baron Munchausen', which would have been considered precisely the kind of narrative that is simultaneously unhealthy for being 'improbable' and 'stimulating unhealthy desires' (Baker, 2011: 81). However, the illustrated German tales for children and adolescents of the adventures of a 'loosely real' baron, written by Rudolf Raspe in 1785, were a much more recent narrative than, for example, Arthurian legend or the Scheherazade *A Thousand and One Nights* collection. The peak of The Enlightenment in the late XVIII century (officially starting with Kant's publication on Enlightenment in 1784) would have put an untimely end to these recent very popular children's novels. This untimely demise of the baron's flamboyant adventures is the starting point of the film, which opens with a crane shot on the half-destroyed statue of Baron Munchausen on his horse at the centre of the sieged city. Much like Tarsem Singh in 'The Fall', Terry Gilliam additionally creates a war environment – a fictional siege of the unnamed city by the Ottoman Empire – in which the fantastical seems in no position to make a claim of importance, within an overly-politicised conflict which, it seems, only planning

and reason can resolve. Yet, the discussion on the war satirically opens with the governors' confusion why the Sultan has attacked them on a Wednesday, when they were accustomed be sieged regularly on a Thursday. The Baron, contrastingly, claims the Sultan wants to destroy 'his' city because he cannot forgive the baron for winning an embarrassing bet on wine with him when he was a guest at his harem, and proclaims that he alone can therefore stop the war – which only Sally instantly believes.

Playing with the idea of the German aristocrat's epic and quirky narratives as they would have been perceived during the hten of European Enlightenment, Terry Gilliam uses the quasi-real figure of Baron Munchausen jarring his improbable heroic feats against the highly praised realism of the Enlightenment period. The film therefore is a playful provocation against the values of 'The Age of Reason' as they would have been seen through the figure of the 'Baron' – and through the eyes of a young female child. Equating the two perspectives, the child's and the aged hero's, and thus uniting against the age of reason, is a union of imaginations and playfulness against dullness and pragmatism. Starting the film with the broken stature of Baron Munchausen on his horse and ending it with the statue being reforged and the real baron celebrated, as he departs on his real horse, Gilliam aims to reinstate the never-certain role of whimsy and the fantastical in the world and specifically in the child's world. These novels were intended for children to be able to dream of the world's 'wonders and curiosities' through the epic travels of the perfect aristocrat-adventurer, therefore the Baron as a figure is already a symbol of a child's imagination. His 'dethroning' is also already a dethroning of a child's dream of an adventurous adulthood, in which the grand, the heroic and the splendid can partake in any form. However, the Rudolph Raspe novels were strongly intended for a young male audience, while Gilliam

chooses to focus on the character of a little girl as the Baron's partner in his last adventure. The choice of Sally as the story's counter-lead is a further provocation against the time period, this time both in a historical and a literary sense. The original novels were intended for boys, however, in his 1989 appropriation of the baron's world, Gilliam manifests a little girl's imagination as not only equal in its claim to importance and relevance, but also as equal in content – in terms of a fascination with wanderlust, adventure, whimsy and satire. The inversion of the presumed gender of the child-recipient of the baron's adventures further subverts the cultural period explored in the film and celebrates fantasy as a way to reinstate a child's claim to an identity as a child, a girl and an individual, through co-authoring and co-living the fantasy story generated by the hero-narrator. Replacing the female child with the presumed male child for whom heroic travels or renegade quests, like those in 'The Fall', would originally have been intended in the late XIX and early XX century, demonstrates an externalisation of a female child's imagination in historically and culturally male world. Both male narrators are also quasi-personas of the auteurs of these two fantasy films and an allegory for an author and a storyteller. Therefore, the acceptance and focus on a female child, instead of a male child, by the fictional narrator is equally an acknowledgment and an integration of the female child's imagination on screen by Terry Gilliam and Tarsem Singh and can be argued as an attempt to demonstrate the lack of little girls in history, literature and even on screens thus far (1988 and 2006).

The Fall (2006) is set one year after the start of World War I in a Los Angeles clinic, in which an immigrant girl is healing her broken arm from falling while employed with her surviving family to pick fruit. She encounters a crippled stunt-actor recently left by his fiancée. While the film's main narrative line keeps away from the recently erupted war in Europe, the young girl's home was destroyed during the war by 'angry

people' and her father is not with them 'because of angry people'. Childhood culture had been considerably re-fashioned since the mid-Victorian period, with fanciful fantasy being 'valued in association with imagination, sympathy, and understanding' and 'considered essential to the development of the child's mind, even to the success of a nation.' In the words of Charles Dickens: 'a nation without fancy, without some romance, never did, never can, never will, hold a great place under the sun (1854)' (2011: 81-83). Stories for children, therefore, had already become a part of a collective national identity and an essential tool for child development and maturing by mid-nineteenth century, resulting in an unprecedented amount of publishing for children; the latter part of the century further enhanced the idea of the importance and nostalgia of childhood and the figure of the romanticised child. 19th century narratives for children are at the core of the narratives, which the narrator, Roy Walkers, invents for Alexandra, including a fictionalised version of a young Charles Darwin, before his theory of evolution (which Roy explains to Alexandria was in fact the idea of his pocket partner – the monkey Wallace). The elaborate retrospective 19th century costumes and cultures referenced in the fantasy worlds Roy invents for Alexandria's amusement stand in stark contrast to the 20th century hospital setting of the film. The hospital, painted and lit in pale green, with metallic and pale sets and props, signifies a reality which is orderly, neat and meticulously organised and maintained, in which Alexandria, as discussed in the next section, cannot find a place, where she can be a child. In this mid-war environment imagination has been ejected from clothing, literature, social culture – and even childhood. Therefore, the 'make' of Roy's fantasy worlds romanticises the period directly preceding the newly established WWI socio-cultural environment, which also penetrates literary and educational traditions:

20th century narratives, particularly those of a fantastical nature, were newly challenged by the reality of the first world war. David Blamires observes that while there is a lot written on the first world war surrounding all disciplines, ‘what was written for children and teenagers has virtually disappeared from awareness’, citing the brief account made by Mary Cadogan and Patricia Craig (*Women and Children First: The Fiction of Two World Wars*, 1978) (Blamires, 2009: 409-22). David Bugden, conducting a more detailed study of children’s fiction during the first world war, also points to the difficulty at finding archives of relevant materials, differentiating, nevertheless, between stories and comics for boys and those intended for girls. The fiction for girls ‘was rarely concerned with the actual experience of fighting. Instead, writers frequently focused on aspects of citizenship and social status largely unrelated to the war. As Cadogan and Craig note, novels more often than not simply ‘encouraged [girls] to worship the male heroes at the front, and to knit comforts for them’ (Bugden, p.63).. For boys, ‘the tone of boys’ fiction in the build-up to war would be considering representations of potential allies and enemies and ways in which writers imagined possible future wars’ (Blamires, 2009: 8). Most stories and comics, when preserved, were oriented to a young male readership and towards ‘explaining the conflict’ (Blamires, 2009: 24). Those that were not, were rooted firmly to reality. For example, in his exploration of the lives of children during World War I, Mike Brown references several comic magazines for boys: like ‘Magnet’ (1916) or ‘Rainbow’ (1917), which was for very young boys that were sheltered from the conflict, could read narratives about boys battling honorably against oafish opponents (often foreigners) in sporting or public school settings (2017: 408 (kindle pages)). Mike Brown further tracks the child’s increasing insignificance during the war, except as referenced above, as a potential soldier. Youth in soldiers was commemorated, as in the case of soldier John

Cornwell, who actually is featured in an illustrated war-book for children, dying in battle at 16. Children would play mainly outside as the streets were comparatively emptier; factories stopping producing toys, because of the growing demands of weapons; war-related toys, produced at the start of the war also were becoming unwanted by 1917 as a result of the war-weariness and disillusionment spreading throughout the continent (Brown, 2017: 383) A lot of children grew their own vegetables at school, and fruit and vegetable picking became common since an early age (2017: 198). This is similarly the case of the 8-year-old Alexandria, who got hurt picking vegetables, having left her home country where she lost some of her family. She is Romanian, judging from the accent and family story; Tarsem Singh adapted 'The Fall' from. Singh actually invents a foreign child instead of simply a hospitalized one, possibly as a tribute to the Bulgarian 1981 film, thus accentuating both the child's physical and emotional vulnerability, her displacement from a home-environment and her social irrelevance within the new war circumstances. As with *Baron Munchausen* the gender inversion further challenges the exclusive privilege of male children to adventure and fantasy narratives, aligning a female child's claim to an active agency and valid perspective. Again, the narrator can also be argued to function as a fictional self of the film's auteur, and it is a movement towards the reinstating of the female child's claim to perspective, on her culture and society, through the fantastic and her own imagination at play.

The Adventures of Baron Munchausen and *The Fall* present two time-periods in which imagination has been ejected from reality, but also from literature and other narrative traditions, and shows how two 'little girls' are treated in these periods – inhabiting very 'adult' spaces, without a space of their own, neglected by their family and caretakers, and treated as needless and a nuisance in worlds where childhood

and its culture have gradually become a synonym for 'nonsense'. Childhood, like fantasy stories of make-belief, are becoming culturally and socially obsolete, when re-assessed against the backdrop of war, reason and order. These two films, working in retrospect to reinstate fantasy as a valid and playful perspective on the world even during periods when it has become forgotten, aim to satirize adulthood through the introduction of these two worlds – the world of reason and the world of the clinic, and to introduce two little girls who can't – physically – find their place in them. Finally, they do find a place to play – in the imagination of an old/injured narrator, who maps a world for them, where they can co-author their adventures and identities.

Visual Presentations of Childhood and Lostness: Little Wandering Girls

The openings of 'Baron Munchausen' and 'The Fall' are each narratively and cinematographically centred around the figure of a small wandering girl. This section will first focus on the figure of the silenced wandering female child as a 'lost girl', investigating the ways in which the figure of the little girl is visually explored at the openings of the two films, discussing it as a critique of the time periods in which the films are retrospectively set in terms of the child's place in them. I will discuss the child's body on screen in inhospitable environments, referring to Karen Lury's analysis of the child in films about war (2010), while analysing the visceral impact of the female child's body when abandoned and endangered. The chapter will then focus on the lost child's sense displacement and disconnection from the external world, address Catherine Driscoll's study on girls and girlhood in order to discuss the dissonance between a girl's 'habitus' versus her experience in the 'outside world', (2008). The chapter will further argue that this tension is artistically resolved in these two films through their use of the fantastic.

Both girls are visually presented a small wandering figure, moving through an 'adult' space (a hospital and a bombarded town square) by herself. The films both open with walking sequences, which offer the visceral experience of seeing a young female child wandering alone in an 'adult-only', adult-dominated, space – hospital corridors and city warzones. These introductory sequences immediately force a focus on parental neglect, and emotionally engage the spectator through wide shots of the solitary short figure in a dress, walking alone through a gritty half-ruined square or fluorescent empty hospital corridors. The girls are both wearing white knee-length dresses with a loose cut, reminiscent of white-gowns, with a dark sweater/hood specific to the time period each film is set in, which presents them as children who are 'outside' before being ready to be outside. The ghostly free-falling dresses, which look almost like underdresses, combined with dark top clothing, contrastingly more 'outdoors' looking than what's underneath, further adds to the vulnerability of this figure of the female child exploring the adult world prematurely. She explores specifically 'adult' spaces and their rules and mechanisms, by herself and without mentorship, ultimately exploring 'adulthood' and its rules and boundaries. The costume choices for Sally and Alexandria enhance the idea of this autonomous figure of the wandering female child as not being fully 'equipped' for these spaces and dislocated from the domestic environment, that her nightgown-like dress invites the thought of. The silently walking child, filmed from a distance over a period of time, speechlessly deciding where to go and what to do, operates on a similar principle as any fully or nearly silent character that the camera rests on. The spectator eventually begins to ask themselves and then to imagine and speculate on what the silent character is thinking. Or, in this case, the continuous sight of the wandering-child figure on the screen, generates a speculation on the child's internal thought and inner world. It also highlights the child's

isolation and, above all, her state of neglect, displaying the solitary child's wandering as an autonomous, introvert, silent existence. Finally, the visual experience of a child simply walking – wandering in a disengaged way – is a form of displacement as well. A displacement from the child's body's state of playing – of being energetic and being able to engage with her environment.

Alexandria and Sally both spend almost the entire film in their white childish nightgowns. In the case of Sally, it might be a child's domestic dress or an underdress, but, like Alexandria's hospital wear, or nightgown, it is a whitish, knee-length, simple-cut dress, loose-fitting and almost like an undergarment in pattern and fabric. This choice of wardrobe serves as a reference to the girls' vulnerability and young age, but also a gesture towards bed-time storytelling and dreaming. Their ephemeral attire against the backdrop of the gritty and ruffled war-ridden city and the sterile, fluorescent green-and-white hospital carries a strong visual contrast between the child-protagonist and her environment. The surreal vision of the almost inappropriate presence of a female underdressed child in an ostensibly adult environment dominates the visual narrative at the start of the films – the figure of the solitary walking child, dislocated from a home environment and wandering around 'adult' sets, searching for various ways to physically find her space, permeates the films' opening acts. The films both open with walking sequences, which offer the visual experience of seeing a young female child wondering alone in an adult-dominated environments. In *The Fall* Alexandria is walking through the empty hospital corridors of a large, long-stay clinic, and in *Baron Munchausen* Sally is making her way through one of the sieged city's bombarded zones – a destroyed city square. Both girls are visually presented as a small wandering figure, moving through a public space, which both graphically and

symbolically, is a space of near-death, whether through violence or disease. The two girls explore specifically 'adult' spaces and their rules and mechanisms, by themselves and without mentorship, in a way aiming to explore rules and boundaries – walking to the very borders of what is familiar or permitted, in order to try and find a space for themselves, or simply a place of some interest or amusement. These introductory sequences immediately force a focus on abandonment or parental neglect, and emotionally engage the spectator, establishing the figure of the abandoned wandering girl through performance, cinematography, and design.

The films open with wide shots of the singular short figure in a dress, walking solitarily through the gritty half-ruined square or the empty hospital corridors. The cinematographic choices of *The Fall* for this sequence include most notably frequent central framing of Alexandria's body in the shot, which deliberately breaks the aesthetical convention of 'the rule of thirds' and serves to suggest rigidity – both of the environment itself, enhanced by flat background walls, and of Alexandria's uneasy, unnatural positioning within her environment. This framing choice is combined with long, static wide shots, suspending detail on Alexandria's face, presenting her instead as a small, distant figure, sometimes silhouetted against the green of the walls. The introductory wide static shots are then intercepted by medium-wide tracking shots, following Alexandria's child-silhouette with her arm held up in a white cast, as she walks around the green and yellow corridors at different times of the day in her nightgown and sweater. These moving medium-shots take up a significant part of the introductory sequence of *The Fall*, a non-dialogue sequence lasting establishing Alexandria's autonomous and introverted experience at the hospital as a narrative problem that character is faced with and the themes of abandonment and isolation settle into the film's narrative. The scenes revert to extreme wide static shots to further

enhance a sense of a monotonous and eventless routine, framing the shot usually within a doorframe or split by two walls, with Alexandria centred, in order to accentuate the singularity of her short child body in in the composition of the shot (Fig. 1).

Cinematically, as well as through partly suspended sound design, Alexandria is

portrayed as 'haunting' the hospital, a ghost-like child always pointlessly searching for something to preoccupy herself with, and with scarcely anyone interacting with her. Alexandria's initial shots include cleaners and nurses going about their work, and sleeping/bored younger children (always motionless), but the sequence gradually moves away from any other bodies in the shots, as Alexandria, trying to somehow entertain herself, wanders further into longer, emptier corridors, as though further into her own isolation.



Figure 1: Catinka Untaro as Alexandria in *The Fall* (2006).

In *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen*, Sally is introduced through colour and size, and as the only wandering or steadily moving figure in the city square full of

wounded and homeless citizens. She is seen walking down the town square of her city which is under continuous attack. People are missing limbs, are covered in blood, and are all trying to get out of the open space as soon as possible. Sally, being either very unaccustomed or very accustomed to the attacks, is walking in the open. In this introductory sequence she actually has a hooded cloak above the white dress that she will spend the rest of the film in. The full-length black cloak and Sally's calm pace of walking through the wounded, filmed from behind, initially make it hard to tell whether the figure is in fact that of a child. This uncanny ambivalence of the small dark figure that is only later revealed as the wandering figure of a female child, dislocated from her natural environments, similarly has a visceral effect on the screen. Like in *The Fall*, where Alexandria is visually presented as a ghost, in the opening sequence of *Baron Munchausen* Sally, a dark-cloaked figure, remains entirely neglected or unseen by the various victims and refugees on the city square, as she makes her way through to the centre, where the broken statue of Baron Munchausen makes her look up – which is the first point at which her face is shown on the screen and her identity as a female child is confirmed (Fig. 2 and 3).





Figures 2 and 3: Sarah Polley in *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen* (1989).

These two different visual portrayals of isolation and neglect, one operating on emptiness and sterile order, the other on crowdedness and disjointed chaos, both are centred around the singular figure of a wandering little girl as a visual thematic introduction to the films's universe, which will later contrast child-like and adult-like perspectives through fantasy worlds. For now, the child is silent, autonomous and searching for an active agency within unwelcoming environments.

Karen Lury's research on the child in film (2010) informs this discussion on the visceral figure of the autonomously wandering female child. Lury specifically discusses how the child on screen is experienced by the spectator, when perceived as being endangered or mistreated, focusing her research on the vulnerability of the child in films about war: 'Since they are blameless, they make the wrongs of war seem all the more wrong, and the viewer's righteous and explosive response all the more satisfactory. Satisfactory because morally it seems uncomplicated (horses and children 'did not start' the war) and because it puts the viewer in a superior position.

We are feeling sorry for those who cannot care for themselves and for those we believe should be cared for as some kind of universal right.' (Lury, 200: 1893 (kindle pages)). Both *Baron Munchausen* and *The Fall* are set during wars, however, this is a choice argued here to further disconnect childhood from adulthood in the time periods when the two films are retrospectively set.

In terms of wardrobe, the girls are both wearing white knee-length dresses with a loose cut, reminiscent of night-gowns, with a dark sweater/hood specific to the time period each film is set in, which presents them as children who are 'outside' before being ready to be outside – symbolically as well. The ghostly free-falling dresses, which look almost like underdresses, combined with dark top clothing, contrastingly more 'outdoors' looking than what's underneath, further adds to the vulnerability of this figure of the female child exploring the adult world prematurely. Their underdresses, covered by a top garment which doesn't quite fit the dresses, demonstrates that they should not really be 'outside' in both senses of the word - outside of their homes, but also outside in the world, dominated by adults, and adult themes, such as illness and violence. The costume choices for Sally and Alexandria enhance the idea of this autonomous figure of the wandering female child as not being fully 'equipped' for these spaces and dislocated from the domestic environment, that her home-like dress invites the thought of.

The silently walking child, filmed from a distance over a period of time, as the film rolls, silently deciding where to go and what to do, further operates on a visceral level as dialogue is suspended, as well as any significant action or narrative development – therefore, the spectator eventually begins to ask themselves and then to imagine and speculate on what the silent character is thinking of. Or, in this case, the continuous sight of the wandering-child figure on the screen, generates a

speculation on the child's internal thought and inner world. It also highlights the child's isolation and, above all, her state of neglect, displaying the solitary child's wandering as an autonomous, introvert, silent existence. Finally, the visual experience of a child simply walking – wandering in a disengaged way – is a form of displacement as well. A displacement from the child's body's state of playing – of being energetic and being able to engage with her environment. Playfulness, whimsy and imagination are shown as suppressed in the narrative frames of the two films, through the silent figure of an autonomously wandering female child, dislocated from domesticity into exterior and public 'adult' spaces. In her research on girls and girlhood today Catherine Driscoll observes that there are contemporary 'tensions' surrounding a girl 'being in the world' as opposed to her 'habitus' (Driscoll, 2008) – a girl's 'habitus' can be summarized as her internal view on the world, whether taught, self-formed or both, which are conflicting, according to Driscoll's work on girls and girlhood, with the girl being 'outside in the world'. In *The Fall* and *Baron Munchausen* opening scenes two little girls, walking through adult spaces, visually displaced both through performance and costume, are forced into an external experience with the world, and their 'habitus' – their internal worldview, – becomes problematized by adult worldviews. This tension is something that these two fantasy films aim to address. The films' fantastical visual narratives within narratives allow for the girls' habitus, which has been compromised by the being in the external world, to also be externalized through the girls' playful engagement with their own imaginations. The figure of the silenced wandering child in *Baron Munchausen* and *The Fall*, trying to find a way to play and engage with a hostile, adult-dominated environment, serves as a cinematographic and a graphic exploration of this tension discussed by Driscoll as a conflict generating concerns in writing on girls and girlhood today.

Writing Identities: Little Girls Trying to Write Themselves In

While children in general were, as discussed above, not necessarily well protected or particularly prioritized during years of war, Alexandria is additionally originating from an impoverished background, alone at the hospital and, like Sally from *Baron Munchausen*, unable to form a connection with either her environment or the adults around her, preoccupied with coping with war and disease. Trying to establish a connection with an adult is presented as the main narrative challenge and thematic conflict of the film. In both these opening sequences the filmmakers introduce the spectator to a neglected child, walking where she shouldn't and aiming to establish a connection with an adult. The adult in both cases is too busy for direct contact and the two little girls are resorting to almost imagining a desired relationship with this parent-figure by writing something that presents their identity to their desired parent-figure. They want to write their identity, as they understand it, on made-up documents that will bind them to this desired adult, trying to write something to their parent or guardian, which will denote a mark of their relationship to that person.

Alexandria has written a letter to her favourite nurse Evelin, managing to write it in English, as she brags, and has been waiting by the window so that she can throw it at her when she sees her. But by accident it falls in the room of another patient. As the nurse barely shows regret and is too busy to go retrieve the letter, Alexandra goes after it herself, relentlessly walking about the clinic to find the room it fell in. In *Baron Munchausen* Sally is examining leaflets relating to the war (summons to join the military, advice on how to take cover during attacks) and amidst them a poster for 'The Adventures of Baron Munchausen') being performed at the theatre by "Henry Salt and Son Players". Sally is preoccupied with scratching out "Son" and writing "Daughter" instead next to her father's name. A following tracking shot reveals she has done the

same to other posters around the square. She has preserved one poster as evidence to confront her father with and demand why since she is an only child a non-existent son is mentioned on the poster instead of her. Both little girls try to take control over the evading connection by creating written evidence, a contract between themselves and their desired parent-figure. Alexandra has written nurse Evelin a letter with doodled illustrations in the nurse's own language in order to explain her feelings for the nurse in this letter, but equally to have written her a letter as an act of intimacy in itself. Sally in the meantime has scratched out "son" and added "daughter" next to her father's company name. Each girl is trying to create an identity relative to her desired mentor figure and to 'write' this relationship into her reality. She is trying to write herself into the life of her chosen parent-figure, Sally scratching out the reality she dislikes and Alexandria doodling the one she dreams of. Both girls are trying to work within an adult format, letter writing and poster titling. Both girls are however partly misappropriating the adult format through which they try to establish their intimacy with the adult. In both cases their attempt to create this intimate connection is a failure, as both adults regard the misappropriated medium of the girls' written communication as childish and negligible. In both cases, however, their written note is received not by their desired parent-figure, but by an incidental bystander. In *The Fall* Alexandria's note falls through the window of Roy Walker's hospital room and in *Baron Munchausen* the aged baron himself sees the scratched-out posters among the myriad of placards and pamphlets and decides to go see the play about his life. Both these incidental readers of the children's written identities connect with the little girls through playfulness.

Co-authorship: The Mentor-Narrator and The Little Girl

The two adult male narrators, both partly incapacitated by respectively old age and physical trauma, engage the two little girls in oral narratives centred around quest, adventure and voyage, typically male narrative, thus subverting literary gender archetypes. The male narrators also occupy a gender-reversed narrative and literary position – the ‘grandmother’. Their respective traumas partly incapacitate them as ‘men’ and their roles in society are partly interrupted by age and injury. Suspended from their male role in society, the injured stunt performer and the old-aged adventurer are themselves bed-ridden. The usual storytelling-dynamic between the grandmother and the child is therefore also subverted in the two films, including through staging, costume and the scene structuring of both films. Storytelling, in particular oral narration, is an interruption of time and space. The main chronotope of events is interrupted / intercepted by the secondary chronotope of the oral narrative. In classical literary and film traditions fictionalized storytelling the adult narrator, stopping by the bed of the child, interrupts (their) time to ‘make time’ for the act of storytelling. Here, with the male narrators being themselves suspended from time and space and interrupted from a ‘male’ role their respective societies, as a travelling adventurer and an early Hollywood stunt-performer, it is the little girl who needs to ‘stop’ by his bed and interrupt (her) time to hear the narrative of the bed-ridden male narrator (Fig. 4 and 5).

The OTS shots of the female child leaning over the incapacitated male narrator reverse the traditional storytelling dynamic in fictionalized narratives. The high angle in *The Fall* accentuates Alexandria (Catinka Untaro)’s upright, straight position, while the shot is centred on Roy’s (Lee Pace) contrastingly feeble and exerted lying position and emotionally dejected state (Fig. 4). In *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen* the Baron (John Neville), who has barely averted Death coming to collect his soul, is

staged in profile, with a headspace to the left, filling the lower horizontal half of the screen, staged and lit as a body at a funeral, in his formal military attire, and resembling also a post-mortem tomb statue, or what was earlier an actual cast covering the body of a fallen hero / official to preserve its shape (Fig.6). Sally (Sarah Polley) is leaning over the Baron's 'death-bed' shot is interfering in the the frame, partly cropped by the upper edge, while the lighting and close-up accent remains on the Baron.



Figures 4 & 5: Lee Pace and Catinka Untaro in *The Fall* (2006).



Figures 6 and 7: John Neville and Sarah Polley in *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen* (1988)

Both female children stop by the male narrator themselves, and the narrators take time to first acknowledge them and then decide whether to engage with them, as the physical performances and body staging in Fig. 4 and Fig. 6. demonstrate, with Roy facing away from Alexandria and The Baron playing dead, both keeping their eyes shut after the female child starts to speak, unwilling to engage in dialogue. The male

narrators' reluctance to acknowledge the female child and their visual centering in both frames subverts the classical relationship as well as the power dynamic in fictionalized storytelling, where the 'grandmother'-like narrator leans over the child's bed.



Figures 7 and 8: The Grandson (Fred Savage) and Grandfather (Peter Falk) in *The Princess Bride* (1987)

The anticipation of the child as a listener is sometimes questioned or undermined, for example in *The Princess Bride* (1986), but due to the passivity of listening as a dialogue position and a power dynamic, all that the child is required to do is accept the storyteller's presence – and listen.

Unlike the farming and angling of the shot-reverse shot in *The Princess Bride*, with the active physical performance of the grandfather and the passivity of the boy (Fig. 7 and 8), in *The Fall* and *Baron Munchausen* the little girl is actively asking for a story from an adult man, who is physically resenting her presence through staging and performance. Both shots are visually aligned with the adult male – the frame is centred on his traumatic physical and emotional state, as a tragic figure or a fallen hero, the light is dramatically and aesthetically accentuating his emotional state and his reaction to the child as an interference and an irritation. Both female children are effectively lit as a secondary subject in the first set of shots, which does change in their single shots, however, this also is in alignment with the male narrator. In contrast to *The Princess Bride* where the little boy's reaction is central to the scene in terms of shot composition and lighting, in the other first set of two-shots, aside from visually interfering in a shot framed and centred around the male narrator, the female child is lit with what's left from the lighting scheme needed to light the narrator as a tragic figure – which makes her own lighting and physical presence in the scene more mundane and less aesthetical and expressive. Lit almost like a part of the environment the little girl is not yet a 'character' for the narrator, but an everyday type of presence or a mundane occurrence. Her physical relationship to his lying, incapacitated position is therefore visually overbearing and her asking for a story out of a reluctant incapacitated adult male turns her into the active side and the storyteller into the passive and conforming

side. This subverts the traditional storytelling dynamic and turns storytelling into a dialogue, in which the power dynamic is reversed, as the story is at times almost 'extorted' and other times co-narrated by the child that initiates it despite or against the adult. The power dynamic is entirely the opposite to that in *The Princess Bride*, where the grandfather's multifold methods of active persuasion are visually counterbalanced by the boy's passive body position and skeptical expression. The power-relationship is dominated by the little boy's reluctance (Fig. 8), however, unlike in *The Fall* and *Baron Munchhausen*, the active agency still lies in the hands of the grandfather, as he is the storyteller. The power dynamic is therefore not as unbalanced as in the other two films, where the little girl actively wants to be a listener and is a one-sided initiator of a relationship with an adult man. The two girls pause and wait statically, making the scene's pacing slower, eventually bringing the narrative to a pause, in which they visually have to wait, in a series of static shots, for the passive male narrator to acknowledge their presence.

The strong sense of male and adult alignment in both films is can be read as reflecting the two male directors' personal alignment with the 'alter ego' narrators – as well as with storytelling as an type of an activity and a relationship as it is experienced by the narrator. The latter would account for the alignment with the passive adult male as opposed to the active female child. The second pair of reverse shots, focusing on Sally and Alexandria' faces, are both still attached to the male characters' perspective and aligned with their perception of the little girls. In *The Fall* Roy's face is turned to Alexandria, who's looking at him, smiling, almost in profile – unlike Roy's reverse shot which is centered on him fully facing us, and Alexandria's body weighing in the lower right of the shot, de-balancing the central placing of his figure. The following two-shot which does show Alexandria's face is visually balanced between Roy and in two

opposing corners, and the staging is focusing on their matched eye-line and Alexandria's facial reaction to him, rather than on her perspective (Fig. 2). This strong male alignment and sense of comparative visual alienation from the perspective of the female child is similar in *Baron Munchausen*, where the Baron gets optically confused by a set of costume wings, hanging from some ropes in the background of the theatre and thinks for a moment that Sally has wings (Fig. 4). Her single shot is therefore a POV shot of the Baron's first close-up sight of her. Both shots of the little girls are still strongly aligned with the male narrator, presenting them as a light, angelic presence over a fallen hero's death-bed. There is a sense of gender disbalance in these two scenes, as *The Fall* especially opens and remains narratively focused on Alexandria's experience in the hospital, however, the cinematographic and the directorial alignments frequently prioritize the male mentor figure's perspective over that of the little girl, whose reactions are mostly filmed with a closer framing when they are directly towards / about the storyteller character. This othering of the child's perspective is not present in *The Princess Bride*, where the little boy is comfortably positioned with space around him in the grandfather's shot and fully central the reverse shot. This sense of gender disbalance could be partly due to the storyteller's self-connection to the two male filmmakers, as well as to the female child's initial unimportance to the reluctant male narrator, which is gradually overcome through their storytelling relationship. Nevertheless, an othering of the female child's perspective is implicit in these almost 'automatic' alignments with the male perspective in a scene, which is narratively dominated by a pro-active female child, however remains visually focused on the male character – this dis-contention between narrative and visual alignment is discussed by Laura Mulvey as an almost automated, non-voluntary act of male film directors in their perception of the female presence on screen, resulting in 'decorative' female

characters. In *The Fall* and *Baron Munchausen* this 'decorative' quality imposed on the two female characters is manifested through the infantilization of their clothes (white, nightgown-like), their 'girling' (ribbons, braids, lightened eye/hair color) and the canonization of the little girls' (preadolescent?) state of purity and innocence. Presenting them as the fallen narrator's guardian angels, stopping by his death-bed for a story, fails to be visually counterbalanced through cinematography and editing, and is a disbalance lacking from *The Princess Bride*, where the much more passive boy's visual perspective is never secondary to the storyteller's.

The visual reversal of the narrator and the listener is not only reflective of the power dynamic between the films' male narrators and female children, but also of the male narrator's condition as suspended from time and space. Stories are traditionally told by the child's bed for the child to go to sleep, however these are the sick-bed and a death-bed of two adults. Referring back to *The Princess Bride* (1986), which is also, as mentioned earlier, a partially subversive fictionalization of the act of storytelling with a reluctantly listening male child, at the start of the film the little boy is ill and also suspended from being out of bed during the day. His grandfather manages to negotiate to read him a story, with some additional arrangements, like skipping all kissing moments, and reads until nightfall. *The Princess Bride* puts the child in a sick-bed in order to arrange a time and space in which oral story-telling can take place. It additionally dialogues negotiations and compromises in order to later reinstate storytelling as an imaginative activity – as well as a type of relationship and a dialogue, which *The Fall* and *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen* are specifically interested in. All three films aim to reinstate storytelling and fantasy as an act of imaginative play, which is sometimes also shared through reading, reacting or co-authoring and it thus becomes a type of a relationship. This relationship between a narrator figure and a

little girl, or a grandfather and a little boy, reinstates classical storytelling tradition through a storytelling-relationship dynamic in a contemporary world which is disinterested in 'outdated' oral narration. The storytelling dialogue of negotiation, compromise and passivity is gradually supplanted with anticipation, accordance and active engagement – thus gradually working storytelling back into modernity through the development of a mentor-child relationship and reinstating storytelling as an act and a relationship.

Narrated Universes: Playfulness and Subverted Worlds

Both narratives generate whimsical fantastical worlds that are narrated by a male adult to a young female child and use narrative frames set in specific historical periods. In this section I argue that in this set of films each little girl's imagined fantasy experience can be discussed as a valid way of nurturing a neglected child confined to an austere environment. The made-up rules of the fantasy worlds generated by the narrators of *Baron Munchausen* and *The Fall* mimic social norms and laws borrowed from real-life contexts (both historical and contemporary). This mimicking serves to satirize various conventions and requirements, presenting them to the young child as quirks and oddities, ultimately – as absurdity. This effectively enables her to learn and play. I will investigate how the fantastical worlds of 'The Fall' and 'Baron Munchausen' whimsically mock social norm and convention in order to reinstate playfulness as a valid approach not only to childhood, but adulthood.

The fantasy narratives of the adult male mentors, both partly incapacitated by old age and physical trauma, engage the little girls in stories of hero-quests: partly subverting literary and film gender archetypes, but nevertheless retaining a certain

degree of dichotomic male alignment and consequent involuntary othering of the 'little girl'. Through shared narration and a shared, co-experienced fantastic space between the female child and the adult male narrator, the silently wandering lost girl figure haunting the opening acts of *Baron Munchausen* and *The Fall* becomes a speaking fantasizing child, acquiring an identity through make-belief. Through make-belief the child can safely 'play at' having a pretend-active agency, in a half-pretend-experience, which however results in acquiring a non-pretend identity. This is achieved since, although the austerity and expulsion of the adult culture of the child's environment hasn't been resolved, her own playfulness and child culture has been accepted and shared by an adult co-narrator. Much like her perspective is rendered into being 'nonsense' and 'ridiculous' by her time period's 'adult' culture, so too 'adult' perspective is satirized and 'played with' with until it is fully rendered into parody and absurdity.

The fantastical worlds of *Baron Munchausen* and *The Fall* operate on the interplay of satire and epic. These two generic lenses conflict, compete and contrast with each other to playfully display the various tensions between individual agency and social norm. Heroism foregrounds the satire and draws vastly from epic genres, introducing hero-type protagonists, who, however, are performing feats within satirical worlds, facing satirized villains in castles and kingdoms which parody psychology and relationship types typical of dysfunctional adulthoods. Against the backdrop of epic heroism, the close mimicking of various socio-cultural traits, then whimsically othered as made-up cultures and societies, enables these fantasy worlds to simultaneously refer to the real world and not refer to in any concrete way. This enables the young child to experience social normative convention in a subverted and satirical way, isolated as a clear binary opposite to playfulness and individuality. The child's fear from adult norms and conventions is overcome through satire. Conventions that the

child is not yet accustomed to are presented as absurd and simplistic, and, instead of having to work within them, the satirical narrative enables her to play despite these conventions – and against them. Mimicking real cultural traits and social etiquettes enables the girl to overcome her anxieties regarding the complexities of adulthood through playfulness. And further, the socio-cultural traits' othering and re-rendering into made-up rules then enables the little girl to react, make decisions and take initiative within an 'alternative' adult world – simplified and satirized.

In those fictionalised worlds there are pretend-rules and adulthood is digested by the child's mind through satire and subversion. The child encounters her fear from adulthood within non-existent socio-political structures, referencing laws, traditions, manners and wars, but all re-invented for the child's pleasure and for her escapist rite-of-passage into becoming not an irrelevant 'little girl', but an individual.

Both the fantastical worlds of Alexandra and Sally are full of pretend-violence, of pretend yelling and quarrelling, and thrill-and-horror. The films demonstrate how absurd and incomprehensible real-life situations become absurdist fantasies in the young girls' minds. Trauma, abandonment and fears of adulthood tint the girls' imaginations in a way both culturally influenced and whimsically ridiculous. The shared act of storytelling restores the child's ability to play in an austere adult environment, and introduces playfulness as a tool of both pleasure and subversion. The narrators' storytelling enables the little girls to escape from both boredom, irrelevance and abandonment and yet manage to confront these issues within the make-belief arenas constructed for them by their very unwilling, yet equally playful mentors-storytellers.

The narrator's fantasy nurtures the girls during a phase of displacement and neglect, which is both personal and cultural. The storytellers use fantasy as a safe playful space for the little girl's enjoyment and amusement, while offering whimsical

pretend-encounters with adulthood. The imaginary sequences of *Baron Munchausen* and *The Fall*, visualized on the screen, are constructed into rich fantastical landscapes. Both production design schemes borrow from caricature and use a carnivalesque subversive symbolism in order to illustrate psychological and socio-cultural tropes. Mikhail Bakhtin defines the carnivalesque as the recreational extravagant experience of seeing the world in reverse, which helps society then return to its own norm, while 'sampling' what the world in reverse would be like. The carnivalesque is a comedic, subversive act of catharsis, in which, by showing society in its carnivalesque rendition – it is a parody that defeats itself: by showing an exaggerated, farcical version of what society is not, yet of its individuals might like to (temporarily?) be, society can then return to normality, having experienced the jumble of various individual desires to (temporarily) inhabit another social role. Once the festivities are over, the norm and normality that society makes-believe to have escaped from for one carnivalesque night are reinstated. Due to its binary psychology of exploring desire until its final expulsion, the carnivalesque uses the epic and the satirical in its material and aesthetic to a great degree, in which it is visually similar both to the fictitious aesthetics of *Baron Munchausen* and *The Fall* and with fantasy storytelling, which similarly operates on the interplay of expulsion and desire. However, the fantasy worlds operating on this principle of fantasy worldbuilding and narration are autonomous from culture in ways in which the culturally subversive universes of *The Fall* and *Baron Munchausen* are not. As previously cited, Rosemary Jackson argues that fantasy worldbuilding and narrative operates on expelling or condemning all undesired elements and reinstating all that is desired, giving *The Lord of The Rings* as an example of a nostalgic universe, expelling certain elements of modernization, both philosophical and economic. The worlds of the two case-studied

films operate on a way which is psychologically more akin to the concept of the carnivalesque in their narrative and worldbuilding involvement with historical and cultural traits.

In *The Adventures of Baron Munchhausen* levels of authenticity vary throughout the film, which allows for various degrees of psychological symbolism and cultural references to be aesthetically co-accommodated in the same fantastical universe: After being briefly introduced to a realistic world, in which war prevails upon the fictional reality (Ottoman soldiers are invading an unnamed city with monumental ominous 18th century European architecture), screen unfolds a wild, highly theatrical universe, with shifting levels of realism, which seem to be determined by the Baron's faith in himself. Terry Gilliam's fascination with parody, the theatrical and the carnivalesque permeates the playful and satirical nature of *Baron Munchhausen* fictional universe. His exaggeration of reality, turns existing cultures into parodied décor, continuously showing a 'wrong', dysfunctional, yet humorous and rich reality. Terry Gilliam deconstructs the visual authenticity of Baron Munchhausen, by using tropes from theatre, practical effects and constructed set-designs symbolically, in order to playfully engage with the fact that the screen is displaying a-story-within-a-story and the more he uses this symbolic surrealist acathectic so to illustrate the dysfunctional adult psychologies, both individual and cultural. The Moon King's palace for example, which at first appears as a real palace, is gradually revealed to consist of 2D flat backdrops of painted facades of palace walls and various rich interiors. This surreal journey deep into a non-palace which both the guests and the royal hosts need to keep pretending is a real palace, is presided on by The Moon King (Robin Williams), whose character has decided to separate his head from his body in order to lead 'a life of the mind' and leave the animalistic needs of hungry, lusting body behind – in

accordance with the Enlightenment anxieties whether mind and reason ever could fully govern emotions and instincts – and dreaming to be simply free of them. The material aspect of the castle is therefore also becoming obsolete, and the castle is now a comically a concept of itself, a painted version of a castle absurdly trying to retain its idea without its form, much like the Moon King, who eventually does get captured by his body and schizophrenically turns loud, vulgar, rosy-cheeked and jovial, being neither the body nor the head personality, but a new third personality. Later, in the god Vulcan's forgery, turned into a weapon factory, the god and his workers all pretend to be giants, drinking from tiny tea cups (served by an enormously tall and strong man who dresses like a governess and wants to be 'dainty' so that no one hires him for his strength anymore). In this volcano everyone properly employs the carnivalesque, pretending to be what they would have liked to have been – strong and big, or nimble and dainty, and use props and costumes to 'achieve' it, yet their make-belief is delusional and uses conscious deception and practical tricks to perpetuates its delusion.

The Baron is not exempt from being a visually de-stabilized entity himself. Whenever feels disillusioned with himself and the world, the Baron's age changes according to how he experiences himself, much like the Moon King's palace has moving walls, which obey his every whim, and the Baron's suite of quirky aged renegades keep regaining and losing the very talents that make them who they are. The story mocks both the imagined for its frequent absurdity and the real for its blandness, constantly asking through its levels of realism which one is mocking the other more, and which one is embraced at the expense of the other. Ultimately, dysfunctional adulthoods are ridiculed through satire and mimic, while the epic is reinstated through the character of the Baron and his group of renegades. But the

playfulness of this satirical world reinstates a sense of pleasure in exposing the socio-individual dysfunctionality and parodied cultures born of imperialism and orientalism. Renaissance culture and art ‘marry’ weaponry and industrialisation – with Botticelli’s Venus (Uma Thurman) indifferently idolised by Vulcan (Oliver Reed). *The Adventures of Baron of Munchausen* offers the viewer an unstable world of metamorphosis, where forms evolve and devolve according to something as ‘fanciful’ (and uncontrollable) as mood. The playful and satirical world of *Baron Munchausen* exposes the adults of playing ‘make-believe’ – delusionally, psychotically or post-traumatically, confined to their own ‘sets’, instead of acquiring identity through agency.

While 18th century set designs, rich in practical tricks, optical rescaling and stage magic are utilized in the cinematic set designs of *Baron Munchausen* in order to, as described above, use the concept of the ‘theatrical’ and of ‘sets’ as delusional spaces accommodating dysfunctional adulthoods, early Hollywood fantasy and adventure cinema (e.g. *Lawrence of Arabia*, *High Noon*, etc.) is referenced in the colour scheme production design of *The Fall*. These cinematic references are a retrospective way to demonstrate the cultural identity of art and specifically the fantastical arts during the two films time periods – not only by referencing cultures that existed at that time, but also visually referencing through their film aesthetic how artwork from the period re-rendered its own, and former, cultures.

Tarsem Singh similarly psychologizes spaces as extensions of the psyche. In his earlier film *The Cell*, the production design compartmentalizes visual renditions of the human mind, into landscapes and chambers. In *The Fall*, this is similarly the case with the early Hollywood stunt performer, whose epic adventure narrative of a group of questing 19th century renegades, is visually treated as a series of evocative landscapes, reflecting the wounded stunt actor’s artistic tastes and distastes and

personal aspirations and anxieties. All the renegades are men of exceptional skills, betrayed by an oppressive imposter cast as the lead actor in the production where Roy got injured, who exiles any man attempting to excel with an actual skillset. (here I will briefly discuss the sets belonging to governor Odious and the wardrobe of Odious and The Renegades, in order to explain the aesthetic)

Playfulness whimsically confronts social convention and normativity in *Baron Munchausen* and *The Fall*. Through the rigid narrative frames displaying pragmatic restriction, within which the team of the older male narrator and the young female child invent heroic quests in satirical worlds. Through their shared narrated fantasy landscape, the duo confronts normative convention simultaneously as conspiring narrators, and as made-up characters facing made-up trials, which destabilize social protocols and dogmas through satire.

That the child's pleasure of make-believe and playfulness is celebrated in these two films as a valid need that needs to be met and, through this, fantasy is reinstated as being an end in itself. I argue that valid understanding and experience of the real world are nevertheless achieved through make-belief and self-narration.

This is achieved in both films through the use of mimic and othering. Mimic is experienced by the two female children both as listeners in the narrative frame, and as fictional characters partaking in the adult mentor's made-up narrative. The mimic permits them to learn and the othering to play. The mentors' subversive narratives mimicking the real world through fantasies of absurd traditions, mysterious cultures, simplified social hierarchies, ridiculous rules and comical psychological disorders acquaints the young girls with the restrictions and conventions of adult society in a playful way. The adventures in these worlds circle around imaginary societies which do reference real socio-cultural ways, but they are strongly satirized and subverted.

The girls may play in, and with, a made-up set of rules, through encountering satirical enemies and trials, reminiscent, yet othered from social norms and conventions. The narrators however, equally introduce ideas of heroism, through an epic, dramatic and single-dimensional fight against social convention, which has been fully villainized and undermined through satire. The two female girls are guided through a made-up heroic experience in a made-up satirical world, experiencing the tension between individual identity and social norm as a binary opposite through the mixed use of satire and epic.

As mentors, father-figures, as well as fictional versions of Terry Gilliam and Tarsem Singh, the narrators invent fantastical worlds operating on playfulness, or the imagination at play, within which the young child can play at make-belief and have a first pretend-encounter with adulthood. Little children's need to play and imagine has been discussed by Wilson, Donald and Wright as a way of internal learning and assimilating the external world: 'Childhood happens at home, in playground, in classrooms or in the fantasy worlds' of a child's ambition. Their micro-borders of imagination and experience intersect with the great narratives of political borders and conflict.' (Wilson et al, 2017: 9).

My research aims to build on this discussion of play and imagination as fundamental to the young child by arguing that an entirely made-up experience nurtures the child in a playful, guided and mentored way in the safe playful space of her imagination. In this sense, building on Wilson, Donald & Wright's point her imagination at play is both protecting her from and preparing her for the traumatic and unguided public spaces, in which she could previously only obtain a sense of identity and agency through her autonomous wandering. Sally and Alexandria transformation over the course of the narrative comes its culmination when Sally alone believes she can escape from the Belly of the Whale and Alexandria succeeds in persuading Roy,

who has been attempting to poison himself throughout the film, to not commit suicide. The rite of passage between an adult narrator and a child, I would further argue, both as a form of child-play and as a narrative art, is celebrated a nurturing necessity in a child's life in these two films. The fantastic can be argued in these films as nurturing the child through enjoyment, engagement and pleasure into acquiring agency and identity.

Conclusion

Playfulness is therefore seen as a valid need in a child's life which ought to be fulfilled. I want to argue that two films offer the child (and the spectator) an engaging and socially subversive fantastic narrative to learn from through playfulness – and to play in. I also want to propose, however, that fantasy is also simultaneously nurturing the child's need to learn and experience. Fantasy as a learning experience also rooted in the same imaginative play – the child's fantastical experience is an experience of action and reaction. It should be pointed out however that although the child's pleasure and engagement with the fantastic ultimately do enable a learning experience through play, this relationship between pleasure and learning goes both ways, as I have argued that the pleasure of playfulness is strongly advocated by these films is an end in itself. Learning equally enhances enjoyment. The learning experience of the child serves to 'authenticate' its imaginary experience and helps it to further suspend disbelief, which makes for a better play at make-belief.

Baron Munchausen and *The Fall* therefore revalidate fantasy through playfulness. By celebrating the imagination at play through the carnivalesque, the satirical and the epic, the two fantasy directors, Gilliam and Singh, reinstate playfulness as a valid

approach to reality, using narrative toposes, production design and cinematography. Fantasy is presented as the imagination at play, and playfulness and make-belief are reinstated in the female child's world through the rite-of-passage between two imaginations at play – from the experienced fantasy of the adult male narrator to the undefined fantasy of the female child.

CHAPTER TWO: YOUNG GIRLS IN IN-HOUSE WORLDS: *Spirited Away* (Hayao Miyazaki, 2001) And *Coraline* (Henry Selick, 2009).

This chapter will be dedicated to a comparative discussion of *Spirited Away* (Hayao Miyazaki, 2001) and *Coraline* (Henry Selick, 2009), and the ways in which girlhood and lostness intertwine in both films (with textual reference to Gaiman's novel *Coraline* (2002)). The close analysis focuses on the uncanniness of monstrous motherhood and on how the lavish, spirit-infused worlds of fantasy lead to the refurbishment of identity in terms of both childhood and maturity.

As the director Hayao Miyazaki himself puts it in interviews, 'his primary agenda in *Spirited Away* was to show the maturation of a contemporary young girl in the face of an array of frightening and fantastic encounters' (Napier, 2006:288). The mixture of the fantastic and the monstrous generates a haunting, idiosyncratic atmosphere, where didactic judgement is suspended, while the subjective experience of Chihiro is enhanced. A holistic reading of these films, as suggested by Daniel Yacavone, is highly applicable to these two films that function on the basis of gradual immersion into the film universes and on the subtleness of cumulative detail.

Home and Identity

The word 'identity' derives from the Latin *idem*, meaning 'same', thus emphasizing the connection between sameness and constancy, and identity (Coats, 2011:98). Feelings of lostness and a disconnection from one's former self recur in these post-2000 narratives of leaving the young person's home for a new one.

In children's literature, the exploration of home and the concept of belonging is a key recurrent theme (Reimer, 2011). Even the physicality of the child's house has a bearing on their identity. According to Witold Rybczynski, the linkage of the house to the psychology of the self and the family has a long history in Western cultures (1986), while Mavis Reimer observes that 'The common use of the family home as a primary setting in children's literature can be to facilitate the development of the sense of self in young readers' (2011:107). The connection between home and identity for children is further emphasized by the enclosure and domesticity prominent in a child's life, especially for girls, who are to be kept indoors.

According to Driscoll's research on girlhood, 'Girls were positioned not only in relation to the nuclear family, but also as living their adolescence closely contained within its territory (2008:21). Due to this concept of keeping the child/girl within the territory of the home, in children's cinema the notion of a family home is further explored through interiority and domesticity, where 'dwelling [is] often used metonymically to convey the core emotional qualities ideally associated with home' (Reimer, 2011:108). In *Coraline* and *Spirited Away* the houses that the two heroines transcend into take on a life of their own and carry rich emotional connotations imbedded in their magical designs. Both Chihiro and Coraline discover another world, within which there is an adoptive home, where the monstrous and the magical intertwine. This chapter will explore the ways in which techniques of symbolic

worldbuilding and character design in these two other homes reshape the two girls' sense of identity through an encounter with monstrosity (in particular of monstrous mother-figures) and enchanted worldbuilding.

Moving Away as a State of Lostness

Spirited Away and *Coraline* open with their titular young heroines moving to a new town, despite wanting to remain in their previous whereabouts, because their parents have decided to relocate. A very common trope in children and adolescent cinema, moving away usually signifies a new beginning and the start of an adventure (*Harry Potter* (2001-2011), *The Chronicles of Narnia* (2005-2010), *The Chronicles of Spiderwick* (2008), *Twilight* (2008-2012)) whilst the nostalgia for the former home is downplayed. Unlike these children's films, where the nostalgia of leaving the child's former home plays a secondary part in creating backstory in the opening act of a film, in *Spirited Away* and *Coraline* the trauma of moving away is brought to the foreground, emphasizing the correlation between one's environment and one's identity at a young age.

Both Chihiro and Coraline rebel against moving away and are shown as not coping with the newness of their lives; their trauma narratively dominates the opening sequences of the two films. Both Chihiro and Coraline are sullen and capricious at the start of the films, trying to hold on to their former environment – Coraline with her photo of her and her former friends, Chihiro to her flowers that she received as a goodbye gift. They both resist their parents' positive encouragement to engage with their new environment and blame them for leaving, failing to physically connect with their new

house – Coraline detests the emptiness of her new home and complains to her mother, while Chihiro states in discontent at their new house as her father excitedly points to ‘the one with the blue roof’ in the distance. At the start of *Coraline* and *Spirited Away* there is little other than an emphasis on the trauma and the nostalgia of a child being detached from their environment. Rather than the speedy introduction of a colourful adventure to distract from the child’s emotions, in these two films the interiority of the child remains the primary focus. This way the child’s lostness, her inner world, identity and sense of belonging become a paramount theme of the film, rather than a secondary element of character development. Feeling lost in this chapter will relate to not only losing one’s physical home, but also losing one’s identity as a part of this former home. Both *Coraline* and *Spirited Away* are films preoccupied with a child’s identity and the way that identity correlates to ideas of home and belonging, including the physicality of a home and an interior space. The opening sequence explicitly demonstrates that to a child a house is not necessarily a home and that something needs to convert it into a home – above all, the child’s willingness to perceive it as such.

In-House Worlds and Monstrous Motherhoods

Both girls are reluctant to accept these two new buildings as their homes and perceive them as a nuisance, which only reminds them of the true home that they have lost and that loss, and feeling lost, is what initiates the turning point in both films, as they, like Alice in Wonderland, or Little Red Riding Hood, ‘stray from the path’. Coraline in particular does so in search of something other than this new house that ‘took her home away; only to stumble on the seemingly perfect mirror-image of her environment across the enchanted tunnel. Her mother tells her not to go in, but Coraline is looking

for anything to divert her and is tempted to punish her mother by disobeying her advice. The seemingly utopian quality of the Other House during the opening sequence of the film however possesses an uncanny quality, as it is eerily similar to her world, yet there are some deliberate changes which almost appear to hide a concealed agenda. The case of Chihiro and the abandoned feast that she stumbles on along with her parents is strikingly similar. These tempting, self-concealing liminal spaces between the two worlds which seduce the two young girls suggest someone's will at play, a god-like figure which has manufactured those in-house worlds in order to tempt their preys inside. Gradually the audience comes to realize that the girls' otherworldly journey is confined to a single building within which the enchanted and the monstrous collide and become unified. Chihiro, like Coraline, is not allowed to leave the house, and the two girls' experiences become claustrophobic in the course of the films. Unlike other quest-narratives of young girls that take place outdoors and can be 'mapped' as worlds (*Pan's Labyrinth*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Wizard of Oz*, *Labyrinth*, *Tideland*), *Spirited Away* and *Coraline* use a single building to represent an entire other universe. This building in both films is a form of a home away from home, or an adoptive home, which gradually becomes more nightmarish, dominated by a monstrous mother figure that controls everything and everyone within. These two mother figures, Yobaba and the Other Mother, have generated these house-worlds in order to fulfil their personal desires and the girls' experience of these claustrophobic worlds reflect the two other-mothers' own monstrosities and perverted motherhoods.

Coraline initially mistakes the Other House as what she imagines having the makings of a home: the magic and the allure of the other mother who indulges her every need, a carnivalesque world where everything is more unexpected, quirkier, and more engaging. She enters the world through a locked door, which her mother shows

her as the absolute limit to her desire for exploration – disobedience and a desire for independence lead her into the Other World, the familiarity enhances the difference between the new empty house that she deserts and the full-blooded experience of the Other House. Simultaneously, Reimer argues that the Other Home gradually becomes more ‘horrifying both in its resemblances and differences from her ordinary home, linking this to Sigmund Freud’s observation (1919) that the experience of the uncanny (unheimlich) resides precisely in that which is most familiar (heimlich) – both the house and, most strikingly the metamorphosing body of the other mother (2011:106).

Spirited Away has been argued to draw from *Alice in Wonderland* and *the Wizard of Oz* (Napier:290), tapping into dream-like, carnivalesque tropes of worldbuilding, yet making a departure from Western Culture in favour of both criticising and refurbishing Japanese culture. Furthermore, unlike the worlds of the two ‘original lost girls’, in *Spirited Away* the bath house is made to represent the entire world, encapsulating a representation of Japanese culture within its walls. Chihiro encounters the Japanese demons as they come and go, but she, a locked servant, always remains within, until she manages to get on the train to visit the antithesis of Yobaba - her twin sister, the good witch, who lives in a modest house. This house is naturally also a representation of herself and respectively honours a child’s free will, unlike Yobaba. The first thing that her sister tells Chihiro is how much she hates Yobaba’s ‘tacky’ house. The two in-house worlds are therefore direct extensions of both the will and identities of the monster-mother figures that own and dominate them.

The two monstrous motherhoods in *Coraline* and *Spirited Away* ‘step in’ when both children resent the authority of their original mothers, feeling disconnected from them. The child and mother dynamics are paramount to a girl’s identity in two ways:

as a relationship and as an example/role model. Paradoxically, in many traditional coming of age narratives, the mother is temporarily or permanently removed from the journey of the young heroine, as is indeed the case in most case studies in this research (*Baron Munchausen, Tideland, The Fall, Mirrormask, Labyrinth*), as well as the cohort of Disney 'Princess Films'. As argued by Palko:

Critically understood to uphold heteronormative patriarchal norms, the Princess films depict a world in which an absent (typically, dead) mother has been replaced by a surrogate maternal figure marked by a seemingly irredeemable malevolence: They are the monstrous mothers of the Disney Princess universe. In the process, these characters—and the films they appear in—also indirectly reinforce ideologies of good mothering and simultaneously imply the impotence of good mothers to protect their children (Palko, 2008: 85).

Further to this argument, from the perspective of the sheltered and domesticated female child, as discussed by Catherine Driscoll (2008), the removal of the mother serves also as a narrative facilitator in terms of exposing the child to the outside world and depriving her from the intimate relationship inherent in the institutionalised concept of motherhood. For the mother herself, motherhood can be regarded as a rite of passage and can result in either embracing motherhood or in fact developing resentment for the child (Yearley, 1997: 23). This phenomenon has been further observed in a book on Monstrous Motherhood as a literary trope by Palko, claiming that:

Mothers and their mothering practices are often easy targets of ridicule and fear in moments of cultural angst or crisis. Widespread obsession with monstrous mothers and their harmful behaviours reflects anxieties about the ways that

mothering is an inherently unpredictable endeavour. We cannot guarantee that children will turn out well. And when social structures produce systemic instabilities and inequities, mothers easily become a proxy for other sources of fear and uncertainty. (2008: 12)

Problematic, or even monstrous mother-figures have come into focus in 20th and 21st century narrative traditions of coming of age, as the study of psychology has become more prominent in Western culture, replacing the absent/deceased mothers from older traditional narratives, and merging the monstrous woman with the mother-figure, giving darker overtones to notions of nurture, upbringing, and parental authority. Famous examples of this include *Brideshead Revisited* (1945) or *One Flight Over the Coo-coo's Nest* (1962) in literature, as well as films such as *Carrie* (1976) or the recent live-action renditions of *Maleficent* (2014, 2019), and *A Haunting in Venice* (2023). Jacqueline Rose argues that 'motherhood is, in Western discourse, the place in our culture where we lodge, or rather bury, the reality of our own conflicts, of what it means to be fully human' (2018: 1). This argument can be seen as one of the roots for contemporary representations of monstrous motherhoods and their impact on the child's sense of identity/lostness. The next section will explore, through close analysis, how the monstrous mother figures and their in-house worlds affect the two young heroines in terms of lostness and girlhood.

Many critics have linked the uncanny to children's literature, Roberta S. Trites in particular, positing the uncanny as one of the most useful theoretical tools for understanding children's fiction, at times going so far as claiming that childhood itself is uncanny (2015: 59). Almost every review of Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* hints at the uncanniness imbedded in the narrative's ambiance, some even putting the genre

“children’s’ novel’ in quotation marks (Thea James, 2008:07). Critics call it scary and frightening (Jones, 2008 Card, 2008); Terry Pratchett describes it as ‘delicate horror of the finest fairy tale’ (2002); Phillip Pullman remarks upon its ‘creepy atmosphere’ (2002); Yvonne Zipp is taken with the book’s ‘creepy humour’ (2009) and Shane Ivey defines it as ‘alternatively whimsical, creepy, surreal, charming and dreamy’, noting that ‘the story’s most memorable scenes are those of dreamy terror’ (2002). Anita Burkam also perceives the work as ‘creepy’, stating that it possesses ‘charged and often horrific flotsam from the subconscious (2002).

The Uncanny Mother Figure as a Rite of Passage Into Girlhood

Both stories readily lend themselves to a psychoanalytical reading and, in particular, a Freudian reading, as *Spirited Away* focuses on a ghostly reincarnation of Japanese mythology demons and on the double-casting of the good and the bad witch, while *Coraline* rests upon ideas about the familiar and homely made strange and unsettling, yet still known, connecting it to Sigmund Freud’s ‘Das Unheimlich’. Also, it relates very strongly to concepts of the subconscious through the theme of a female child, surmounting its Oedipal complex to her mother through reimagining her as something initially desired and later monstrous (the ‘other mother’), and finally rediscovering her real mother as an imperfect, but caring woman and recognising her as her own. Gooding in fact suggests that the author of the graphic novel ‘The Sandman’ has been reading Freud and had him in mind, when writing the novel *Coraline* (2008: 392). There is no doubt that the novel is eerie, surreal, and, according to Times Educational Supplement, ‘taps into our most uncomfortable fears’. *Spirited Away* similarly detaches a discontent and homesick Chihiro from her mother and father

and replaces them with a surrogate family, presided on by the monster figure of Yobaba and her anti-motherhood rule over the bathhouse. I will now examine how this surreal uncanniness is achieved and a particular focus will be drawn to the figure of the monster-mother, as a subconscious figure of fear and desire, resulting from the child's disconnection from her real mother.

According to Freud the uncanny 'belongs to all that is terrible – to all that arouses dread and creeping horror' 'The "uncanny"', he continues, 'is that class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us once very familiar' (Freud, 1919: 6). The psychoanalyst also draws the reader's attention to the fact that one of the significances of the word 'das Heimlich' (the homely, familiar) is the same as that of its opposite, 'das Unheimlich' (the uncanny): 'das Heimlich' is 'the serene, the comfortable, but also that behind closed doors, concealed, kept from sight, so that others do not get to know about it, withheld from others.' (1919:10). Relating to the magic that Yobaba practices on Chihiro in her study, 'Das Heimlich art' also means magic; therefore, there is something elusive, secretive, mysterious and unknown about the concept, that connects it to the uncanny, creating a curious dichotomy between the two terms; a dichotomy, which *Coraline's* themes and ambiance appear to almost embody, through the recreation of her house, garden and parents, as something familiar, but other, concealed behind a bricked door. Das Heimlich belongs to two sets of ideas: the first, as discussed above, is the congenial and familiar, but the second, as Grimm's dictionary describes it, is that which is concealed and secret 'and that idea is expanded in many ways: das Heimlich in a different sense, as withdrawn from knowledge, unconscious... that which is obscure, inaccessible to knowledge.' (1919: 11).

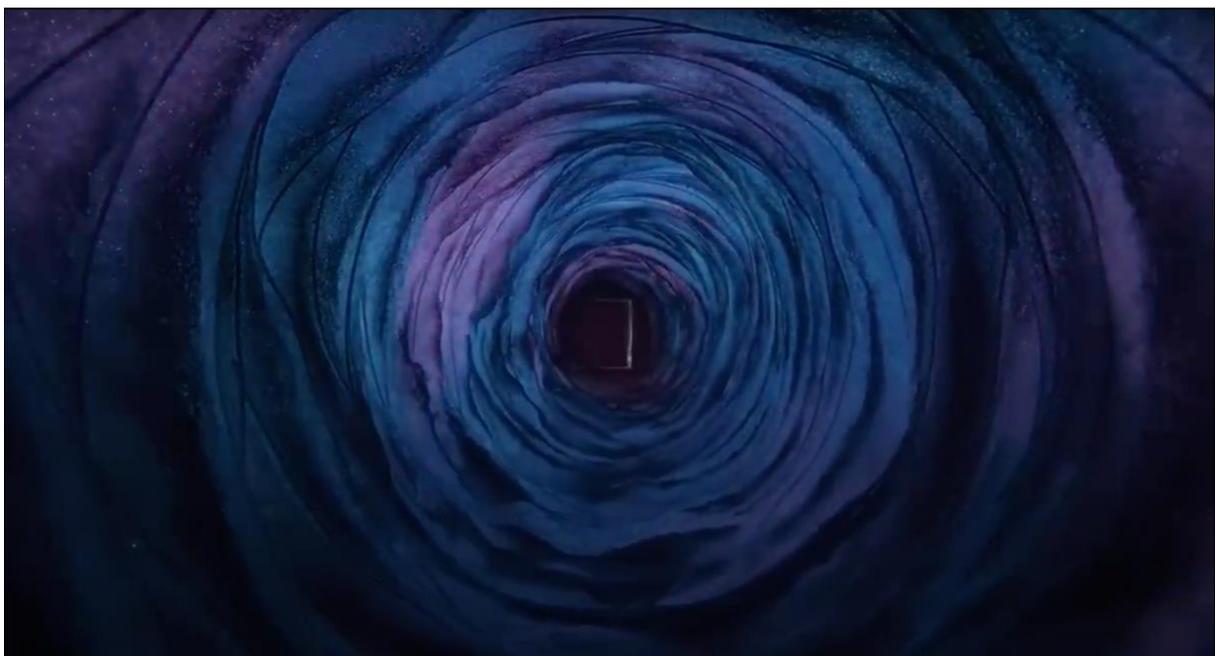
This meaning of das Heimlich creates a link to the psychological aspect of Chihiro and Coraline's adventure into the in-house worlds of the Monster mothers. These worlds, in which the subconscious and the id reign over conscious reason, remain forever a mystery: inaccessible to knowledge, withdrawn from it. It is a world wrapped in an eternal mystery, a stage on which the other mother's narcissistic ambition for a daughter's love unfolds against the backdrop of a perverse dollhouse. This other world of Coraline's is both Heimlich and Unheimlich. It is known, but strange and all the more terrifying and uncannier for its familiarity. A similar effect is achieved in *Spirited Away* during the immersive entry in the spirit realm. Chihiro first sees a stone demon, followed by the abandoned 'theme park' that she and her family discover. Everything is still feeling familiar and heimlich, however the further they immerse themselves into this liminal space the more the familiar trope of the abandoned theme park begins to transform into a camouflage of another kind: it is only a cover for the bathhouse of the spirits, who become visible after nightfall and thus the heimlich eerily becomes the unheimlich feeding into the paradigm of Freud's paradox. – From his investigation of the words Heimlich and Unheimlich Freud concludes: 'What is Heimlich thus comes to be Unheimlich' (1919: 12). Gutzkow supports him in this deduction, remarking: 'we call it Unheimlich. You call it Heimlich.' (1919: 12). Das Unheimlich is defined as something 'uneasy, eerie, bloodcurdling.' According to Schelling, in his *Philosophie der Mythologie* 'Unheimlich is the name for everything that ought to have remained... hidden and secret and has become visible' (1835:13). Chihiro transcending into the spirit realm of the demon bathhouse is a form of an unheimlich progression, leading towards the distorted mother-reign of Yobaba, is much like Coraline unlocking the bricked door allegedly leading to the empty flat. Coraline's mother invites that which has been secret and hidden to become visible

and Coraline's decision to follow the corridor likewise submerges her into an Unheimlich mystery, which ought to have remained behind closed doors. From this moment on the interplay between das Heimlich and das Unheimlich, the familiar and the uncanny, begins. Yet, even before the mystery starts, the text is permeated with uncanny predecessors of what will ensue. For example, when Coraline enters the drawing room for the first time:

The room was dark. The only light came from the hall, and Coraline, who was standing in the doorway, cast a huge and distorted shadow on to the drawing-room carpet: she looked like a thin giant woman (Gaiman, 2002: 13).

It is as though the other mother is already there, trying to possess Coraline, haunting the room; thus, later on, when her actual description takes place, the reader has the uncanny and yet familiar feeling that he has seen this thin, giant woman before – imbedded in Coraline's shadow. The implicit comparison is uncanny furthermore because it hints at an inherent monstrosity embedded even in the pre-adolescent female child figure, an uncanny detail of 'delicate horror' at the outset of the narrative. In Henry Selick's film the long shadow is omitted, however the colour palette and the shape/make of the enchanted tunnel is reminiscent of a birth canal, thus implying that Coraline is regressing into an earlier stage of childhood or symbolising an anti-birth. The corridor is a very important feature of the lost girl narrative – it is the wardrobe leading to Narnia and Alice's rabbit hole, the link and divider of the two worlds. Vianne Muller similarly compares the corridor to a womb (2012: 1) and the film reinforces this impression, choosing to replace the familiarity depicted in the novel with a surreal, cramped space in pink, red, purple and blue nuances, reminiscent of the birth canal.

There is uncanniness in the film adaptation too, not only because of the natal analogy, but also because there is something dishevelled, imbalanced and surreal about the tunnel space and Bruno Coulais's musical score signals to both magic and danger. The corridor symbolises Coraline's rebirth into the other mother's world, it is her involuntary initiation as the other mother's daughter: as She created the world, the corridor may be seen as an extension of herself.



Figures 9 and 10: Coraline going through the magical tunnel, *Coraline* (Selick, 2009).

Later in the novel Coraline experiences the tunnel as having an active agency, having the uncanny sensation that she is being watched: 'She had the feeling that the door [of the tunnel] was looking back at her, which she knew was silly, and knew on a deeper level was somehow true (2002: 65). It is as though the other mother has injected herself into the entire micro-universe, including the tunnel, and is the house itself.

Further, in the novel's text as well as the film Coraline's explorations happen in circles, until she discovers that there is 'no more' to the other world, just a milky fog that returns her to the same place she started. In the film this is particularly well executed as a sequence, with the world becoming visually more schematic and less 'real', until it finally dissolves into white fog, and Coraline returns to where she started – the tools of animation are extremely well employed symbolically, as the world gradually becomes a 'sketch' – unfinished – and finally white non-existent, like a white page of an artists' sketchpad. Freud mentions walking in circles and finding himself, 'by devious paths' at the exact location where he started, without anticipating it, as one of the situations evoking an uncanny feeling (1919: 20). There is uncanniness in the act of repetition, as Freud argues:

That factor which consists in a recurrence of the same situations, things, and events... this phenomenon does undoubtedly, subject to certain conditions and combined with certain circumstances, awaken an uncanny feeling, which recalls that sense of helplessness sometimes experienced in dreams (1919: 23).

In *Spirited Away* the repetition of Chihiro's situation and routine is a prominent part of the interplay between the Heimlich and the Unheimlich and accentuates her helplessness and lostness while living and working in the bathhouse. The dreamlike quality of this circular repetition of her indoors life begins to gradually purge itself, as she confronts and defeats the mud demon and wins the affection of Yobaba's other servants. The Japanese expulsion of mud, pollution and the unhygienic is a prominent in the film (Napier, 2006: 290) and Chihiro herself, as a human, is seen as 'scum' by Yobaba, but is gradually accumulated into the collectivity of the bathhouse, again reminiscent of Japanese social culture. The gradual overcoming of her circular routine is symbolic of her growth and maturing, as the uncanniness of her environment is slowly accumulated into her understanding of home and family. The unheimlich therefore is eventually overcome and becomes less threatening and 'other'. The film's design itself has been described as 'dreamlike colours and imagery and themes of metamorphosis, doubling, and the uncanny' (Napier, 2006: 295).

In *Coraline*, there is helplessness, similar to that experienced in dreams, in the way Coraline succumbs to the other mother's orders when initially meeting her, an immediate acceptance of her lie 'Of course you do [have an Other Mother]. Everyone does.' (Gaiman, 2002: p.34), because she has seen her before, she has been called to dinner in almost the same manner, in the almost same house, by the almost same woman. The act of repetition disarms her, as well as evoking a feeling, which is both Heimlich and Unheimlich, becoming increasingly Unheimlich, as she notices the differences in the familiar house, her own, yet not her own and the mother herself. In the film this uncanny sense of familiarity is reinforced through the physical appearance of the Other Mother, looking precisely as Coraline's, as opposed to her description in the novel:

She looked a little like Coraline's mother. Only...

Only her skin was white as paper.

Only she was taller and thinner.

Only her fingers were too long. (2002: 32)

The novel relies on the frightening effect of the description itself, on the uncanny resemblance to the shadow Coraline cast in the drawing room, on the abnormality of the fingers, the anorexic thinness, the ominously translucent skin and the Medusa-like head (as depicted in Chris Riddell's illustrations), while the film chooses to use a different kind of uncanniness – that encountered in repetition and similarity. Like Yobaba is the same as her sister, including her hairstyle and dress colour, the Other Mother is identical to Coraline's mother, with the exception of clothing, and in the course of the narrative she slowly morphs into the thin, spider-like woman that Gaiman's initial description seeks to terrify the reader with. The only difference between the screen other mother and Coraline's mother is the button eyes: Coraline and the reader encounter familiarity with something not quite right about it, with a brink of uncanny difference between this world and the real one. This is precisely the note on which Gaiman is playing, when Coraline initially enters the Other Mother's microcosmic domain:

[The door] opened to a dark hallway...it smelled like something very old and very slow... Coraline walked down the corridor uneasily. There was something very familiar about it. The carpet beneath her feet was the same carpet they

had in their flat. The wallpaper was the same wallpaper they had. The picture hanging in the hall was the same they had hanging in their hallway at home.

She knew where she was: she was in her own home: she hadn't left. (p.31)

Here is Freud's returning to the same place he left, 'by devious paths', however, the uncanniness here is intensified, as Coraline clearly has shifted in space and although she is persuaded that she is still at home (whether acknowledging it with a childish acceptance or a startled suspicion), she knows that something is amiss and that something Heimlich (in the sense of both familiarity and magic) and Unheimlich (ominous, unfamiliar and wrong) is at hand, especially when the little differences between the two worlds become evident, for example the young boy in the picture, 'looking at the bubbles as if he would do something nasty to them and something peculiar about his eyes.' (p. 32). In the film the button eyes are suspended during Coraline's first visit, and the portrait is instead one of a blond cherub-like boy eating an enormous ice cream, amplifying the utopian quality of the other home, as opposed to settling a sense of eeriness.

The button eyes are the novel's most distinguishing and original feature, and it is certainly one of the most uncanny. The film emphasizes this uncanniness by creating an opening sequence, during which in stop-motion two ghoulish hands with long fingers create a doll, identical to Coraline and sew buttons into her eyes. The fear of losing one's eyes is something, which Freud, as recounting the story of the Sandman who tears out children's eyes, defines as one of the uncanny fears of childhood:

We know from psychoanalytic experience... that this fear of damaging or losing one's eye is a terrible fear of childhood...A study of dreams, phantasies and myths has taught us that a morbid anxiety connected with the eyes and going blind is often enough a substitute for the dread of castration (Keeling, 2012: 18).

Many critics read *Coraline* as a tale of budding sexuality and a child passing from the latent to the genital stage of her development (and creating Lacanian psycho-narratives detailing Caroline's progress into adolescence and individuation), however, Kara Keeling and Scott Pollard offer a fresh perspective on this idea by connecting Coraline's urges first and foremost to food, placing her in the oral stage. Using the cat's answer to Coraline's question 'Why does she want me to stay here with her?' – 'She wants something to love, I think,' said the cat. 'Something that isn't her. She might want something to eat as well. It's hard to tell with creatures like that.' (2002: 77-8) – Keeling and Pollard create an intrinsic connection between love and food, arguing that:

The cat's inability to distinguish between the other mother's desire to love and her desire to eat reflects the inseparability of these two fundamental human impulses... If we take the cat's pairing of love and food as a fundamental clue, then food becomes the Symbolic's central representation within Gaiman's novel.

In the film this link is certainly strongly suggested, as the first thing Coraline sees is a child eating an ice-cream, being indulged, and then sniffs the air, realising there is something delicious nearby, and most of her encounters with the Other Mother revolve around food. Visually, the food is one of the very few colourful details in the

eery dark house – food is seen as a temptation and entertainment, as well as a lure. While the accentuation of food is a truly compelling idea and eating certainly is central to the film’s narrative especially, I am more inclined to agree with critics reading *Coraline* as a novel about a child surmounting its Oedipal (or, as Jung calls it, Electra) complex, like Vivienne Muller and Elizabeth Parsons et al., stating that:

Gaiman deploys the trope of the evil, powerful “other” mother as a vehicle through which the protagonists resolve questions of identity, one’s (gendered) place in the world, and the kinds of interpersonal relationships that are culturally sanctioned (2008:371).

Coraline encounters the other mother as a Doppelganger, the ‘dark double’, of her real mother. When defining the double, Freud marks his/her transformation from something essentially representing the immortality of the soul, into something sinister: ‘From having been an assurance of immortality, [the double] becomes the ghastly harbinger of death’ (1919: 26). Similarly, Coraline’s other mother initially appears to provide Coraline with a complete affirmation of self, by fulfilling all her dreams with food, toys and attention, but later her ‘love’ proves to be the darkest shade of narcissism and she becomes precisely ‘a ghastly harbinger of death’, seeking to feed on, as opposed immortalise, Coraline’s soul. The two mothers, the real mother and the other mother, are connected through this idea of the double, as the other mother embodies Coraline’s unconscious fears about her real mother. As Vivienne Muller argues:

The other mother is also the real mother in that she embodies Coraline's unconscious feelings about her real one. The other mother is a constantly transforming mix of the solicitous and nurturing mother (satisfying primary narcissism) and threatening and fearsome crone (the uncanny harbinger of death) – thus embodying both aspects of the ways in which Coraline sees her own mother, but also the ways in which she *needs* to see her own mother as she begins to relinquish dependency on her. In order to accomplish this dependency and to move beyond primary narcissism, the pre-Oedipal mother must be demonised and made abject so that the child can become an 'I', an individual functioning self (2012: 3).

In his work *On Narcissism* Freud describes the ego as an amoeba, wrapping itself around the projected object. According to Freud the mother's love is narcissistic: she projects an imago of the child and protects it as though it is herself – it is essentially a narcissistic projection (1914:36-37). Yet, what the Other Mother wants is beyond this theory. As the cat stated, she might want something to love, or something to eat, however, as Coraline concludes:

It was true: the other mother loved her. But she loved Coraline as a miser loves money, or a dragon loves its gold. In the other mother's button eyes, Coraline knew that she was a possession, nothing more. (2002: 127)

Before this realisation, however, Coraline's other mother is precisely what Coraline desired, an idealised concept of motherhood, and Coraline does not immediately shy away from the idea of having someone who would shower her with

attention and give her a world full of interesting, if bizarre, things to explore. This concept of the other mother as a figure of desire is only minorly suggested in the novel, where Coraline almost immediately knows something is wrong, whereas in Henry Selick's *Coraline* the heroine is thrilled with her new world, with the new food, with the fantastic garden, with the playfulness of her other mother and father.

Upon returning home to her parents, after her first visit (the film fractures her visits into more episodes), Coraline even resentfully tells her mother: 'My other mother would buy [the green gloves] for me!' Coraline's visit to the other mother's world is precisely at the time of her life, when she is shifting from one stage of development to the next. She is still desirous of her parents' attention and company yet is striving for independence. In a psychoanalytical reading, she is on the verge of undergoing a resolution of the Oedipal complex, enabling her to start her adolescent life with a sexual interest in individuals outside of her immediate family. Coraline is bored with her toys and movies and she wants to be an adolescent – she wants to stand out from the other girls as is evident from her desire to buy the Day-Glo gloves.

Coraline's parents, like Chihiro's, are still perceiving her as a child. Her mother, working on her computer, bluntly responds to Caroline's desire to play: 'I don't mind what you do, as long as you don't make a mess! (2002: 15). Her father advises her to check the numbers of the doors, windows and everything that is blue in the house. These two replies suggest that Coraline's parents are attempting to confine their daughter to the domestic and homely, the Heimlich, and keep her behind closed doors, and thus endorse her child status. Coraline does not succeed much in finding recognition for her needs and a counterpoint for her desire for development of self outside of her house either: 'The crazy old man upstairs' and Miss Spink and Miss Forcible hardly provide her with the necessary means for growth and individual

progress. Individuality is greatly emphasised in the book, and it is expressed particularly through names. When Coraline asks the cat why it doesn't have a name, it answers: 'Cat's don't need names. Now, you people have names. That's because you don't know who you are.' (2002: 43) Names are therefore essentially made equivalent to identity and both Miss Spink and Miss Forcible, and the old crazy man upstairs mistake Coraline's name for Caroline. The importance of a child's name as an inherent part of her identity and sense of self-confidence is also, as discussed above, prominent in *Spirited Away* where Yobaba takes Chihiro's name away. While Chihiro's parents appear a little absent-minded and nonchalant in their comments to their daughter, once lost, she immediately begins to experience herself as being segregated from her nuclear family and wants to rescue her parents, seeing them as an extension of her true identity and feeling lost without them. Coraline on the other hand is seduced by the other mother and unaware that her identity as a daughter and an individual is being taken away from her.

Coraline has reached a threshold in her development as an individual: if she does not receive an affirmation of self (be it even a recognition of her name) she runs the risk of retreating to a more regressive state, 'trapped in a mirror phase, which allows only the play of the imaginary'. As Muller perceives it, 'against this backdrop of the symbolic order's refusal of her 'self' as she experiences it, coupled with her need to still be linked in some essential way to her mother and father, Coraline's fantasy/dreamworld is triggered' (Muller, 2012: 4). Muller regards the world, which Coraline encounters, as a subconscious imagining of her fears and desires, while I perceive it rather as a real externalization of her dreams and nightmares, colliding in the figure of the mother. It is true that this world may easily be linked to Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*, as a universe oscillating between the dream and the

nightmare: the psychoanalyst argues that 'dreams are a disguised fulfilment of a suppressed, repressed wish'. In the same work he also elaborates on the Oedipal complex, stating that:

King Oedipus, who slew his father Laius and married his mother Jocasta, is nothing more or less than a wish fulfilment – the fulfilment of the wish of our childhood> (1900: 26).

There are two battling wishes in *Coraline*: the budding Oedipal complex, seeking to make the mother abject and demonise her, and the desire to surrender herself to the care of the Pre-Oedipal mother. Freud identifies the pre-Oedipal mother as central to the baby's sense of unbounded self-continuous with the mother and thus with the pleasure principle and the satisfying of physical and emotional appetites. The other mother initially fulfils this role; she is the person, on whom Coraline has projected her desire for the fulfilment of her latent and repressed wishes. She provides her with all that she desires: abundant food ('the best chicken she ever tasted' (34)), incredible toys ('whole toy box filled with wonderful toys' (36)) and an exciting surrounding world (her room for example (35) or, in Henry Selick's film, the incredible, magical garden). Yet, as Rudd argues,

The internalised mother, the pre-Oedipal mother, is rapidly transformed into the suffocating archaic mother with a more phallic incarnation. She is the monstrous feminine. The black, gleaming button eyes of the other mother play a sinister role in this imperative frame. They do not prevent the other mother from seeing; rather, they enable her to see the world only as a reflection of her

'self' and her desire to accrete the power to serve it... The other mother's power is wrongfully usurped from the masculine. The other mother has made the world in her own image, an assumption of the creativity that is traditionally preserved as a godlike and male domain.¹

It is precisely the other father that tells Coraline the truth about this other world: 'There isn't anywhere but here,' he explains. 'This is all she made: the house, the grounds and the people in the house.' (2002: 84). The other mother has thus usurped the masculine from the 'father', becoming 'the monstrous feminine'. The world the mother has created is, just as she herself is the Doppelganger of the real mother, the dark double of *Coraline's* world. It has been created to be alluring and all that a young explorer can desire, however, it soon morphs into something 'ghastly', dark and amoeba-like. As if the other mother's projected ego, which has given shape and life to the invented microcosm and its 'characters' is disintegrating back to its original state. One of the most uncanny motifs, according to Freud and Jentsch, rests on the threshold between the alive and the artificial, the animate and inanimate:

A particularly favourable condition for awakening uncanny sensations is created when there is intellectual uncertainty whether an object is alive or not, and when an inanimate object becomes too much like an animate one (Rudd, 2008: 19)

Examples of this doubt as to whether an object is alive or not are abundant in *Spirited Away*, and extends the uncertainty of whether a certain individual is an enemy

or friend, as will be discussed later in the chapter. In the latter part of *Coraline* the film is also permeated by a blurred boundary between animate and inanimate. The motif is foreshadowed by Coraline's animated and responsive toys, whose state of existence remains unclear. Miss Spink and Miss Forcible initially transform in a magnificent fashion from the old chubby ladies that they are into their glamorous younger selves, just as the other mother initially appears to be an improvement of Coraline's real mother:

Then they unbuttoned their fluffy round coats and opened them. But their coats weren't all that opened: their faces opened, too, like empty shells, and out of the old empty fluffy round bodies stepped two young women. (2002: 47).

There is something uncanny about the two retired actresses' transformation. They unzip that which ought to have been alive, their original bodies, and emerge as something exquisite, but squeezed out of their true shapes. What are these two nymphs and what becomes of their fluffy envelopes? The answer remains hidden, but is suggested by their later transformation into something amorphic and distorted:

Inside the sac [looking like a spider-egg] was something that looked like a person, but a person with two heads, with twice as many arms and legs as it should have. The creature in the sac seemed horribly unformed and unfinished, as if two Plasticine people had been warmed and rolled together, squashed and pressed into one thing... twisted and squeezed together, like two lumps of wax that had melted and melted together into one ghastly object. (2002: 120-122).

That Coraline calls the once Miss Spink and Miss Forcible melange 'an object' is strongly indicative as to their state of existence: they have become inanimate, if they ever were anything beyond an organic automaton. Born out of the other mother's devious imagination, they collapse into something uncannier than nothingness, into something which ought to have been human, but is now an amoeba-like substance, which has lost the other mother's attention and turned into an 'empty shell', just like the children in the mirror, lost and trapped without their souls. The other major example of this uncanny morphing into a state worse than nothingness, an organic mess oscillating between the living and the non-living, is the 'other father', hunched and ostensibly of a smaller built compared to the other mother in the film:

The thing was pale and swollen, like a grub, with thin, stick-like arms and feet. It had almost no features on its face, which had puffed and swollen like risen bread dough. (2002: 132)

It is again meaningful that Coraline names her other father 'a thing', something gone beyond the human, past the living. Yet, the other father is still capable of speech and thus continues to oscillate between the animate and inanimate state, leading to the uncanny sensation of observing a strange, amoebic organic automaton. Muller perceives his transformation as a representation of a flaccid phallus, marking the shift of power from the patriarchal order to the 'monstrous feminine' (2012:5) once again emphasising the other mother's absolutist reign over her microcosm, a reign only ended when Coraline finds her courage and decides to challenge her.

Freud argues that a girl both identifies with and renounces her mother at this particular stage of development that Coraline is in. The heroine's battle and eventual destruction of the other mother and her reconciliation with her real mother suggest that the Oedipal stage has been successfully surmounted.

Coraline, at its most immediate level, functions as a Gothic tale, uncanny and alluring, about a brave young girl, who battles and defeats a creepy medusa-like spider-witch from a micro-realm embedded in her house, reaching a reconciliation with her parents. Gaiman works with the subconscious fears of the uncanny in terms of the familiar and unfamiliar, the dark double, the rituals of repetition, the play of life and non-life and the fear of losing one's eyes. At a psychoanalytical level, the book taps into a young adolescent's most uncomfortable fears regarding their family and, in particular, the mother figure, which sometimes needs to be reimagined as something, which first resembles the superego, but then becomes the id, in order to be reconciled with the ego – one's real, own mother. In *Spirited Away*, by comparison, the monster mother figure is revealed as such at the outset of the film, to be subverted by her sister Zeniba at the end of the film.

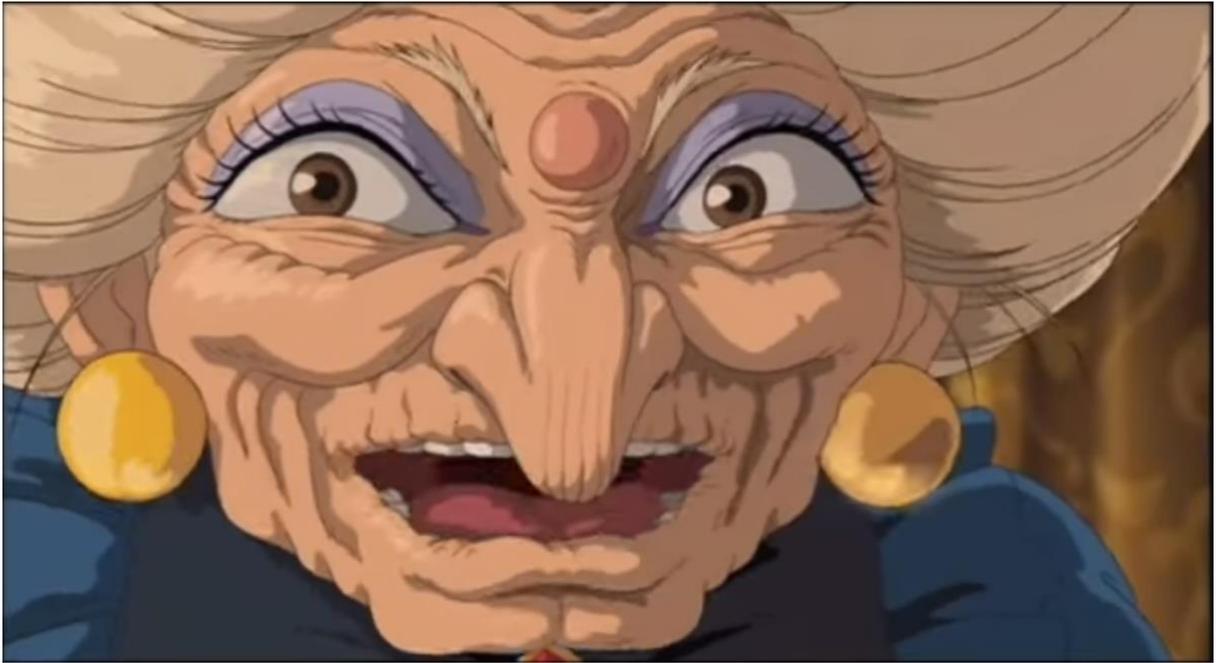
When Chihiro meets Yobaba, she is firstly introduced indirectly through her interior environment. The elaborate, over the top, snobbish foyers leading to her office contrast with Chihiro's contemporary child-like and casual attire. She appears small and out of place as she wanders to meet the owner of the Bathhouse, with extreme high angles and exceeding headspace to accentuate this. With its many vases and artefacts on display like trophies the rooms appear more like an exhibit or a gallery than a house – another symbol of the anti-home that the young girl will be trapped in. The lack of windows and of practical light sources is reminiscent of a cave or the

dwelling of a giant with the enormous ceilings and hyperbolized scaled artefacts. Everything is ornate, coated and decorated, in a wine-red and inky colour scheme, which is dark but still vibrant enough to create a strong sense of contrast and overwhelm the senses as an over-the-top kitsch interior. By contrast, Chihiro's light pastel clothes with detail-stripes in green and pink feel natural, light, and springtime-like. The design of her clothes is furthermore contemporary and casual, and she looks like a child out of time as well as place, as a lost girl that has wandered into a dark fairy tale.

As Chihiro knocks on the door and the doorknob speaks to Chihiro, a myriad of double doors opens and chandeliers light up but instead of introducing Yobaba within this space, the scene cuts to an extreme close up of her wrinkled mouth, telling the girl to come closer, emphasizing her authority over the interior space and her god-like control over it. The house is alive and yet not quite alive, oscillating between the animate and inanimate, emphasizing the uncanny effect of the dark enchanted bathhouse. Yobaba then whooshes Chihiro closer with magic, through another insert shot of her gesturing hand with its many rings, whose surface and colours reflect the colour palette of the rooms' decorations. Concealing Yobaba while she can see Chihiro from a distance and manipulate her with magic through this space not only places her in a position of ultimate power over her, but also makes her the mistress of that territory, while the girl is immediately deprived of her free will. As Chihiro moves forward, as though pulled by an invisible hand with her arms lifted as though she is afraid of what is holding her, the doors shut behind her, amplifying both the magical quality of the space around her being a living, enchanted space, and extending the will of the witch Yobaba over her. She is finally tossed on the floor in front of a fireplace, indicating she has reached the heart of the maze. She is approached by three talking

male heads – all of Yobaba’s henchmen are male, however all are distorted into becoming functions of her needs, even physically. Her overgrown child that appears later on in the film is not an exception. An enormous talking baby that is physically denied the free will to mature and is instead distorted into a child that grows without growing up.

Yobaba’s sick attachment to her baby is eventually her downfall, as the overgrown baby orders her to let Chihiro find her parents – as a monstrous mother figure she is vulnerable the same way the Other Mother is: monstrous mothers need a child to fulfil their needs (as was the case in *Mirromask* as well). The only control that a child can have over a monstrous mother-figure is to threaten to exercise their free will by breaking away from her dominant will. Chihiro’s free will is taken from her the moment Yobaba’s doors open, physically, and then symbolically as she takes her name away. Her heavy makeup and grotesquely large head immediately caricature her, but the effect is more monstrous than it is comical. The extreme closeups of Yobaba’s head make her feel even more enormous and threatening, while Chihiro’s medium shots emphasize her frail frame and her body language as she jumps around the moving male heads. Signing contracts for her servants in a manner similar to satanic myths of the devil making contracts for human souls, Yobaba zips Chihiro’s mouth closed with magic. This act of ‘physically’ demanding obedience is echoed in *Coraline*, where the Other Mother attempts to replace Coraline’s eyes with button eyes to make her a child of her own. The desire to transform the child’s face physically and entrap its faculties and senses can be argued to represent as the final stage of an anti-nurturing upbringing through the demand of absolute obedience.



Figures 10 and 11: Yobaba meets Chihiro in her study, *Spirited Away* (2001).

It is also an act of anti-motherhood, acting upon the frequent advice of mothers not to touch your eyes or to put things in your mouth. Instead, the monster mother figures replace their child's senses to exercise complete control over her. Once Chihiro's mouth is unzipped so she can tell Yobaba who helped her get into her office,

the witch flies over to her and her every touch horrifies Chihiro: their difference in scale and character design makes the scene feel like a monster is playing with her prey as she interrogates her in a two-shot in which only the gigantic eye and nails of Yobaba and the trembling Chihiro are visible from the witch. Their character design is highly contrasting too, inviting notions of binary opposites such as innocence versus corruption, unpretentiousness versus snobbishness and of course childhood versus old age.

The appearance of Yobaba is without a doubt petrifying, however, the twist at the end of *Spirited Away* subverts even that: the uncanny doubling of Yobaba with her 'light double' twin sister at the end of *Spirited Away* makes her appearance even darker and more perverse, as her malevolent will now transcends appearance and she becomes, through the contrast with her sister, one and the same with her house – snobbish, tacky and overwhelming, through her rings and love for materiality and ornate luxury. That way she becomes even more uncanny and, presented with a motherly antithesis of herself, even more of a monstrous mother figure. The figure of Yobaba as a head of the bathhouse has been discussed even in terms of a metaphor for Studio Ghibli and for Miyazaki himself, while her modest sister Zeniba and her pastoral hut has been seen as an extension of his picturesque European longings: Zeniba's fairy-tale- style thatched cottage may represent Miyazaki's yearnings for the "thatched hut" of the medieval hermit Kamo no Cho'mei, combined with his youthful longing for Europe (Napier, 2018: 3). This uncanny doubling of the two sisters, the mother and the anti-mother, is precisely the binary opposite on which the 'unheimlich' in *Coraline* is built too.

The presence of a monstrous mother figure and of a home that is not a home, but, essentially, a monster-house, enhances the feeling of having lost one's true home and parents. Generating this 'other' house that represents a binary opposite of what a child's real home is, which is especially explicit in *Coraline*, but also metaphorically true of *Spirited Away*, brings the theme of home even closer to the centre of the film. Having a female child trapped in a monstrous adoptive home, where everything is concealed, children are enslaved by adults and dysfunctional adulthoods are caricatured and turned into grotesques, generates more feelings of lostness than, for example, an outdoors adventure would. Being a child endangered outdoors brings a whole list of associations and anxieties – there are the immediate dangers of nightfall and hunger, the uncertainty of what creatures and obstacles you might encounter during your journey and the general threat of being a child alone outdoors. However, an in-house journey has its own very different, and, one might argue, worse list of dangers: there is no sense of progression, like there would be in an outdoors quest, only being trapped in a maze-house that you need to unravel, going in circles; there is no danger of nightfall or hunger, but instead there is a dominant figure (the monster mother) who commands everything, including when you eat and sleep; finally, the creatures and obstacles you encounter are arguably only scarier because they confront you in a confined space and on your own territory. The anti-home that Chihiro and Coraline are trapped in needs to be overcome, both physically and emotionally, in order for them to rediscover their concept of home and regain their own identity.

As observed by Bacchilega and Rieder, the world of Chihiro in *Spirited Away* remains problem-filled, it is she herself who has changed: 'The world upon Chihiro's return remains problem filled. Ten-year-old Chihiro goes from being an unpromising heroine to an "intrepid" one (Zipes 2006a, 211), a shojo upon whose courage—but

also discipline and integrity—the rescue of others—the dragon Haku, the XL baby Bôh, and her parents—depends.’ (2010: 39). The way in which the two heroines accomplish a rediscovery of home is by being lost in the first place. Like the two little girls in playful worlds in *Baron Munchausen* and *The Fall*, who used unreal fantasy adventures to acquire a real sense of importance, in *Coraline and Spirited Away* fantasy offers the two girls two anti-homes in order for them to come to terms with the concept of a new home, while the monstrous mothers help the girls to renegotiate the meaning of proper parenthood. The fantastic forces them into a monstrous adventure where they encounter a number of dysfunctional adults, most of all – the monster mother, within an anti-home that they cannot leave. Like in other lost-girl films, in these two productions there is no straight forward ‘education’ to speak of. Fantasy as a medium of education, as well as entertainment, is more mischievous, indirect and evocative. In a sense, like in most coming-of-age films, here girl meets world, however – not the real one. Instead, what she encounters as fantasy and nightmare then impacts her real personality and interiority through a series of magical encounters, and along with her – the child watching the film also co-experiences the monster-house and losing one’s home and family for a monster figure. Like in the previous chapter, this makes a case for fantasy as a nurturer and an educator. Not only does the fantastic offer an infinity of possibility in terms of what you might encounter and in what world, but it also offers a richer opportunity to generate metaphors and parallels between a child’s interiority and the external world. If in children’s literature ‘dwelling [is] often used metonymically to convey the core emotional qualities ideally associated with home’ (Reimer, 2011:108), then this is only enhanced in the realm of fantasy.

CHAPTER THREE: GROWING GIRLS IN MONSTROUS WORLDS: Guillermo Del Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006) and Terry Gilliam's *Tideland* (2005)

Introduction

Both Guillermo Del Toro and Terry Gilliam are well-established in the field of fantasy filmmaking, with Del Toro successfully transcending the genre's perceived inability to give birth to an auteur-filmmaker. Gilliam, too, has had his critical spotlight and has been discussed as an artist in his own right (Hairvy, 2013). The aesthetics of Del Toro's cinema have been praised for their gritty realism paired with the gothic horror of his imaginary sequences. His more realistic, detailed take on the fantastic collides with early writings on auteurism focusing on neorealist cinema (Chabrol, Bazin, 1951) and its stylistic cinematographic choices, which can be argued to correlate to the style of Del Toro's reality sequences, in particular those centred around the anti-father figure of Captain Vidal (analysed later in the chapter), which have been explored in terms of their often brutal realism and visual language of character building (Brown, 2015). Del Toro's stylistic choices of cinematography and production design move away from the frivolous and polished look of the fairy tale genre and thus generating a collision between fantasy and reality, generating what Todorov labels as [a fantastic universe](#) – one existing on the verge between the fantastic and the real. This oscillation evident in camera and production encapsulates Ofelia's psyche as a child on the cusp of adolescence and complexifies *Pan's Labyrinth* in terms of firstly character and theme, but secondly also genre. With fantasy's somewhat disputed reputation both as a genre and as auteur-worthy field, Del Toro's work has greatly advanced the reputation of contemporary fantasy and fairy tale writing, generating an

international academic buzz, which has not desisted since the film's original screening in 2006 (Vargas, 2014, Haddu, 2015, McIntyre, 2017). Gilliam, on the other hand, works within the aesthetics of hyperbole, surrealism and caricature and has been praised as a master of the grotesque (Weishaar, 2012). According to Peter Wollen's differentiation between the two schools of auteur theory – those focusing on directorial themes and those 'who stressed style and mise-en-scene' (Wollen, 1969: 566) – Gilliam is certainly renowned for his style and mise-en-scene. I personally am inclined to agree with this division between types of auteur and this thesis acknowledges this. Peter Jackson, for example, has been praised for his visuals (Croft, 2005), but has generally eluded the status of auteur beyond the aesthetics of the screen. Terry Gilliam is distinct from this: he is not merely celebrated for the aesthetic distinction of his fantasy filmmaking but has been acknowledged for the key themes running through his work. He is for example interested in the artistic study of psychosis (Thomas, 2005; Hamel, 2013), which is a theme permeating the majority of his narratives – *Tideland*, *Baron Munchausen*, *The Fisher King* and *The Imaginarium of Dr Parnassus*. Much like Del Toro wields the marvellous to externalise the maturing of Ofelia and the inherent tragedy in losing one's childhood through a fantastic rite of passage, Terry Gilliam uses elements of the absurd, the grotesque and the carnivalesque to explore psychosis and a psychological departure from reality. He therefore uses the fantasy genre as a distorted mirror of the human psyche. Gilliam is interested in the intimate human experience that is engaging with one's own imagination. This has already been observed in *The Baron Munchausen*, where the imagination of the seemingly mad and aged Baron eventually triumphs over a society based on reason and pragmatism. In *Tideland* he revisits notions of childhood and imagination taking a stand against adulthood, however the undertones of this more recent feature are much darker with

Jeliza-Rose's fantasising taking a psychotic turn; *Tideland* has been advertised as 'Alice in the land of nightmares' (2005), as a part of the film's original promotional campaign and the fantastic is used as a visualisation of the girl's problematised interior world. Both films, as will be discussed in this chapter, make artistic use of fantasy as a genre-within genre. The strong narrative frame of *Pan's Labyrinth* makes reality ever-present, and the fantastic sequences are like an inner narrative of the film, intimately acquainting the spectator with Ofelia's universe. Similarly, Jeliza-Rose's hallucinatory sequences serve to show her struggle to assimilate the monstrosity of her reality by replacing it with psychotic fantasising.

Andrew Sarris, writing along Wollen, identifies three premises of auteurism, uniting the two schools of thought that aim to define auteurism: 'the outer circle is technique, the middle circle personal style and the inner circle interior meaning' (Sarris, 1962: 563). I am more inclined to write with this definition of auteurism in mind, as it cinema is a multi-track medium, operating on multiple levels. With this definition in mind, as discussed above, these two fantasy filmmakers, by adopting and appropriating conventions of the genre, have excelled critically at all three levels – aesthetics in terms of technique, a personal voice in terms of style (grotesque and gothic) and finally, the inner meaning of their films which will be discussed in detail in this chapter as allegorising pivotal points in problematic girlhoods.

This chapter will explore the how fantasy informs, confronts and resolves notions of girlhood and lostness in Guillermo Del Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006) and Terry Gilliam's *Tideland* (2005). The focus will be on the development of dark fantasies which reflect the two female protagonists' traumatic experiences of parental neglect and abuse, and on the way in which these fantasies take them through these critical

periods of late childhood and nurture them into early adolescence. I will argue that in these two dark fantasy films revolving around the concept of 'lost girls' the narrative oscillates between real-life experience and child-like fantasising in order to further bring the two lost girls' point of view to the foreground of the narrative. The juxtaposition of the two worlds – that of dark fantasy and that of pre-adolescent trauma – demonstrates the two female protagonists' state of lostness in traumatic homes which compromise and undermine their pre-adolescent perspective on identity, family and society. The narrative's genre, as a meeting point between dark fairy-tale fantasy and pre-adolescent family drama, unfolds the girls' point of view on their reality through the imagined visualisations of their dreams and anxieties. *Pan's Labyrinth's* fantasy-monster in Ofelia's abusive and neglectful family environment; and *Tideland's* borderline hallucinatory imaginative play visualised during Jeliza-Rose's period of parental bereavement and abandonment both portray the girls' perspectives. Their lostness, as a family trauma which undermines their sense of identity, is addressed and confronted through their visualized fantasies, which demonstrate and resolve their transforming conceptualisation of the idea of a home and their evolving notion of girlhood as they enter early adolescence. As their abusive families neglect and compromise their sense of home and identity, the two girls' fantasised imaginations take on a nurturing and educational role.

Pretend-play specifically is prominent in early childhood (Fein, 1981: 1097 (kindle pages)), both in terms of imaginative child-play and fairy-stories and plays a leading role in the child's development, leisure and culture through early (3-7 years old) and middle childhood (7-12 years) (Donald et al, 2017: p.31). Thus, when a new age or a or a new environment presents the growing child with unfamiliar social structures and cultural constraints, s/he already has a child culture and imaginary

children-story structures that s/he is bringing into this new development stage. The adolescent has not fully moved away from child culture or from the fantasy story structures in which nothing is impossible, when confronted with the new period of adolescence. *Pan's Labyrinth* and *Tideland* show two pre-adolescent girls that fall on the old and familiar tropes of their own imagination when faced with new and the unfamiliar traumatic environments. Using familiar tropes from child-play and appropriating child-culture narratives such as bedtime storytelling and fairy tales, Del Toro and Gilliam present the girls' imaginary worlds as both an escape from traumatic environments. The unfamiliar and the traumatic is confronted through the familiar and the imaginary. I will argue that is as much a post-traumatic journey as it is a confrontation between points of view. As Carol Lury observes with regards to *Pan's Labyrinth*: 'the economic and symbolic density of the fairy tale world are employed to represent the child's point of view.' (Lury, 2010: 201-202). In these two fantasy films, the directors use the trope and symbolism of fairy-tale to unfold a child's perspective on the world. Jack Zipes argues on the function of the fairy-tale in *Pan's Labyrinth* that:

The fairy tale in this context helps to bring a universal appeal or understanding, but also more complex effects, in the sense that the conscious application of familiarity these stories generate can help to reflect back on the devastating reality or historical situation, where there is limited (hope for) change. The interrelation between fantasy and reality... [is] explored, both in the way that "realist" representations are interjected momentarily with fantastical visions, and how fantastical and real worlds are heavily interwoven. (Zipes, 2002: 262)

Del Toro and Gilliam thus effectively impregnate childlike fairy-tale structures with 'adult' concepts, such as violence, abuse, isolation and death, both within the girls' abusive families and more widely within their socio-political environment. In *Pan's*

Labyrinth Ofelia's traumatic family environment also feeds into the wider theme of early Fascism in Spain, and in *Tideland* into wider themes of drug abuse and psychotic states in segregated environments. This chapter will explore how the harsh realities in *Tideland* and *Pan's Labyrinth* are interjected and interrupted by *Pan's Labyrinth's* Ofelia and *Tideland's* Jeliza-Rose's fantasy. It will focus on the ways in which their escapist worlds are still heavily interconnecting with their reality and haunted by the traumatic real-life monsters who force their individual, private fantasies to take a dark turn. This dark fantasizing nurtures the posttraumatic pre-adolescent girl through abandonment and abuse, allowing her to address her undermined point of view on her notions of home and identity.

As in the case of the other eight case-studied films, *Pan's Labyrinth* and *Tideland* are constructed with a strong ongoing allusion to the restrictions that their chosen cultural context imposes on girlhood and critiques the demand placed on young girls to enter into specific and constrictive social roles. Jeliza-Rose is required to take care of and catered for her drug-abusive parents. Forced into models of adult behaviour that she does not fully understand she explores her incomplete pre-adolescent understanding of adulthood through dark imaginative play as she tries to find a new identity and a new family – firstly with her dolls as her sisters and daughters with their heads stuck on her fingers, and later on Dickens as a father and husband, finally visually transforming herself into a costumed bride. Ofelia is required to adopt an adult and ladylike behaviour by her mother and stepfather, while the fantasy aspect of the narrative reintroduces her into childhood through a hero's quest and through fairy tale creatures. Each film introduces a narratives that provide the opportunity for the girls to adopt more active agency, particularly with regards to taking the initiative to explore and challenge. These films offer fantasy landscapes as arenas where social norms

can be more directly challenged and the young girl's own understanding of society and her role can be tested against these norms of adulthood. Some (older) classical fantasy examples do partly draw on coming-of-age parallels between the fantastical and the real (*Wizard of Oz* (1939), *The Never Ending Story* (1984), *Labyrinth* (1986), *Hook* (1991)) and use these 'arenas' in order to re-establish notions of 'adulthood' – family, order, maturity, responsibility, etc. However, resolution is neither the main focal point nor the final result of the fantasy structures imbedded in the two fantasy narratives studied in this chapter.

Instead, the fantastical finds various ways to reflect and unfold the girls' state of lostness, experienced within real-life contexts that are 'impossible to change' (Zipes, 2002: 262). As their traumatic environment is observed by Jack Zipes to be unchangeable, their state of lostness is resolved through the fantastical. The fantastical also demonstrates their sense of lostness as a state of mind and a line of action, with a prominent and deliberate lack of a resolution of their real-life situation. Instead, the experience of the fantasy journey without a real destination reflects the dead-end situation of the lost girls. Their cultural contexts impose this sense of lostness on them, both in terms of individual identity and social position. Subversively, the fantastical world simultaneously reclaims and undermines their right to individuality and belonging. Thus, the figure of the lost girl is at the threshold between two types of impossible situations and she serves to reflect various 'lostness' which can often be experienced in the early-adolescent girlhood period (and more specifically within the various 20th century Western cultural contexts which are explored in this research's ten case-studied films), such as a disillusionment with a parent figure, a failure to adapt to a new home environment, a confrontation with the perceived social roles and functions of womanhood, a resentment of the social demands of adulthood

as a way of behaviour, and others, more specific to the case-studied films. The lost girls in these films therefore experience their intercepting dreams and nightmares as an end-in-themselves, instead of necessarily reaching clear narrative resolutions in their real-life situations. Rather, some end violently or tragically, while others are resolved only partly. The fantastical is not always indented or aimed at resolving reality, but at addressing and resolving the internal experience of lostness. It is the fantastical experience itself that is the aim. It nurtures the lost girl through trauma enabling her to experience (and live through) an alternative narrative in which her sense of lostness can be imaginarily resolved.

Ofelia's dream in *Pan's Labyrinth's* to disobey the restrictive control of her violence-prone stepfather is lived through the fantasy creatures that she encounters in the landscapes around her new home. The oppressive power-dynamic and disturbing physical relationship established with her stepfather during her first encounter with him is paralleled and 'resolved' by her encounter with the Faun. Prone to violence and suffering from compulsions for control, Captain Vidal treats Ofelia with neglect and demands her full obedience. But the physically incapacitated and courteous faun bows at her and tells her she is the princess he has been waiting to find and that her real father, the king of the underworld, is trying to find her, thus lending her a sense of identity and family. Ofelia's anxieties regarding her mother's sickened pregnancy and her helplessness as she witnesses her gradually worsening condition are expressed when she places a mandrake root in milk under her bed. Her understanding of the importance of the unborn baby for her stepfather is expressed when she has to dig inside the belly of a toad monster for a magical key. The marriage of her mother to the Captain is very much so that she can produce an heir for him and he is much more interested in the child's health than her own. The reason why the

mother and Ofelia move to the military posting in the mountain is so that Captain Vidal can witness the birth of his child, despite the journey being mentioned as dangerous for the mother by the military doctor. The unborn baby is the key to their new home – a home that they need, but do not necessarily want, after the death of Ofelia’s father. Ofelia needs to dig out a key from within the belly of a monster-toad to get closer to her home in the Underworld that the faun has promised her. And she retrieves a key from where keys to new homes come from – from the toad’s belly, valuable in the same way like the baby in her mother’s pregnant stomach is valuable to the mother and daughter. Womb and birth-like, the scene with the frog and the key is also an allegory for inverted birth. Ofelia, neglected and no longer protected by her bed-ridden mother, tries to crawl back into childhood, into safety and into a family, as her mother’s attention and love, like her pregnant and sickened body, are no longer available to her. As her second trial Ofelia has to face the monstrous Pale Man who only attacks when a rule he himself is subjected to has been broken – and he is only able look at his visitor if they break his rule, alluding to Ofelia remaining unseen and neglected by her stepfather unless she is found guilty of disobedience. The rule that Ofelia breaks with the Pale man is not to eat anything from his feast – a rule absurd to a child, referencing dinner etiquette and paralleled at the stepfather’s formal dinner party. The creatures that Ofelia’s imagination conjures therefore serve to face the anxieties of her stepfather’s household, where she is at once neglected and in danger of abuse. Through the fantasy universe she is able to interrogate mechanisms of control and to experience her dream of disobedience. Her death is a culminative point of both these explorations.

In *Tideland* Jeliza-Rose replaces the dysfunctional relationship with her family who exploit her to nurture them during drug abuse episodes, by playing at being best

friends with her barbie dolls. The dolls however begin to take a life of their own and become mischievous and jealous for her attention. While their jealousy also enhances her real situation of her isolation and child-neglect, the conversation of the talking dolls helps Jeliza-Rose face unsettling concepts like exploitation, hidden motives and betrayal. She gradually brings her escapist games of pretend to an end, beginning to engage instead in imaginative games of testing and exploration. Starting to understand the dysfunctionality of the life established by her parents, Jeliza-Rose gradually overcomes her denial that her father is not dead and survive this period of trauma through the dream-like conversations with her talking dolls.

The chapter, comparing the two films in order to draw out themes and motifs prominent the 'lost girl' subgenre, will follow the metamorphosis of the girls' world. The chapter will first discuss the time of pre-adolescence and the girls' post traumatic arrested development, exploring it through costume and through the girls' relapse into make-belief. The chapter will then investigate the replacement of adult monsters with imaginary monstrous allies. The films demonstrate the impossibility to grow up in a traumatic environment and present these dysfunctional environments as homes of arrested development. Afraid of adulthood, as a traumatising result of their dysfunctional homes, the two maturing girls relapse into fairy tale and imaginative play. Both girls are infantilised through costume and performance and hold on to their dolls/books; refusing to fully surrender to reality and its demands on their identity. Effectively, a fantasised exploration of their own imagination instead of their traumatic real-life contexts, helps them ultimately mature and re-enter reality. I will explore the two films as a discussion of how a young girl could disobey reality. Ofelia disobeys control, neglect and violence and Jeliza-Rose disobeys death, isolation and psychosis, each surviving these traumatic experiences through imagination. The films suggest, I

will argue, that the only way in which they can disobey is by hiding away in their imagination in a search for a freer active agency, implying that a child's fantasy is not only a place for self-discovery, but also independence.

I will explore the process of the girls' lapse into fantasising as processes of resistance against problematic and flawed adulthoods, presented through overbearing stepparents acting as antagonists. I will further investigate their fantasy universes with a focus on the imaginary characters and beings which either help or endanger the lost girl. Their magical allies supplementing needed guidance and companionship contrast and yet share some kinship with the gothic, horror-like monsters in scenes revolving around filth and devouring. Through the girls' fantasy universes, their real-life issues and the 'real-life monsters' that they encounter are readdressed through transformation in their fantasy mindscapes.

The chapter will further trace the process of 'landscape becoming mindscape'. The girls of these two films encounter firstly their fantasy worlds outside of their dangerous houses, outdoors or in overgrown fields, where dreams and fears can later take shape as magical holes and fantastical creatures. The realities of the stagnant, rigid interiors of the girls' new homes are gradually replaced by the desolate, overgrown exteriors surrounding their houses across which the two young female protagonists scatter and unfold their fantasies. The households are controlled and suffocating spaces of helplessness versus the uncouth and unknown open spaces in which (self-)exploration and autonomy of mind and body are possible. They later bring some of these fantasies within their homes, secretly from their family members, symbolically uniting the two worlds, as the fantastical starts to merge with their real-life environments (Ofelia places the mandrake root under her mother's bed to heal her, while Jeliza-Rose sacrifices her favourite doll to her father's dead body – both girls

offering a tribute to resuscitate or commemorate their dying parent-figure that they are about to lose). I will argue that these fantasy worlds, hallucinatory and half-real in terms of character alignment, represent the unwillingness to let go of their imagination in the face of domestic threat.

Two Lost Girls Running Out of Childhood

Ofelia's character is on the verge of adolescence. Originally, her part was written for an 8-year-old, but later it was considered by the casting team that elements of the dialogue would be delivered better by a more mature child and that the storyline would have different undertones with a slightly older protagonist. Therefore, Ivana Baquero was cast at the age of eleven. A similar problem was encountered in the casting process of *Tideland*, since, as Gilliam explains in an interview, "The dangerous thing about making this film was the fact that a little girl, a very little girl of about nine or ten years old is in every scene, she is the movie." (Thomas, 2005: 5). In a critical article detailing the adaptation and production process of the film, Jeremy Thomas claims that 'There was a certain amount of anxiety amongst the producers and directors as to whether they would find a child actor who could carry this film (Thomas, 2005: 8). The casting process was prolonged to the degree that Gilliam further joked: 'I thought I was going to have to look in newspapers for stories of families that have been killed in terrible accidents where one little kid survived, or search the orphanages of Canada. This kid had to have a real soul'. Eventually, Jodelle Ferland was cast with a filming experience of 20 plus films mainly for TV, including films like *Carrie* and *Deadly Little Secrets*.

As a result, what the audience experiences in both those films through Ofelia and Jeliza-Rose's age and screen presence are two children, who have almost run

out of childhood – both characters are faced with first-time encounters with adulthood (violence, control, death, abandonment, isolation, self-sustaining) and the actresses cast are both visibly on the edge between late pre-adolescence and early puberty. Enhanced through this visual juxtaposition, both growing girls are running back towards elements of their childhood or shelter. Jeliza-Rose and Ofelia gradually segregate themselves from their inhospitable reality and increasingly become more involved with the simultaneously developing fantasy narrative. For Ofelia this narrative is fantastical by nature and experienced as real, while for Jeliza-Rose it is imaginative and border-line delusional. The real-life agitations are replaced by pacifying rituals of imaginative child-play. Yet the real-life environment continues to pose a threat to their emotional state and increasingly to their physical body. Both girls try to force their fantastical world onto reality in the final part of the two films – Ofelia steals her baby-brother to take him to the Faun and open the portal to the underworld with his blood, while Jeliza-Rose dresses herself as a fairy-tale bride and pretends to be married to the mentally impaired Dickens, who does not understand the game. Both girls however are reinstated through a modern-day form of ‘deus ex-machina’ which supplements the seemingly inevitable tragic of the films. As Ofelia dies, she miraculously is transported to the kingdom of the underworld, where her mother and father welcome her into their throne room. As Jeliza-Rose assists Dickens to blow up the passing train, which he perceives as an enormous shark, a bereaved woman surviving the wreckage decides to take her with herself and offer her a home. Ofelia dies at the end of the film, while Jeliza-Rose is fully delusional at the end of *Tideland* and explains to her new parent-figure that she can hear the stars talk and that they have names too. Ofelia’s ending is after death and Jeliza-Rose’s is a path to a new life, yet their real-life traumas have been resolved, only potentially miraculously superseded by the films’ deus ex

machina endings. Yet, these miraculous *deus ex-machina* elements to their endings (as unlikely as the fantasy narratives that preceded them) serve to reinstate the girls' sense of identity and home. Ofelia's ending can only be achieved through the fantastic, whereas Jeliza-Rose's is achieved by the film's unlikely development, as a bereaved woman stumbles on the abandoned girl, after her and Dickens blow up a part of the train. Both *deus ex machina* endings are a way for the filmmakers to celebrate imagination and childhood and reinstate its place through these two narrative choices. They are miraculous and contrived by nature, in a way which subversively critiques unresolved child issues. These two films offer these fantastical solutions to further enhance the usual tragic outcome of childhood traumas.

Del Toro and Gilliam have shown a sustained interest in childhood and child-parent trauma, particularly on how trauma can impact the coming-of-age of a growing protagonist. In Gilliam's *Baron Munchausen* (1988) the daughter's trauma lies in being denied her childhood (her father wants her to assist him at the theatre and stop 'behaving like a child') while in *Doctor Parnassus* (2009) the daughter is being denied her adulthood (her father infantilises her and pretends that she is younger, afraid of aging and of 'both them running out of time'); in *The Wholly Family* (2011) the imaginative play of a pre-adolescent boy is surreally brought to life to make up for parental neglect. Further on how neglect can reduce childhood and lessen imagination, In Del Toro's *The Devil's Backbone* (2001) an orphaned boy is nurtured into adulthood along with his peers by a ghost – another pre-adolescent boy. In *Cronos* (1993) the young granddaughter is the caretaker of her vampire grandfather, unable/unwilling to discern between monster and guardian, much like Jeliza-Rose refuses to perceive the rotting and decay of her dead father's body. Both in *Pan's Labyrinth* and *Tideland* continued childhood-trauma is destructively intertwining with

maturity and the coming-of-age process is poisoned. Motherhood as care-taking, femininity as vulnerability and sexuality as a disturbing rite of passage collide in the interrupted childhoods of Ofelia and Jeliza-Rose.

Kathryn Laity discusses the explorations of sexuality in *Tideland* as a type of unresolved trauma in neglected children, matching this prominent theme of *Tideland* to some of Ofelia's dark experiences in *Pan's Labyrinth*, particularly the Pale Man sequence, reminiscent of the gothic trope of a monstrous master devouring an innocent youth who has wandered into his castle, and broken an unfathomable rule, following fairy-tale traditions such as Blue Beard, or the myth of Orpheus and Euridice, where the rule is not to ever look back (Laity, 2013: 118). Both journeys also bear characteristics of a hero's quest – Ofelia's dark fantasy journey and the surreal borderline hallucinogenic experience of Jeliza-Rose. Both lost girls have their state of lostness directly addressed by the fantasy narrative, which allows them to retain both a sense of active agency and the opportunity to explore their imagination and the nature of their trauma. The more the two girls run out of childhood the more they race against adulthood, eventually reaching a direct confrontation between their imagination and their reality – one ends in Ophelia's death the other in the psychotic destruction of a train full of passengers. Yet, despite the tragedy both growing girls 'outrun' adulthood – the first reunited by her family in death, the other incidentally adopted.

Encountering the Monstrosities of Adulthood

Both female protagonists are exposed to dangers originating from adulthoods which have turned monstrous. Historicised as in *Pan's Labyrinth* or contemporary as

in *Tideland*, these two domestic contexts of child abuse, representative of larger social concerns (the first of military oppression and patriarchal violence, the second of drug-abuse and child-exploitation) constitute two realities which prove challenging to survive and comprehend for the films' pre-adolescent protagonists and result in them losing their sense of home and identity.

Having experienced the loss of a parent, Jeliza-Rose and Ofelia are forced into new homes, where they have their first-time encounters with exploitation, violence and death. They are removed from their previous homes at the start of the films and hurled into environments, which are 'devastating' and nearly impossible to 'change' (Laity, 2013: 118). The child's emotional and physical survival becomes something increasingly uncertain in these new homes where the neglect of parents and the abuse of strangers are quickly normalised. The child's reality is interrupted by the monstrosities of adulthood that she is not yet experienced or informed enough to fully understand. 'Adulthood issues' such as drug abuse, mental-illness, obsessive disorder, violence, fetishism and rape, hard to grasp, infect the child's imaginative mind in a search for resolution and transform her girlhood into a forced pre-adulthood period. In this state of lostness both girls enact pretend games of care-giving and heroic deeds in an attempt to make up for their own feeling of helplessness regarding themselves and their environment. Jeliza-Rose, who is four-days starving, feeds her dolls and her dead father's body the last remains of her peanut butter, while Ofelia tries to improve her mother's sickened pregnancy by putting a baby-mandragora root in a bowl of milk in her bedroom. These two child-like acts of care-taking are a demonstration of the girl's fear to lose their incapacitated parent completely. Adopting a parent's role for their sick parent (Jeliza-Rose is still perceiving her father to be merely asleep at this point) the two girls find a fairy-tale action that will nurture their

parent figure back to health. Jeliza smears the last bits of her own food onto the dolls' mouths and smears some on her father's lips – leaving only a little bit for herself. She waits for her father to react and is panicked when he doesn't. Ofelia nearly gets hit and is prohibited from being with her mother because of the dirty mandrake root. Both mis-conceived ideas of taking care of their parents fail and worsen their circumstances, leaving them feeling more lost – more isolated and endangered than before.

These make-believe attempts to re-establish a sense of control over their own identity and household position are the only control which the two female protagonists are able to attain. Ofelia encounters the compulsively controlling nature of Captain Vidal, with fatal outbursts of violence and manias for order and cleanliness while worrying about her mother's pregnancy. Jeliza-Rose, losing her mother and starting to live a one-sided life of devotion with the corpse of her father, seeks the protection of Dell and her mentally impaired son Dickens. Jeliza-Rose inserts herself into their disturbingly symbiotic, incestuous relationship, which she comingles with her make-believe games of pretend. Jeliza seeks shelter from her toxic house in the wild abandoned landscapes surrounding the several depopulated houses that constitute her world. Ofelia, surviving off the half-care of Carmen and her ever sicker mother Mercedes also abandons the domestic threats of her new home for the overgrown outdoors, the forests and old ruins, where her fantasies take shape. It is only within these abandoned landscapes that autonomy of mind and action can be reached, or, rather – played at.

Within their new homes dominated by Mother Dell and Captain Vidal, both girls are confronted with obsessive control and mental illness. Both adult antagonists, Dell and Vidal suffer from an obsession with hygiene and pristine order, and share a

maniacal need to mend things that can't be mended – nearly-broken clocks or, in the case of Dell, overly-aged corpses of stuffed animals. These two primary antagonists are the 'adult monsters' that are key to the girls' experiences of de-identification and sense of abandonment. First in reality and then through their fantasy world the two girls confront the obsessive compulsion and mental illness in their new homes.

They early on confront sterility and control with freely playing physically with nature. While the two growing girls are getting their hands dirty constantly, whether with mud, food, milk, monster slime or decay in their fantastical explorations in the outdoors, the villains of *Pan's Labyrinth* and *Tideland* are marked by their obsession with sterility.

In *The Shape of Water* The Amphibian Man's wildness and natural behaviour is contrasted by the film's antagonist, Richard Strickland. His character, like two other antagonists in Del Toro's Hispanic Trilogy, is very peculiar about his hands. In *Cronos* (1993) the vampiric millionaire striving for immortality lives in a sterile environment wrapped in plastic and other ways of self-isolating, where nothing can touch him; he only ever touches several absolutely vital objects. In *The Shape of Water* (2017), Richard Strickland, compulsively enjoys touching, particularly women's skin, as well as glorifying his own genitals, by washing his hands both before and after urinating. He washes his hands, licks his fingers and loves touch, until the moment when his fingers are bitten by the amphibian man and are surgically reattached with a slim hope that they might heal. Vidal has an attitude contrasting to the sterile millionaire too afraid of his own death to touch anything or to Strickland who puts his hands on everything he craves including his own body; but will refuse to touch anything 'undesirable'. *Pan's Labyrinth's* Captain Vidal always wears leather black gloves, which look pristine and unused. As he first greets his new wife Carmen in *Pan's Labyrinth*, helping her

out of the car, it he takes off his black gloves, to touch his wife's hand with his bare palm; he will only touch what he wants/should/must, above all her pregnant belly, which he feels to try and guess the current size of his baby. All three adult male antagonists want to impact and control without being touched themselves unless on their own specific terms. This is accentuated through the sterility of the dying millionaire's home, by the touching/washing compulsion of Strickland and by the black gloves of captain Vidal, removed only when something is deemed worth/safe to be touched.

Ofelia, contrarily is never afraid to touch gore, filth or slime as she crawls into muddy tunnels and digs into the belly of a toad. She is not too disgusted to feed the gruesome mandrake milk or to hold her mother as her cough and illness worsen. Similarly, Aurora in del Toro's *Cronos* (1993) is never too disgusted to hug her vampire grandfather whose skin gradually rots and peels off. The adult antagonists bodily segregation from the natural world and the child's physical constant interaction with nature fall into direct juxtaposition. The child's uninhibited physical connection to other human bodies also serves to hint towards the unhealthy differentiation that these sterile antagonists draw between bodies that excite their lust and all other bodies and elements of the natural world. Like Aurora in *Cronos*, the two growing girls in *Pan's Labyrinth* and *Tideland* are not afraid of the sickness, or the death and the decay as they occur in the body of their parent.

While del Toro's antagonists' sterility aims at compulsive hygiene and perfect health, Gilliam's antagonists fall victim to anxieties surrounding aging and death. The antagonists of Terry Gilliam hide from death and develop unhealthy habits and rituals when old age or death occur. While Gilliam's protagonists also fear age and death (Baron Munchausen, Doctor Parnassus, Don Quixote) they distinguish themselves as

heroic by challenging death and continuing with their exploits well into old age. In Gilliam's *Brother's Grimm* (2003) the hunter-maiden (Lena Headey) handles blades, skins and meats, while the Evil Queen (Monica Bellucci) has built herself a tall tower to preserve herself from the diseases and deaths in the kingdom. Repeating a fairy tale topos, The Queen has prepared young girls to be sacrificed to replenish her youth: the young girls are covered in flowers and made-up national garbs, as though dressed to dance at spring festivities, but are instead groomed with leaves and flowers to partake in a ritual of death. Baron Munchausen's antagonist, 'The Right Honorary Horatio Jackson', a parody character driving the Enlightenment doctrines of reason and logic to absurdity, prioritizes the preservation of his own body, perfect clothing and lifestyle, rather than the safety of his city, which he calmly signs off for destruction by the Ottoman army. In *Tideland*, however, concerns with death and decay are much more interrogated through the gradual decay of Jeliza-Rose's father on the chair and Dell's secret plan to disinfect and stuff his corpse, as they were once engaged. The conservation and stuffing of a corpse in order to retain the body within the household turns out to be what Dell has also done with her mother, in a plot twist comparable to the reveal of Norman Bates' mental illness in Hitchcock's *Psycho*. While this reveal drives all other characters in *Psycho* into astonishment and horror, Jeliza-Rose is unable to perceive the illness and the unnatural, learning from her new mother-figure, Dell, that this way she will be able to not get sick from infection and still have her father in the room. Jeliza-Rose's childhood dream of a happy family having a meal is eerily re-enacted when Dell repaints her house in all white paint and has a family lunch with her father's corpse next to her. These perverted 'escapes' from death are another form of segregation from the natural world, this time not as compulsive syndromes of hygiene, but as fetish and psychopathic ritual.

These two antagonistic extremes of sterility are strongly contrasted by the young female protagonists' natural and undisturbed handling of gore, illness, filth and death. Both Ofelia and Jeliza-Rose contrast and expose the incapacitating sterility of their adult antagonists through their child-like interaction with infection and decay, with nature and with other creatures. These growing girls, in late pre-adolescence, still do not feel the need to maintain an high level of cleanliness, which is something for which Ofelia specifically gets reprimanded about by her mother, when she ruins her new formal-dinner dress. They are not afraid of the natural world, which they like to explore and dig into; the unnatural restrictive behaviours of the adults around them are something that disturbs them and that they try to avoid. The growing girls preference to focus on the natural world where they can get filthy through their own active behaviour instead of being restricted into passive behaviours and forced to remain clean and proper by rules that feel unnatural to them, being enforced, addresses tensions between late childhood and early adolescence, and tensions surrounding social notions of femininity.

A Growing Child's Traumatic Perspective on Adulthood

Terry Gilliam and Guillermo Del Toro visualise the ways in which the two girls' minds assess and digest the mental disorders and compulsive behaviours is explored by thus critiquing issues of parenthood and parenting, and the ways in which these dysfunctional adulthoods can impact children's sense of perspective and identity. In *Pan's Labyrinth* and *Tideland* two young girls face the neglect and abandonment of bedridden parents and the threat of violence of new antagonistic stepparents. The growing girls' domestic encounter with these mental illnesses are matched (or counter-

matched) by the young protagonist's gradual investment in fantasy and fairy-tale and child-play as an act of independence and disobedience. In his own definition, Del Toro has written a 'disobedient fairy tale' exploring acts of disobedience in children against controlling authority.

The archetype of the lost girl is both a figure of individual experience and a child-like point of view, reflecting issues of adulthood and adult society from her childhood's perspective. Del Toro writes on children in the gothic genre:

'To most adults, the notion of duality in childhood is terrifying. Our society seems to equate innocence with ignorance, and the fact that a child can be sophisticated is, by itself, a scary fact. The very idea that a child can be the vessel of something... produces in all of us a sense of inadequacy and loss. These seemingly different plot devices actually come from the same root – the recognition of something alien to the identity adults normally ascribe to a child, be it intelligence, be it malevolence or possession.'

Del Toro pinpoints the alien nature of the thinking child, as experienced by an adult audience in a society, where the cultural understanding of the childhood period, as outlined briefly above, is one centred around the governance of adults and the gradual shaping of the child into an adult. The presence of independent thought in a child can be seen as both alien and disobedient and it therefore generates fear. He continues to state that 'The supplanting of one function for another is the essence of all horror — the recognition of something that is there in the eyes of a child but that shouldn't be there. It operates at a very basic level of fear.' The child's point of view, therefore, looking onto adulthood from an independent perspective, potentially not merely 'ignorant', but also 'sophisticated' in some way is, as Del Toro argues, disturbing to adulthood. Karen Sanchez-Eppler similarly to him identifies childhood as

a clearly discernible period of the life of an individual, but she critically discusses some of its definitions. She writes childhood often is 'seen predominantly' through the prism of what the child must be 'taught' by adults as opposed to an autonomous time carrying an independent sense of identity. Henry Jenkins further argues that because of this 'the power imbalance between children and adults remains at heart a profoundly political matter' (Sanchez-Eppler, 2011: 36). *Pan's Labyrinth* and *Tideland* directly confront childhood with adulthood, unfolding the girls' point of view as a valid point of independent perspective. They simultaneously undermine aspects of adulthood, exposing issues of parenthood as traumatic hauntings in the growing child's autonomous mind. The search for a way out of feeling lost, both abandoned and confused, through imagination is a direct way to critique the traumatic effects that adulthood can have on childhood – both domestic and socio-cultural.

Adult Monstrosities And The Child's Imagination

Ofelia's book of Spanish fairy tales also one of a shared folklore past, or as Jack Zipes writes about it, 'folk tales representing ideals' (Zipes, 2002: 108) – Ofelia is reading Spanish fairy-tales, illustrating the collective fears and longings of a shared national heritage, as Spanish citizens rebel against the new regime, struggling to retain their former identity as a nation. Zipes argues that fairy tales are capable of 'capturing the natural and pure forms of cultures' and, writing on German fairy tales, discusses cultural anxieties surrounding the preservation of the nation's identity. He theorises about the Brothers' Grimm's desire to resurrect this cultural heritage, of dreaming to 'regain a lost, untarnished home or realm', in which 'the purity of traditional German culture' would endure.

Relating to this argument, Rosemary Jackson argues that 'fantasy characteristically attempts to compensate for a lack resulting from cultural constraints: it is a literature of desire, which seeks that which is experienced as absence and loss (Jackson, 1981: 3). Jackson explores fantasy's relationship to desire in terms of an (occasionally simultaneous) manifestation or expelling:

Fantasy can tell of, manifest or show desire or it can expel desire, when this desire is a disturbing element which threatens cultural order and continuity. In many cases fantastic literature fulfils both functions at once... In this way fantastic literature points to or suggests the basis upon which cultural order rests, for it opens up, for a brief moment, on to disorder, on to illegality, on to that which lies outside the law, that which is outside dominant value systems. The fantastic traces the unsaid and the unseen of culture: that which has been silenced, made invisible, covered over and made 'absent' (Jackson, 1981: 4).

Jackson argues that fantasy becomes a socio-political engine through its psychological and social relationship to desire, capable of expelling certain aspects from civilization and manifesting others that either no longer exist, or never have. This theory informs *Pan's Labyrinth's* mirroring of the Spanish Civil War with Ofelia's fantastical experience through oppression, disobedience and death. As Juan Vargas observes, Del Toro is critically known for his recurrent focus on childhood, 'particularly noteworthy, particularly in the way it is used as a forceful instrument to expose the inhuman nature of the adult universe.' (Vargas, 2014: 183-184) In his article on man's capability for inhumanity in *Pan's Labyrinth* Michael Atkinson further observes that Del Toro's concern with a child's perspective and innocence serve as a reflection for the problematic politics of adulthood, which in turn are matched to a historical critique of the then newly shaping Fascist Regime in 1944 Spain: 'Del Toro's film is far more

embroiled in the real-life visitations that rupture the family's unbalanced universe... Amidst the Fascist tactics of summary executions, torture and mutilations, Del Toro has found an evil that mythologises itself in the eyes of the young' (Atkinson, 2007: 50-53) The 'eye of the young', as argued above, is a prism through which these dark fantasy films choose to address issues of adulthood the normalised violence aimed at unquestioned control during the early years of Spanish Fascism.

Dolores Tierney's essay 'Transnational Political Horror in [The Hispanic Trilogy]' investigates the workings of the horror genre, reimagined by Del Toro as a new 'hybridized' artefact of national and transnational film culture, tapping into 'a shared Hispanic imaginary and explor[ing] cultural, local, and political material specific to Mexico/Latin America and Spain.' (Tierney, 2014: 163). I would like to further argue that Del Toro has created a Spanish fairy tale in modern day, feeding from politics, culture and Hispanic folklore imaginings in order to discuss how an individual's and nation's identity struggles against authoritarian regimes. As Karin Brown observes:

Spain is made flesh, a character that exists in two time zones that need to be reconciled before it can heal, recover and move forward. Of course, this is also true of the central protagonists in *Pan's Labyrinth*... who have a tenuous and fragile hold on the present and are drawn to the eternal (Brown, 2015: 55).

Ofelia's character – a neglected child undertaking troubled journey into adolescence – serves as the focal point for a narrative reflecting Spain's troubled transition into its new political regime. Her figure is bringing together those themes through her state of lostness – her interrupted childhood and dislocated identity. The concept of individual identity, entering into an intricate symbiotic relationship with national identity is prominent in *Pan's Labyrinth*. As argued by Donald *et al*, 'Whatever the state of childhood for actual children, the *idea* of the child is without doubt a potent

symbol for the nation state, for the ethno-national group, and for those who wish either to defend or to abjure national histories and collective memories alike.' (2017: 2).

This is a type of allegory Del Toro is very fluent in, both narratively and visually, particularly in the Hispanic Trilogy, of which *Pan's Labyrinth* is the third and final film. Miriam Haddu's article 'Reflected Horrors: Violence, War and the Image in Guillermo Del Toro's *The Devil's Backbone*' discusses the manifestation of the ghost as a symbol of a dual-faced mortality and a representative of the boy's personal past as well as the national past, assuming: 'both the form of a monstrous vision, alongside its role as representing ethereal vulnerability' (Haddu, 2014: 144). Similarly, the helpless vulnerability of Ofelia's imaginary search for the underworld is akin to the Spanish rebels' doomed attempts to rebel against a future that has been imposed on them as a nation. Captain Vidal's dogmatic authoritarian habits, machine and clock-like, mirror the precise military mechanisms of new regime and acceptance is a predetermined outcome. Similarly, Ofelia's forced adulthood is a matter of a patriarchal control that predetermines what the female child is allowed to become in adulthood, in particular in reference to a male figure.

A critical argument on the ways in which the imaginary assimilations of the mind can inform socio-cultural concerns, has been made with regards to the cinema of Terry Gilliam in Ofir Haivry's article 'It shall be a nation': Terry Gilliam's Exploration of National Identity, Between Rationalism and Imagination' bases its argument on *The Brothers Grimm* (2005). Haivry argues that there are two ways of assimilating the information of external reality – rational and imaginative – and explores how they feed into national identity (Haivry, 2013: 104). *Tideland* offers an indirect critique on parental neglect, child abuse and exploitation seen through the young protagonist's girl-games with dolls – happy family, dress up, wedding. These imaginative games,

more or less universal to contemporary western culture, are eerily dislocated and juxtaposed to the adults' mental disorders which can – as the narrative demonstrates – go unchecked in segregated, small rural environments. Within these environments dysfunctional behaviors and manias become normalized and naturalized – within their isolated world as well as within the child's isolated mind. Assimilating external reality imaginatively, rather than rationally, Jeliza-Rose's care-take routine for her dead seemingly asleep father, gradually replaced by her compulsive doll-game, which in its turn is finally replaced by playing-pretend family with the mentally impaired Dickens encompass the dysfunctionality, the solitude and the obsessions that can become habitual within small segregated social groups. Dickens's name can be argued to reference 'The Secret Garden', (1911) Mary Lennox (also orphaned) meets Dickon (not an adult, but her own age), who reintroduces her to concepts of friendship, family, love and nature. Like a dark haunting of the traditional romantic trope of 20th century childhood novels of a child meeting unexpected friends in the wild outdoors, or the city streets, when they have been orphaned and alone ('The Little Princess', 'Anne of Green Gables') – the mentally impaired and delusional character of the adult Dickens speaks to issues of child abandonment and being orphaned, ominously looking back on this older novel-tradition in which the orphaned girl would encounter romanticized allies to nurture her back into a new family. In *Tideland*, as in *Pan's Labyrinth*, such help is not offered, except by the girls' own fantasies within the fictional narratives – fairy-tales within narratives of child trauma.

Human Monsters, Fantasy Monsters, and Grotesques

These next two sections will explore the dual natures of Terry Gilliam's grotesques and of Del Toro's monsters. Del Toro's monsters can be explored from two angles, firstly – as darkly haunting, yet ultimately cathartic presences in the protagonists' lives and, secondly – as symbolic personifications which are indigenous and organic to their fantastical universes. The monsters express the worlds they inhabit, through creature design and through their individual hopes and anxieties (similarly to Ofelia's journey mirroring the defeat of Spanish rebels). Jesús Gris, the slowly transforming aged vampire in *Cronos*, whose rupturing, peeling and continuously transforming flesh reflects the stagnation and the decay of the small Mexican town, the aging and feebleness of Jesus's social circle, and the claustrophobia of his old vintage shop, miraculously holding the secret to rejuvenation and immortality. The Devil Backbone's ghost is 'a symbol of a dual-faced mortality and a representative of the boy's personal past as well as the national past, assuming both the form of a monstrous vision, alongside its role as representing ethereal vulnerability'.

The design of every monster is both individualized and more broadly thematized. *The Shape of Water's* critical book (2017) interweaves a descriptive breakdown of the narrative with some close analysis of both the film universe and the characters (McIntyre, 2017: 143), detailing the process and intention behind the design of the amphibian man, explaining that 'the plausibility of the story rested on the authenticity of the creation – audiences would need to believe that this curious being could win Elisa's heart. He needed to be physically attractive, and he needed to possess a beautiful soul' (McIntyre, 2017: 77). *The Shape of Water's* thematic engagement with the musings on what sexual attraction consists of – reflected through Eliza's desire to buy red shoes and through Strickland's irrational attraction to Eliza

are all reflected in the amphibian man's design. In a later interview, Del Toro discusses the amphibian man in a design-breakdown, referring to him as 'a leading man' or the 'love interest'. A couple of character design decisions include:

Fierce

Claws

"If you make him adorable, it's boring. So at first he seems threatening, then he seems cuddly, then he eats a goddamn cat. It's important to keep the aggressive design lines."

Defined Nose: "I wanted to make the Michelangelo's *David* of amphibian men, so we created this Greek-like nose. He has an amazing profile."

Agile

Legs

Doug Jones wears the creature's foam latex suit. "He moves like an animal in some scenes and like a Toreador in others."

Artful

Gills

"The body paint refers to a Japanese engraving from the Edo period of a beautiful black fish."

Sinewy

Webbing

"This webbing makes him buoyant. If the creature were swimming, it would be like a hydrodynamic skydiving suit."

This record of the creation of the amphibian man, as a male creature which in every way addresses aspects of female attraction both as a 'toreador' and an object for the female gaze, informs (and thematically resolves) *The Shape of Water's* sexual anxieties, such as fetishism and rape in sexual relations. This analysis informs the way

in which *Pan's Labyrinth's* monsters will be explored – as dark and haunting, but ultimately therapeutic and renewing presences in stagnant and troubled worlds.

The monster in terms of both origin and placement is an unusual presence in Del Toro's fictional universes. Ann Davies' details budgetary constraints and explains that 'the Spanish-language films offer monsters that inspire fear and repulsion through misshapen decaying or slimy bodies, but the threats they embody or respond to are small-scale or local, in which the human race by and large are never in danger' (Davies, 2015: 34) . While the smaller budgets of Del Toro's earlier films are certainly a financial reality, the localised and more contained 'range' of these small-scale monsters also allows, I want to suggest, for a more intimately organic, psychological and thematically focused narrative. Research like Jessica Balanzategui's explores del Toro's intimate explorations of the relationships between the supernatural and the traumatised child in the Hispanic Trilogy:

Del Toro's supernatural horror films are deeply underwritten with the lingering effects of childhood trauma: a vision of trauma that exists at the interface between personal and cultural identities, expressed via a vacillation between supernatural and material horrors. (Balanzategui, 2015: 66).

The supernatural and the monstrous here is seen as a both psychological and allegorical expression of childhood trauma encountered at a crossroad with 'material horror'. This study builds on this perspective on the monstrous, suggesting its cathartic presence results in a sense of progress for both the films' characters and their respective worlds – serving to re-establish identity and re-define social norm. Juan Carlos Vargas' article on 'child vision' explores the constructs and significance of monstrosity and coming-of-age journey, arguing that:

[Del Toro's child characters] are at once victims, witnesses, and heroes who face a traumatic journey of initiation and discovery in a violent world where fantasy and reality are intertwined. These children form strong bonds with monsters that are transformed into benevolent and liberating figures that help them along their tortuous and brutal journey. (Vargas, 2014: 184).

Del Toro's monsters embody the theme and nature of the film universes, mirroring both longings and concern, holding their potential resolution through this embodiment. This is, this research argues, the nature of The Hispanic Trilogy films' universe-protagonist-monster relationship. It is a mutually shaping relationship between an individual, a monster and their society.

Finally, cultural influences are addressed in these designs in a dialogue between folklore/ cultural heritage and individual monster design representative of the film's fictional universe. Dolores Tierney's essay 'Transnational Political Horror in [The Hispanic Trilogy]' investigates the workings of the horror genre itself, reimagined by Del Toro as a new 'hybridized' artefact of national and transnational film culture, tapping into 'a shared Hispanic imaginary and explore cultural, local, and political material specific to Mexico/Latin America and Spain.' (Tierney, 2014: 163).

Taking this view into account, *Pan's Labyrinth* focuses on the visual representation of monstrosity in terms individual and national identity, where nightmare often metamorphosizes into dream and vice versa.

The fantasy filmmaker's definitions of 'monsters' is not always one that identifies them with 'antagonists'. In *Pan's Labyrinth* the role of a 'guardian' is one taken up by the monstrous and fable-like Pan, while the Captain, as previously described, begins to be perceived and re-imagined as monstrous. The half-monster as a post-traumatic guiding presence is a prominent characteristic in Del Toro's

Hispanic Trilogy. The ghost-boy relationship in *The Devil's Backbone* and the vampire-grand-daughter bond in *Cronos* both demonstrate Del Toro's ability to subvert the nature of the monster, while simultaneously exploring phobias and fetishist behaviours in male characters that represent power and authority (sterility, violence, sexual abuse), which often reside on the uneasy border between law and crime. This inversion of monstrous beings and controlling male figures of authority, vehicled in *The Shape of Water*, will be explored through the comparative analysis of Captain Vidal and the faun Pan.

In *Masters of the Grotesque*, Schuy Weishaar theorizes Gilliam's understanding of the grotesque as a primarily carnivalesque 'mixing together of incomparable elements for its own sake' (Weishaar, 2012: 84) within the prism of imagination and its problematized relationship to reality in the filmmaker's cinema. Weishaar focuses on the extremity of this relationship, arguing that Gilliam's films present the spectator with a number of 'married' polarities:

intertwined polarities, each extreme of which seeming to rely upon and insinuate the other. Each is married to the other, as in this scene, where the opulence and rejuvenation of one side is only possible because of the ruination and violence of the other. Gilliam's films are particularly interested in finding the places where the poles meet (Weishaar, 2012: 85).

This argument relates strongly to this chapter's analysis of *Tideland*. Jeliza-Rose, as discussed above, inhabits a place of two colliding polarities – the naivete and innocence of her child-play unvalidated by the mental illness within which it takes place; and in its turn further exposing the dysfunctionality of the adults in her life, which are written, wardrobe, filmed and performed as grotesques. Neither does the camera avoid the dysfunctional and the disturbing within the adults' demeanour and behaviour,

nor does it shy away from additionally unsettling angles and framing, in particular with visual reference to Jeliza-Rose.

In Gilliam's other cinema the grotesque is indeed strongly connecting to Bakhtin's theory of the carnivalesque. In *The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus*, *Tideland*, or the less known *The Adventures of Baron of Munchausen*, the viewer is presented with whimsically inconsistent worlds of metamorphosis, in which forms evolve and devolve according to the protagonist's mood. The universe of *Munchausen*, which my study will explore in another chapter, exemplifies Gilliam's understanding of the grotesque as a carnivalesque meeting point of polarities: the film mocks both the imagined for its frequent absurdity and the real for its blandness, asking which one is mocking the other more, and which one is embraced at the expense of its antithesis.

Hamel's article 'The Baron, the King and Terry Gilliam's Approach to the Fantastic' interrogates the director's psychological approach to the fantastic as an experimental handling of the fantasy genre, grounding the research in Todorov's structuralist theory, which is complexified by the filmmaker's constant interplay with half-fantasy and his disregard for reality (Hamel, 2013: 59-60). This is also the case of the *Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus*, who 'stretches' reality – like Baron Munchausen – until it becomes fantasy. *The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus* questions recurrent themes through its caricaturesque dramatic characters, such as the worth of the fantastical within increasingly modern and realistic fictional frames, the denial of adulthood expressed through shifts in age, visualized through makeup/costume or experienced internally, and, above all, the never-ending representations of madness and ridicule as the constant public companions of the extravagant, the magical and the fantastic. – these character grotesques and this kind of grotesque writing/directing

is ultimately celebrating the fantastic and the subversive potential of grotesque fantasy worlds.

In *Tideland*, however, it is the real world that is disturbed and turned upside down. The real world is becoming one of those impossible, confusing and unstable fantasy landscapes by the mental illnesses, compulsive-obsessions and psychopathic behaviours that are becoming natural, normal and standardized. The train that passes by the field spied on by Dickens and Jeliza-Rose is to both of them a fast, enormous shark. Jeliza-Rose's play pretend wedding dress is real to both her, Dickens and Dell. In this sense this isolated barely populated landscape is a dark wonderland – a world, like Gilliam's carnivalesque fantasy worlds – where reality has been disrupted and turned upside down – and is perceived as such by Jeliza-Rose's inexperienced understanding of the world.

Monstrous Allies

Through their imagination both girls gradually replace the real-life monsters that they encounter in the world of adulthood with dark and semi-monstrous guides intended to help them resolve their childhood trauma. Talking to her dolls as to 'bosom companions' (Laity, 2013: 122), Jeliza-Rose attempts to take control over her situation, inventing a secondary narrative to her life in an attempt to author her experience and identity, as this chapter will argue, as opposed to remaining a witness and a victim. Instead, *Tideland's* child protagonist is described by Michael Atkinson as a 'defiantly self-preservative heroine' (2007) who makes the audience 'lose themselves in the skull of a day-dreaming trauma victim'. Jeliza-Rose's story-telling gradually takes narrative and visual control over the film, turning the neglected and nearly starved young girl

into the (self-named) author and the (highly performative) hero of the grim and dangerous world she inhabits.

In *Pan's Labyrinth*, Ofelia is removed from her home and involuntarily placed in an isolated military base during the forceful settlement of the Fascist regime in 1944 Spain. Themes of control, domination and violence permeate the narrative and the newly established political regime is allegorised through the antagonistic figure of Ofelia's new stepfather.

Exploring the symbolic wten placed on Vidal's inherited pocket watch Karin Brown argues that 'in the scene where Vidal and Ofelia initially meet, the ghosts of their respective fathers also meet, embodied in her fairy tale book and his watch. Ofelia's book of fairy tales contains the spirit of Ofelia's father.' This idea of both father figures haunting the Captain and Ofelia's scene of authority versus disobedience is insightful in terms of parental care. Brown sees Vidal as having suffered from an overbearing strongly patriarchal childhood ('Vidal is a conflicted character haunted by his past: by the overwhelming influence of his father'); Ofelia, contrarily, can be argued to feel bereaved and nostalgic towards her father. The concept of the two father figures, a torturer, and a protector, colliding in the power-dynamic of their son and daughter, through remaining objects inherited by their children, informs the film's preoccupation with child neglect and its consequences. In my view however Vidal is narratively constructed more as an anti-childhood and anti-nostalgia character, symbolic of the new regime of tyranny and discipline, seeking satisfaction through exercising constant control over the half-broken pocket watch, rather than a tribute to a passed parent figure.

According to Ann Davis 'Ofelia's resistance to Vidal is easily read as both a resistance to the Franco regime he represents and more widely a resistance to

Fascism and dictatorship' (Davies, 2015: 39), however, she observes, this is undermining the personal nature of Ofelia's journey central to the film's narrative. Above all else, despite the running parallel to the fate of Spain's rebellions of 1944, Captain Vidal is the human monster 'far more dangerous than either of the magical threats, the only one who can truly hurt Ofelia (Wetmore, 2015: 25) - drawing a contrast between the slime of fantasy monsters or the subtlety of human villains Wetmore argues that the 'quiet menace' (Davies, 2015: 42) of Vidal is 'by far the more frightening'. It is this unbeatable human monster, I argue, that ultimately gives a push to the generation of Ofelia's fantasy universe. He needs to be evaded, replaced and yet eventually confronted at the fatal meeting point between reality and myth at the end of the film.

With regards to Ofelia's circumstances and family/narrative position as A. Davies has observed:

In del Toro's Hispanic trilogy [including *Pan's Labyrinth*], the depiction of children is complex and powerful; they are at once victims, witnesses, and heroes who face a traumatic journey of initiation and discovery in a violent world where fantasy and reality are intertwined (Vargas, 2014: 185).

Established early on as both a reader and narrator of fairy tales (carrying books as most of her luggage, and telling her pregnant mother a bed-time story), Ofelia gradually falls into her own dark fairy tale. As described by K. McDonald, 'Ofelia devours stories and filters them through her own potent creative sensibilities as a means of escaping and subverting the oppressive system which stratifies her' (McDonald, 2015:94). Much like Jeliza-Rose, McDonald and Clark argue that: 'Ofelia 'writes' herself into existence as an autonomous being, employing the realm of the

imagination as a retreat from trauma as well as a space for self-actualization and resistance' (McDonald, 2015: 157).

Resisting structures of adulthood, which are more devoid of a clear meaning than what the dual and binary structures of fairy tales can offer, Ofelia's fantastical journey is not by nature only escapist, but also a process of acceptance and of maturing into complex adult notions, such as power, death and sacrifice. As similarly described by Jessica Balanzategui, in Ofelia's environment and circumstances, there is 'a traumatic breach in coherent meaning', which can only be replenished in the young mind through 'the richly realized fantastic or supernatural realms that the child perceives'. 'Attempting to suture the gap in rationality raised by trauma', Balanzategui continues, 'del Toro's child characters relish the opportunity for an alternative mode of perception to emerge into the traumatic breach' (2015: 69). In *Pan's Labyrinth* and *Tideland* the directors' therefore use the mechanisms of fantasy – a hero's quest, monsters symbolic of specific fears, fantasy symbolic of specific needs – so that what the growing girl's fears and desires collides can take shape and unfold within these fantasy narratives of maturing. On the subject of the child's ability to imagine and to reach a form of understand through imagination, Donald, Wilson and Wright further argue:

Fantasy and desire are tied into the worlds of children through the imaginaries that they enable, even as they compete with the intersecting and demanding worlds of adults and their national sensibilities and psychoses (Donald et al, 2017: 9).

Children therefore simultaneously resist and assimilate the adult world through imagination. In *Tideland* and *Pan's Labyrinth* the girls inner fantasy universes are displayed and overlapped with reality through the directors' visions, which serves to

measure this jarring discrepancy between a young girl's 'fantasy and desire' versus the demands and sensibilities of adulthood. Furthermore, in the next section I will look at how these demands and sensibilities are digested in the child's perspective through their imagination and how the two films use fantasy to critique dysfunctional and compulsive issues of adulthood, both familial and socio-cultural, portraying them as monstrous.

The next section will explore the specific ways in which Ofelia and Jeliza-Rose's imaginations 'nurture' them (in place of the parents and adults in their lives) into maturity. Both girls engage in child-play as a pacifying ritual and begin to explore the open, gloomy and overgrown landscapes surrounding the new inhospitable homes they move into shortly after the start of *Tideland* and *Pan's Labyrinth*. The tools Ofelia uses to retain her own childlike identity are Spanish books of fairy tales, which gradually shape a fantasy world around her. Jeliza-Rose plays with dolls, which in the course of the narrative begin to speak back to her and develop overwhelming, exhausting identities. Both girls are interested in story-telling and use it to find comfort and retain a type of logic that they are more familiar with. This need for self-authorship further accentuates the lost girl's sense of dislocation and anonymity, however, may also be considered self-made journey of self-discovery, permitting dreams of disobedience and dreams of friendship/family to be experienced within (and instead of) increasingly traumatic domestic situations.

Early on both girls are taken away by their surviving parent into new homes, both barely allowed to bring any belongings; Ofelia is criticised for bringing fairy-tale books, while Jeliza-Rose barely is allowed time for any luggage at all, and only brings her few Barbie dolls. Both these relics of childhood acquire a new meaning in the new inhospitable environments that the girls begin to inhabit as a physical part of the girls'

early childhood identities. The disturbing nature of their new home, where mental disorders are present, yet never fully exposed, gradually prompt both girls to hide into familiar tropes from their early childhood and lose themselves into imaginative child's play and story-telling. Unable to attain full understanding of their new situations and feeling unsettled by the behaviours of the adults around them, the two girls reach for clearer boundaries and more familiar definitions, familiar from childhood games and storytelling.

Ofelia (similarly to Jeliza-Rose) is thus reaching out to a form of logic and meaning borrowed from her own understanding of fairy tales, trying to acquire some form of knowledge and influence beyond the restrictions of her new family situation. *Pan's Labyrinth*, as discussed above, aims to abolish aspects of authority and through confronting 'manageable monsters' it manifests the growing child's intrinsic need for identity and a place in her family/society.

The following section will analyse the beginning of Ophelia's trials and her first encounter with the figure of Pan, in a parallel with her first meeting with the general, to compare the issues of power, obedience and punishment explored above versus a child's need for independence and voluntarily accepted guidance. The close analysis will explore Ofelia's response to the appearance and behaviour of Pan: 'the ancient Faun, a figure who is simultaneously horrifying and beautiful and who functions as the agent of Ofelia's immersion in the fantastic' (Joshi, 2015: 3). In a juxtaposition with the patriarchal tyranny of Captain Vidal and with his round, spiral creature design the Faun invites Ofelia into a dark world offering her a path full of dangerous trials and a promised identity drawn the myths and mysteries of old folklore tradition. .

The path that the faun offers is one of uncertainty, but also independence and hope, instead of helplessness. Above all, it offers a journey into dangers and

mythological obstacles as opposed to an empty existence anchored to a home which is not her own and where she is not needed by anyone, yet forced to mature in a dogmatic society that she does not fully understand in terms of rules or meaning. Ofelia feels lost in this military world she does not belong to – not only in terms of parental care and not belonging, but also gradually losing her sense of identity, as neither a child or a ‘proper’ young woman, interested in good clothes and expensive dinner parties. When Ofelia enters the labyrinth, her identity is begins to be reforged into one she needs and understands. Her mythological journey, half-fantasized, half-experienced, reinforces her identity and leads her into a form of maturity she understands and desires, as opposed to the type of adulthood prescribed by her mother and demanded by Vidal.

The film fluidly transfuses fantasy with reality as Ofelia wakes up in the middle of the night, and, in an analogue to *Alice in Wonderland*, follows a giant bug, which transforms itself into a fairy to match the drawings on her book. It takes her to the gates of the labyrinth – a physical location previously encountered a little off the military base, which, as S. T. Joshi argues visually resembles ‘a structure not far from the Loyalist encampment where Vidal’s forces are battling the rebels.’ He further observes that the spiritual journey of Ofelia offers both an alternative political system and an alternative religion to the Catholic Church, whose participation in the establishment of the Fascist regime del Toro found to be ‘absolutely horrifying’ (Joshi, 2015: 5):’ The film presents a kind of alternative religion or cosmology in the existence of fairy creatures who attempt to lure the young girl Ofelia, Captain Vidal’s stepdaughter, into their clutches.’

This idea of fairy creatures luring Ofelia into their own maze-structure is amplified as she wanders into the old labyrinth by the film’s score. At first dominated

by ambient exterior sound design the musical score gradually overtakes the sequence. Javier Navarrete, most well-known for scoring fantasy (*Inkheart*) and epic films (*Wrath of the Titans*, *Byzantium*), has written the film's nuanced and layered score which in this sequence gradually crescendos from sinister and haunting to almost enchanting. The sound oscillates between an ominous mood and a sense of replenishing and restoration, almost like inhaling from the first time, alongside the 'magical' sound of a high-pitched staccato violins alternating with lingering long notes. Jonathan Broxton describes Navarrete's score for *Pan's Labyrinth* as 'a rich, bold, detailed work, generally dark in tone, and occasionally more sinister than that, but which paints a fantastical picture of myths and legends which never fails to delight.' He specifically alludes to this haunted sequence – 'beyond the main theme, a series of elaborate and expressive musical phrases, each conjuring up a different magical facet to the story as young Ofélia ventures further into the labyrinth and encounters increasingly wondrous beasts' (Broxton, 2006).

Reaching the totem-like statue at end of the labyrinth, with her trusting, child-like 'Hello'-s reverberating through the labyrinth, Ophelia waits by the spherical centre. Unlike the unrealistic rabbit hole of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, Ophelia enters a pre-existent labyrinth all can see, merging the worlds further. But, much like Alice, she is beckoned by an animal, which 'alters nature' to become more human and beckons her towards a 'lower land' where nightmares, but also dreams are possible. Awakened from sleep, like Alice who was in *Wonderland* only in a dream, the film begins its deliberate flirtation with the concept of psychologization and the 'fantastical', as Todorov would define it, nature of Ophelia's dark fairy-tale trials. As the maze is covered in moss and is so ancient it is crumbling, so too the faun, rigid from age, has fallen asleep and become a part of the environment. The spectator can see Pan long

before it establishes he is a living being. This builds on ideas of fantasising child-play also – imagining certain objects or pools of shadow that resemble human or animal shapes are in fact animate.

The Faun is an intimately emblematic figure for Guillermo Del Toro. According to Balanzategui's research:

'the Faun is drawn from a haunting but memorable experience from del Toro's childhood. He claims that when he was a young boy residing at his grandmother's home—a large, eerie house at which del Toro never felt at ease, echoed in Ofelia's discomfort at Vidal's house—he would see a Faun emerging from the shadows in his bedroom. As he elucidates: "every night at midnight, punctually, I saw a Faun emerge from behind the armoire ... a hand would come out from behind the armoire ... and then the hairy leg, and face of a goat." Del Toro casts this as a terrifying experience which crystallized his discomfort at his grandmother's home, an ominous vision which he became primed to dread each night as he fell asleep. Yet at the same time, his visions of the Faun led him to "[forge] an alliance with monsters" which helped strengthen his resolve and sense of identity.' (pp.75-76).

It is this experience, which is hauntingly recreated in *Pan's Labyrinth* – an uncanny guide appearing at the brink between reality and dream to, as the article further narrates, help a young growing child, as in the case of Del Toro, with 'his overbearing grandmother—whose life was strictly guided by an oppressive expression of Catholic dogma'. In the universe of *Pan's Labyrinth*, revising del Toro's childhood experience, the faun is naturalised to uncouth, overgrown and crumbling surroundings, signifying

the threshold between civilisation and the wild, between old familiar structures and the wild, lush world of dreams:

Pan is as though made by his maze, made from the same colours and materials, like an externalisation of her solitude and like yet crumbling piece of rock and moss segregating itself from the maze, he is as though barely alive. I want to argue that this representation of the faun as feeble and in need of Ofelia feeds into a contrasting idea of an elderly male mentor – less threateningly authoritative, less powerful and strict and above all – a character who needs Ofelia: the faun exclaims ‘It is you!’, before having seen Ophelia, as though he can sense her identity.

Unlike the captain, who forges a smile for the newcomers, while in fact feeling grim and indifferent, the faun is overwhelmed by joy and smiles to himself, in a single shot unwitnessed by Ophelia, as he has her back to her. Therefore, despite his introduction, the cinematography of the scene invites us to perceive Pan as being independent from her imagination. Unlike the general’s clock-like fluid and controlled, emotionless movements, the rigid faun is barely able to turn around to look at her. While he is much taller than a human being, he is stooped both at his back and knees to ensure she is not afraid of him, as he asks her briefly after. The general, always filmed from below, holds his chin high and is always in every way aiming to display his superiority. Their voices, one hoarse and overwhelmed by emotion that the princess has finally arrived, the other low, menacing and monotonous, punishing a child for offering the wrong hand.

In a single shot from a slightly low-angle despite his overbearing height, the faun invites Ophelia to look at what is in his satchel, immediately involving her into his world; in his satchel are two more fairies and the faun seems delighted with his reveal that they can fly. The fairies fly to meet Ophelia, who in a dolly-in, smiles as she

observes them. The scene already begins to feel intimate and magical. Single shots, framed closer and closer, make the emotions of the scene surface as the beginning of a friendship or mentorship. OTS-s are still avoided, which aids the illusion that they might be the same. The single shot on Ophelia is in fact also a low angle shot matching the low angle shot on the faun – a clever way to indicate both an equality and to suggest he thinks of her as royalty. In her single shot Ophelia introduces herself and asks the faun who he is. Unlike the self-importance discernible in Vidal's conduct, the faun shakes the question off as unimportant and irrelevant, as he is too old and 'only wind and trees can now remember or pronounce his names' He behaves like a page meeting his princess that he is to escort, unlike the military step-father – a master meeting a necessary nuisance, more luggage accompanying his pregnant wife.

Richard Lindsay sees the Faun as the femininity Ofelia needs and her journey as an extended metaphor for a young girls' psychological experiences surrounding her first menstruation. He argues that:

In del Toro's conception, the idea of Fascist Spain is a representation of the worst of the masculine principle—cold, mechanical, and unfeeling—that must be resisted. Ofelia's world of the Faun, and symbols like the moon and the labyrinth represent a wilder, less controlled, and ultimately more humane and feminine principle. (Lindsay, 2012: 178).

Lindsay sees the faun as central to Ofelia's journey, culminating in a metaphor of an adolescent's first menstruation: 'the implied menstrual meaning of the film which sprouts from the earth like mossy form of Pan, who represent fertility and chaos, self-fulfilment and self-denial.' In my view the film's production design – and particularly Pan's creature design – is abundant in symbols and tropes of child-birth, pregnancy and womb-like environments (round structures and small tunnels) as a way of showing

a lost young girl being carried, as in a womb, by her fantasy and by fairy-tale helpers, in order to regress into her childhood imagination. She is hiding back into her earlier childhood, as though 'crawling back into a womb'. The fantasy world which comes to life around her, specifically the figure of the faun with his ovary-like horns, is a part of the pregnancy process of this second symbolic birth, which she is promised by Pan, will result into finding her true identity. This is a world which keeps hiding itself from the adults and is both ancient, like her fairy tales, and feeble, as though it cannot fully help her to fight back reality and adulthood and needs her help so that it in turn can help her. Kevin Wetmore describes the Faun as 'faded and mangy' arguing that it is only through the symbiotic participation of the young Ophelia that the Elfland can be made whole (Wetmore, 2015: 12).

Pan's physical performance by Doug Jones (also enacting the Amphibian Man and the Pale Man) enhances his creature and character design: as the faun walks everything about him moves trying to help him express himself. His ears and long fingers, his rusty walk, his many joints out of joint with each other. He is untamed and uncouth, like nature and like fairy tale. He has been rusting for so long that he has become impractical, just like old myth and his body will not listen to him. Yet, he feels more harmless for that reason – unlike Vidal, Pan has no control, not even over his own joints. He takes the pains to bow at Ophelia into a courtesy whose manner is influenced by European medieval court cultures.

As he does his true hten is revealed in an OTS, but as she is standing at some distance and he is already stooped in a decorous bow, he does not feel threatening. He has every symbol of being old and impractical, he has 'arthritis', 'hand tremors' and his speech is slow, repetitious, with signs of 'amnesia' and habits taken from older times. He also always thinks that he is right and insists that she must be the princess.

He is the past itself, impractical, mad-like, but ultimately wise, He is also like her old story books becoming obsolete over time. All they can remember now is their message, having long lost shine and allure. The faun was originally intended to be a lot more like the amphibian man from the Shape of Water – graceful, a classic half-man, half-goat fraught with beauty. But in the end, as Del Toro discusses in an interview, the faun was altered into a goat-faced creature almost completely made out of earth, moss, vines, and tree bark. ‘He became a mysterious, semi-suspicious relic who gave both the impression of trustworthiness and many signs that warn someone to never confide in him at all’ (Del Toro interview, 2013).

In two alternating single shots the faun reveals to Ophelia that her real father, the king of the underworld, has ordered his loyal servants to open portals all over the world to make her return to the underworld possible. As he speaks, his body and joints rumble, making his speech seem deep and ancient, and making him feel like an ancient tree, through which wind whistles and rumbles. He feels like he could almost be echoes from the maze, not something she really sees and hears. His image is inspired by ideas of ‘lucid daydreaming’, in which real shapes mingle with spectral beings from the imagination (2013). Jack Collins links the Faun to the primal forces of nature that Nietzsche associated with Dionysus:

‘The fantastic scenes are composed in curved, natural lines, in stark contrast to the rigid, mechanical visuals of the real world. Nevertheless, the world that the Faun opens up is not the world of Bacchic drunkenness, but that of dreams, the domain of Apollo. It is the golden vision (quite literally, given del Toro’s distinctive color palette for that world) that makes the chaos and meaningless suffering tolerable.’(Collins, 2015: 163).

Collins sees the ambivalent figure of the faun as representing a liminal state, the intersection of the Apollonian and Dionysian; this is also the meeting point, which according to Nietzsche led to the creation of tragedy in Hellenic Greece. Certainly, the faun is narratively situated at the meeting point between reality and dreams. In my view Pan is representative of a child's mind at play, reaching out, through the ambivalence of darkness and through her imagination fighting back against a controlled and stifling reality, to the figure of the faun, conjured up from her love for old fairy tales and summoned from the uncanny memory of the filmmaker's childhood to assist a young girls' growing needs.



Figure 12: The Faun in *Pan's Labyrinth* (Del Toro, 2006)

The Faun is the monster Ofelia gradually chooses to follow in relinquishing her new household and family at the military base. He offers her three tasks linked to a clear goal – attaining her place as the princess of the underworld. He offers her a choice of whether to embark on the journey and makes the rules clear to her. The rules are riddle-like and odd, like the rules from fairy tales often can be, however, they

are clear and are leading towards something; they are not, like Captain Vidal's behavior, rigid dogmas and unpredictable, unannounced outbursts of violence. The human monster that he is more incomprehensible and untrustworthy for Ophelia than the old faun who offers her a dangerous journey with the promise of a home an identity both of which are gradually taken away by her new step-father in the course of the film, leaving her to cope with his claustrophobic rules and with her own insignificance.

As Balanzategui concludes:

In resonance with del Toro's own childhood trauma, the Faun at the heart of the labyrinth provides a way for Ofelia to harness the pervasive fear and sense of powerlessness she experiences in her new surroundings and employ it to strengthen her resolve and burgeoning sense of identity (2015: 74).

The supernatural and the monstrous here is seen as a both psychological and allegorical expression of childhood trauma encountered at a crossroad with between trust and horror. Juan Carlos Vargas' explores the constructs and significance of monstrosity and coming-of-age journey, arguing a similar point:

[Del Toro's] children form strong bonds with monsters that are transformed into benevolent and liberating figures that help them along their tortuous and brutal journey. (Vargas, 2014: 183).

Pan is, as discussed above, many things at once. He is a lucid dream of the maze, which he has inhabited for so long he is now as organic to it as the moss that covers it. He is the pathway to another world, a forgotten world from the past of fairy-tales, which is becoming gradually obsolete and falls apart just like his body. He is a mirror and an anti-mirror of Captain Vidal, a seeming monster, which becomes a mentor figure instead of him. In the words of Alexandra West, writing on the adults' treatment of Ofelia in *Pan's Labyrinth*:

The children pass from childhood and towards adulthood which signals and forces the adults to move forward in their own ways which cause the events of the film to radically change the world of the film. The adults in the film are unable to be the guides the children need. (West, 2016: 134).

The Faun is therefore a beckoning presence, which appears at the brink of reality, to fulfil Ofelia's need to forge her own identity and family bonds, which her new step-father, himself a representation of pro-Fascist political doctrine, aims to break into norms of uniformity and obedience.

Pan's Labyrinth's focus on the interplay between a child's fairy-tale-like imagination and the monstrous nature of various adult behaviours is also highly applicable to *Tideland*, where instead of a historical critique of early Fascism, Gilliam explores isolation and mental illness in isolated social groups. The child's mind transforms, translates and struggles to assimilate these foreign cultures into its own culture, that of Spanish fairy tales for Ofelia, and playing with dolls for Jeliza-Rose. In *Tideland* contemporary issues surrounding drug abuse and segregated social groups of small numbers are expressed through Jeliza-Rose's imaginative child play, which is both psychedelic and inherently destructive by nature. The game unfolds an eerie child's universe in which violence, drugs and, later in the narrative, sex, are not only naturalised, but also indistinguishable from symbols and themes associated with early childhood play - games such doll-wedding, fake-cooking, happy homes or baby care-taking. Easily played with cheap mass-produced toys, these are Jeliza-Rose's games at the start of the film, enacted with four old dismembered Barbie dolls that she gradually develops an obsession for.

Both the fairy tales and the Barbie heads are first a source of entertainment and comfort, but gradually they take on lives of their own. It is through the prism of talking

dolls and fairy-tales coming to life that the adult issues are critiqued in *Tideland* and *Pan's Labyrinth*. Jeliza-Rose's favourite doll Mystique openly insults Dell behind her back, while the little girl pretend-scolds her for it, afraid that Dell might hear her. Jeliza-Rose is not aware of Dell's mental disorder and needs a parent-figure, therefore she persistently returns to her house, yet feels the need to disobey and critique her. Unable to resolve her own feelings towards Dell, she 'makes' her doll do it instead of her. This symbiotic and later parasitic system between her and the Barbie heads is a way of validating both sides of her confused feelings towards Dell – demanding care and fleeing in horror.

Both girls develop the fantasy concept of imaginary guides. In both films these guides are weaker than the monsters they encounter but can provide a sense of safety. Their weak and little bodies in themselves are a pacifying presence for the physically threatened pre-adolescent girls. Jeliza-Rose's Barbie dolls and Ofelia's pixies are both treated at the start of the films as little feminine helpers. Fascinated by their adult femininity at the start of the films, the two lost girls end up in arguments with them and eventually each sacrifice one of them, diminishing the importance that they gave them at the start of the films. These small female voices are a comforting presence intended to fulfil the need for both care and devotion. These unconditionally helping miniaturized female presences, the pixies and the dolls, are a constant familiar presence, a type feminine care which goes both ways – pixies and dolls are perceived as being simultaneously younger and older, dependable and dependent, especially for Jeliza-Rose. They are in adult bodies, yet tiny overall requiring care and protection, despite their 'adult' understanding of the world around them. Like sisters or mothers, they are meant to always offer unquestionable help and assistance and be ready to make a sacrifice for the two girls. Jeliza-Rose's dolls start off as wanting to always be by her

side and please her in every possible way. Jeliza-Rose eventually removes their bodies, because she prefers to perceive the barbie dolls as a part of her own body, leaving them only as heads and putting them on her fingers, where they can move more easily, as well as being played with all at the same time. Later on however, the dolls go rogue and start adopting attitudes she does not fully enjoy – painfully jealous, vain and capricious. This transformation reflects Jeliza-Rose’s evolving understanding of femininity and female sexuality, as she begins to suspect that Dell is somehow jealous of her youth and her father. The dolls gradually cease to behave as they should, demanding more and more care and attention, which Jeliza-Rose does not offer willingly (or at all) reflecting Dell’s inconsistent and sometimes cruel ‘half-parenting’ attitude towards herself. Ofelia also grows accustomed to the constant help of the pixies and despite their warning is tempted by the Pale Man’s feast, resulting in the devouring of one of them. These miniaturized feminine helpers express simultaneously a fascination with the idea of being a fully grown woman and an anxiety regarding the weak, merely advisory, and perhaps mainly decorative nature of adult femininity. All the monsters in Pan’s Labyrinth are male, as well as the Faun himself (with only the toad, the first monster, unspecified); the little insects, which take on the shape of the female fairies from Ofelia’s book of fairy tales, are the only type of potentially female fantasy presence among the monsters and creatures that Ofelia encounters. Weaker, being smaller, and more easily neglectable by Ofelia for that reason – and potentially because they only aim to help her and are never intimidating – the fairies never have her full attention or much authority over her (much like Mercedes or Carmen). So much so, that Ofelia banishes them ‘shush’-ing and brushing them away, as they try to warn her against eating at The Pale Man’s feast; as a result one of them gets devoured – the fate both real women in Ofelia’s life suffer

from the patriarchal authority and disregard of men for their health and worth – Carmen dying at childbirth, Mercedes taken to be tortured when discovered to be helping her family of rebels. Women are not strong (perceived as) strong in Ofelia’s world and this can also be argued as being reflected in her own fantasy journey, much more reminiscent of ‘a hero’s journey’ (ref) than falling on familiar female archetype and narrative role from European fairy-tale traditions.

For Jeliza-Rose, however, imaginative play is much more gendered, revolving around femininity entirely – she plays being the daughter and care-taker of her father, the older sister of her dolls and the lover and wife of Dickens, using these female roles in order to use the mis-conceived mechanisms behind the ‘established’, ‘adult’ conventions to find her own sense identity and home. In the eyes of Jeliza-Rose both worlds – the psychedelic, abusive world of her parents (and later Dell’s and Dickens’ family) and the small, half-informed world of child-play are entirely one and the same. Jeliza-Rose strips her dolls naked and often tortures and kills them, all the while retaining the notion that her and the dolls are nevertheless best friends.



Figure 13: Jeliza-Rose (Jodelle Ferland) with her dolls in Tideland (Gilliam, 2005).

Much like her parents exploit her to take care for them while they are drugged and abuse and hurt her physically, but still expect (and receive) the same loyalty and love as before. Ofelia fantasises of dark monsters capable of devouring a child for breaking a useless rule of not eating food unless permitted – re-experiencing the trauma from her stepfather. To Ofelia the absurdity of those two things is one and the same. But while Ofelia's fantasy journey externalises her hypothetical fears from Captain Vidal narratively and the story makes her come face to face with her fears, Jeliza-Rose's child-play directly parallels the way in which her family treats her: using her to put in their heroin injections, prepare their dose and meals and beating her. Yet, as the parents' tone always is friendly and sweet, as they need Jeliza-Rose as a cleaner and an assistant. This is a model of behaviour that she herself unaided transfers onto her relationship with her dolls – the same tone and logic about the mechanisms of family dynamic translates into the young protagonist's treatment of her dolls.

This type of mirroring is a very distinct approach of both these fantasy films. The surreal visualisation of the minds of the two young female protagonists prompts discussions of innocence versus monstrosity, the function of imagination and finally addresses issues of inhumanity and evil through the prism of fairy tales and storytelling, in which the monstrous is traditionally much more visible and clearly named. In her article on parental neglect in *Tideland* Kathryn Laity considers the notion of the monstrous and its relationship to children in the 2005 film linking the less known Gilliam film to Del Toro critical success: 'At the centre of both films is a young girl who confronts all-too-real horrors by delving into a fantasy world that becomes more vivid and sustaining than those daily terrors.' (Laity, p.119). Indeed, both protagonists, as it were, 'manage to retain their sanity by partly losing it' – they invoke their fantasy

universes and dark guides in order to re-acquire further understanding of their new situations and to re-establish meaning – often a meaning borrowed from story-telling traditions. For Ofelia those traditions are Spanish fairy tale, while for Jeliza-Rose they are more contemporary influences on girls, like glamorous barbie-dolls making happy homes and brides hoping to get married to a prince-like rescuer. Both these types of traditions gradually leak into the realistic worlds of Ofelia and Jeliza-Rose and become, as Laity argues, more intimately real to them, as well as more nurturing to their needs for parental care and a sense of identity.

Conclusion

This chapter has aimed to offer a comparative study of *Pan's Labyrinth* and *Tideland* focusing on the trope of the lost girl. The chapter has argued that the imaginary worlds help to sustain the two lost girls during a traumatising period, without being entirely escapist universes, but conceived by trauma and interweaving mechanisms of trauma within fantastical narratives. These fantastical refabricating of the growing girls' realities provide confrontational mindscapes, which help the young girls to identify the issues that surround them and to address them within comprehensible contexts – fantasy narratives within childhood trauma contexts, in which they can address their traumas, challenge their anxieties and ultimately experience their dream of disobedience. The chapter has discussed girlhood in terms of arrested development and child trauma through costume and child play and has explored the transformation and substitution of human monsters with monstrous allies, in two girls' imaginations which themselves have been burdened and darkened by trauma. The chapter has then explored the need to forego a domestic and sterile

landscape and venture into overgrown, desolate landscapes where fantasies can take root. Finally, the chapter has discussed del Toro and Gilliam's interest in the monstrous and the grotesque, which in these two features have been wielded into use in to visualise child trauma and the process of assimilating and overcoming it. The chapter's primary focus and contribution to knowledge is to explore the lost girl as a character, coming into existence as a character and a genre since the mid 1980s and peaking in the mid 2000s, with *Pan's Labyrinth* and *Tideland*, as well as *Mirrormask* (2005). This new genre enables filmmakers to put their fantasy aesthetics such as the grotesque or the gothic to new use – visualising a girl's imagination, which brings an undercurrent of psychological and cultural implications to the fantastic, furthering the fantasy genre's claim of offering something beyond escapism. Furthermore, visualising a young girl's imagination is a way of making her voice be heard, be 'seen', as it were, at an equal stage with reality, thus bringing perspectives of girlhood, coming-of-age and trauma to the foreground of the film's universe, making the perspective of the neglected girl literally overtake reality. The lost girl strikes back at the world that abuses and suppresses her through her own imagination. This 'comeback' is typical of the lost-girl subgenre and, as del Toro points out himself, it consists of 'experiencing the dream of disobedience'. Experiencing a dream, however traumatic or mischievous this dream might be, is a big part of what the lost-girl subgenre is, and this will be further explored in the next chapter, which will focus on *Labyrinth* and *Mirrormask*.

CHAPTER THREE: GROWING GIRLS IN MISCHIVIOUS WORLDS: Jim Henson's *Labyrinth* (1986) and Dave McKean's *Mirrormask* (2005)

Introduction

The previous chapter, focusing on 'young girls' (9-12), explored how danger from real-life 'human monsters' is faced, assimilated and integrated through imagination and the creative use of fairy tale and storytelling. With the aid of helpful monstrous allies, Jeliza-Rose and Ofelia succeed in enacting their dream of disobedience and of acquiring a new imaginary identity, through a mixture of play-pretend and otherworldly experience. One of the main differences between the first chapter, focusing on little girls in carnivalesque worlds, and the previous chapter on young girls, is the darker turn that the story and themes take, both in terms of the menacing circumstances surrounding the Ofelia and Jeliza-Rose and the darker design of the worlds that they enter.

This chapter is very different from both previous chapters, and thematically leads towards the final chapter on exploring imagination and sexuality in adolescent girls, also because of what the state of lostness begins to mean for these two preadolescent girls. The little girls' sense of lostness comes from being dismissed and neglected by the adults around them. The two young girls' sense of lostness comes from bereavement, both losing a parent, and the threat of 'human monsters' – obsessive adults who would exploit and control them. In both these chapters the four girls are objectively 'lost girls', lost in terms of neglect, abandonment, isolation, endangerment and, in the case of *Pan's Labyrinth*, death. This chapter, focusing on preadolescent girls, is very different in that regard, as the state of lostness takes on a new, more internalized dimension, becoming less of an objective, external circumstance that endangers or traumatizes the protagonist, but rather a subjective experience of the girl's world and her own perception of her 'reality'. This leads to

mischievous worlds, in which the girls live through their mischief and its potential consequences in order to both enjoy and partly overcome mischief.

Preadolescent Lostness

In *Labyrinth* (1986) and *Mirormask* (2005) Sarah and Helena experience the demands that their families place upon them as oppressive and as controlling acts that stifle their desire for greater independent agency and a new, different identity. In *Mirormask* Helena (Stephanie Leonidas) no longer wants to juggle in her family's circus, refuses to get dressed to perform and shouts at her mother that she wants to 'join the real world' instead. She perceives her mother as controlling and wishes to break away from the life of her family, actively refusing responsibility and eventually beginning to say things she doesn't mean, like wishing her mother unwell at the end of the argument. When her mother collapses the same evening, Helena is afraid it was her fault. In *Labyrinth* Sarah (Jennifer Connolly) does not wish to look after her new baby brother from her father's second marriage to the degree that she wishes him to be taken away by the goblins. While there are indicators that Sarah is sincerely unhappy with new her family situation, there are also narrative and dialogue 'clues' that her experience of feeling neglected and oppressed simultaneously is hyperbolized and subjective. Sarah's stepmother complains to her father: 'She treats me like a wicked stepmother no matter what I say!' Therefore, Sarah's self-perception of her family situation takes on a performative, external dimension and she distributes roles and personalities to those around her, as well as herself. She describes herself as a 'slave' to her brother, even though she is only asked to look after him once per week and adds dramatically that she needs to tend to him after 'a long day's work', when in fact the film opens with a center-frame shot of Sarah reciting lines from a book called

'Labyrinth' in a meadow in a long white medieval dress – positioned as the center of (her) reality and presented as the author and the main character of it as well.

In the article 'The Heart of the Labyrinth: Reading Jim Henson's *Labyrinth* as a Modern Dream-Vision', S. Carrol discusses the film through the lens of a dream narrative, focusing on the nature of the dreaming girl, the allegorical figures present throughout the journey and the cathartic effects of a dream narrative, concluding that:

Sarah faces the temptation to stay a child, the dangers of budding sexuality, and her own personality flaws and comes out of the experience a more integrated, controlled, and mature human being. She has learned to control her imagination without losing it, sympathize with other human beings, and interact with the world in a healthy manner. Henson has shown the normal maturing of a young woman in a compressed format, a dream vision, to metaphorically and allegorically explore the trials that girls must endure to become women. (Carrol, 2009: 111)

In line with this research, in a comparative study of *Pan's Labyrinth* and Jim Henson's *Labyrinth*, 'The Two Kings and the Two Labyrinths', T.S. Miller observes that

For Sarah and for Ofelia, the trope of the Labyrinth, of the fantastic literalized, is at once a problem and solution, a source of terror and the key to overcoming it, the winding passageway and the thread that guides one through it. (2011: 42).

In this chapter I would like to develop aspects of these arguments further, arguing that Sarah's encounter with the labyrinth is much like a mischievous rite of passage, which takes her from a post-traumatic home into a coming-of-age. Refusing to look after her

baby brother and substitute her mother, who has recently passed away, the Goblin King grants her wish and abducts the baby. The labyrinth through which she must go in order to rescue the baby is in no way a sanctified space, the challenges laid out before her are not the work of a fairy godmother, or good wizard trying to teach her a valuable lesson, but rather the shenanigans of the Goblin King – nevertheless, the fantasy world itself, without the conscious or willing participation of its inhabitants, functions as a coming-of-age mechanism – even more so, because the adversaries and obstacles feel more dangerous, not being ordained by any form of a mentor figure or benign influence. Despite *Labyrinth* appealing to a younger audience, this idea of a world which is self-governed by mischievous goblins and lacks an overarching positive governance, and yet manages to teach the teenage protagonist valuable coming-of-age lessons, feeds into ideas of girlhood and coming-of-age cinema where the approach to overcoming trauma and coming-of-age is more slice-of-life and less pristine, such as *Girl, Interrupted* (1999) or *Thirteen* (2003). Despite *Labyrinth* being a much earlier film, it may be argued that the film is a part of a shift, towards the end of the 20th century, where girlhood cinema begins to move from a more family-centred and family-values-upholding genre towards a darker, less orderly and ordained kind of cinema, where girlhood is self-governed and post-traumatic girls are left to fend for themselves.

Labyrinth, despite its darker and more mature connotations was advertised alongside 'Children's fantasy films like *Return to Oz* (Walter Murch, 1985), *Labyrinth* (Jim Henson, 1986) and *The Princess Bride* (Rob Reiner, 1987) were marketed to the same audience demographic as *E.T.*' As Angus McFadzean points out, these films:

'included characters and tropes common to suburban fantastic films, but they can also be interpreted as children's fantasies, similar to pre-*E.T.* films such as *Mary Poppins* and *Willy Wonka*. Such films are associated with the suburban fantastic on the basis of the proximity of their release to suburban fantastic films, their shared audience demographic (mainly pre-teen and teenager), and a certain continuity of style in their marketing (posters, VHS packaging, trailers), even though it is clear that these films have quite different semantic and syntactic content.' (2019: 42)

It becomes clear from this listing that there was a sense of unification of films in the fantasy genre in the 80s, especially when it came to targeting an audience to advertise the films. Hollywood and indie productions alike would have also aimed to cater for, in a sense, a dual audience when crafting the plot, characters and universes of their productions. In an article on filming fairies ('Filming Fairies: Popular Film, Audience Response and Meaning in Contemporary Fairy Tale Lore') Juliette Wood notes that while certain critiques see the film as a 'coming of age journey into sexual maturity' and that there are references in the film to support this claim, 'younger viewers are content with the lovable Froud-designed muppets, the costumes and the story', which contributed to 'the creation of modern sensibilities to faery mythology' (286-287). *Labyrinth*, therefore, occupies a peculiar hybrid space in terms of both subject matter and intended audience response, combining tropes of girlhood trauma and quirky dark fantasy elements expressed through set design, costume and puppetry.

Helena is also presented center-frame with a tilting shot that reveals her lying on her bed, upside down from our perspective, playing puppet theatre with her socks, one white and one black. The socks are having a playful argument, mimicking how adults

talk when they want to sound 'important', and want to kill each other. Here, again, we see Helena trying to externalize her own emotions by authoring them and re-rendering them into humor and into puppet characters (this highly emotive, performative tone that Helena uses with her mother is already pre-established during Helena's sock-puppet 'show'). One could argue that this desire to author one's identity and one's life indicates the inability to do so in reality.

The two preadolescent girls visually want to fashion their reality and themselves into something that is, if you look at it pragmatically, impossible. Sarah cannot wear a white maiden gown outside her performances and Helena cannot turn the world or herself into her paintings – or can't they? The two girls express their dream of a different kind of agency and identity through play-pretend, like Ofelia and Jeliza-Rose, and this time also through art – Sarah through performance and recital and Helena through sketching.

Since Gaiman's graphic novel version of *Mirrormask* is narrated entirely in the first person and through the protagonist's drawings, there are numerous implications of the conversion of the first person graphic novel panels into camera shots. Due to this on the camera's focus being exclusively on Helena, and on her perception both of herself and what surrounds her. Bacchilega and Rieder argue that:

Acting both as reflecting surfaces and expressive windows between her inner and outer worlds, they both convey and hide the artist's feelings. They also dramatize her confusion about her proper role in her family and the way to deal with her developing sexuality. The drawings, in short, explore how what she sees in the mirror matches up with the masks she puts on. The self-reflexive relationship of

the drawings to the story-within-the- story parallels the self-conscious handling of text and interpretation within the dream. (pp.38-39).

The article then continues to compare *Mirormask* to *Spirited Away* (Hayao Miyazaki, 2001), discussing the similarity in the coming-of-age journey, arguing that 'the worlds to which Helena and Chihiro return remain problem filled':

Spirited Away shares with *MirrorMask* that typical fantasy structure whereby a girl's dreamlike or magic quest is framed by a realistic problem - posing plot. But successfully completing the quest hardly fixes everything. (p.39)

This is a point which returns the argument I want to make to *Labyrinth* and the lack of a pristine overarching plotline to resolve issues of girlhood – and the same point can be made here with regards to *Mirormask*. Finally, the articles goes in detail into the concept of Helena as an artist wielding complete control over her imaginary universe:

In the fluid, color-muted, and blurry topography of the dreamworld, on the borderland Helena acts as a conductor orchestrating her creation... a fluid space that can be shaped and remade. As her dark side gains agency, however, the shadows expand, making her a destroyer as well...Whether creator or destroyer, it his Helena in both aspects that manipulates the topography. (p.143)

In this chapter I would like to address this line of research, arguing that it is this intoxicating sense of complete control that Helena is challenged to relinquish in order to re-enter the real world, where she would be confronted with her own limitations,

mirroring the limitations of reality, instead of a world of boundless enactment and authorship.

These artistic enactments are in fact enactments of their own dreams of independence and identity, resting somewhere between imagination and reality, just like their age oscillates between childhood and adolescence. Sarah wants to be an actress and loves theatre, however, she is acting for her own pleasure and for the sake of make-belief, while Helena sketches as an intense therapeutic process, which physically overtakes her entire interior spaces (which later becomes the cause for her imaginary world to start falling apart). Sarah and Helena, therefore, initially try to resolve their feeling of lostness through imagination and through 'sinking into' art and play pretend. However, as argued above, play-pretend begins to take over their reality and their family circumstances as well, and the two girls' attitudes and self-experience become subjective and performative as well.

Mischievous Imaginations

Bearing in mind Helena and Sarah's preadolescent and imaginative tendency to exaggerate and borrow 'experience' from drama and art, it can be argued that their imagination is both what brings about the crisis they encounter and the start of the film and what they use to 'handle' it. Helena and Sarah's imaginations are mischievous in nature, much like the nature and the design of the fantastical worlds that they enter later. In these two films imagination invites hyperbole, invites rebellion, trickery and even trouble. And doing something mischievous becomes a way for Sarah and Helena to experience the literary, artistic identities that they dream of. As discussed above, play-pretend and make-belief actively become a part of the two girls' behavior,

mingling with their preadolescent concerns about their lives and their families, and their longing for agency and identity.

As Helena yells to her mother that she wants to join the real world instead of the circus and wishes her mother dead, Stephanie Leonidas delivers the lines in a highly performative and exaggerated manner, performing her own anger. Her imagination takes hold of her own perception of her situation, leading her to narrate her own emotion and say things she doesn't mean. The same evening, her mother's collapse leads her to instantly regret her mischief and blame herself acutely, encapsulating all her subsequent emotions and experiences into her artworks. A mischievous imagination, therefore, is what leads Helena to this crisis, and it is also what she uses to handle it.

In an article entitled 'Inverted Spaces', Cetiner-Oktem discusses the world which Helena 'creates and navigates' as an 'imaginative topography of Helena's mind', comparing the imaginative world she generates to the underlying performative and ephemeral nature of the circus as a phenomenon:

'To an adoring crowd of sock puppets, against a backdrop of her own drawings, Helena declares herself to be the queen of everything, including the queen of evil, which initiates a doubleness of self that requires negotiation. The location is inside the mobile abode of Helena's camper situated on the grounds of the family circus. The circus, also a mobile entity, is another imaginative space where identities are fluid, with people permitted to shift and change into other roles through the use of masks and costumes. This is a space that allows for continuous reinvention and recreation.' (p.137)

The article further discusses 'moving spaces' (p.140), referring again to the circus as a moving space, as spaces of sanctuary from reality and from static spaces, which do not offer the same freedom and the opportunity to rewrite and remodel reality:

The circus is more of an imaginative territory rather than a real space, but also alludes to Helena's lack of experience and immaturity that only allows her to function in mobile and imaginative topographies. (p.138)

Indeed, Helena's art as well as her dreamworlds are highly imprinted with tropes and motifs from her life in the theatre; she wants to join 'the real world', however, once she does, after her mother's accident, she engulfs herself into her art and dreams repeatedly of the theatre and of motifs of it that she loves. To further develop the point above, the 'imaginative territory' of the circus gradually becomes the imaginary territory of Helena's mind and subsequently – the dreamworld that she enters.

In the article 'Fairy Tales, Trauma and Writing into Dissociation' Sasha Lapointe discusses Sarah's journey through the labyrinth as a journey through trauma, arguing that, when a fantasy world intersects with a real one, 'the joining of these worlds, both fairy tale and trauma, resembles the very core of the experience of trauma itself: that daydreaming, that survival, those coping mechanisms can be manifested on the page or the screen' (p. 64). I would like to partly build on this point, by arguing that the internalisation of trauma through imagination and daydream is precisely what Sarah's (as well as Helena) does, however I would like to diverge from this reading of the world of *Labyrinth* as post-traumatic and differentiate it from, for example *Tideland* or *Pan's Labyrinth* and rather discuss it in terms of mischief, punishment and temptation.

Sarah, frustrated that she has been asked to look after the baby, asks him whether he wants to hear a bedtime story, pretending – unlike Helena – to be very ominous. While Helena is integrating her performance into her emotions unconsciously, Sarah begins the bedtime story consciously pretending to be scary. However, as the monologue progresses Jennifer Connolly begins to deliver her lines in a way which increasingly becomes infused with her own emotions and frustrations. Finally, she wishes her brother to be taken away by the goblins, just like Helena wishes her mother dead. These speech acts are committed half in pretend, as a mischievous momentary surrender to their hidden emotions. These two episodes connect to issues of (pre-)adolescence, when children begin to strive for agency and independence, often through argument, rebellion and mischief. Mixing these preadolescent themes with an active imagination by choosing two highly performative, artistic girls as protagonists to these stories enables the filmmakers to expand on these familiar coming of age themes of dreams and mischief in a rarer way – by playing them out visually. The ‘films’ themselves trick the girls, much like the girls trick their parents, by making the things that they don’t mean come true and granting their ‘wish’. This wish-granting immediately sets apart the two dual identities of each of the girls – the performative and the ‘real’ one. Sarah instantly regrets having wished her brother away and goes into the labyrinth to find him, while Helena can’t cope with what she has said to her mother and does nothing but think of her and sketch, until the sketches and thoughts of her mother engulf her into an imaginary world.

A disobedient, mischievous imagination is therefore both what brings the girls’ crisis about and what they resort to in order to ‘handle’ it, when the film in turn tricks them. However, I’d like to argue that this conjoint mischief of the films and their protagonists is also a type of remedy, as becomes evident from the girls’ immediate

regret. Imagination ultimately aids the girls to confront their mischievous nature by living out their imaginary mischief. They learn to embrace the imaginary, the performative and the mischievous, while re-learning to recognize their identity as sisters and daughters as well and acquiring a sense of responsibility. This is accomplished through a journey through an imaginary world, whose design resides somewhere between a mindscape and a quest-terrain laid out for the girls by an adversary.

Lost in Mischievous Worlds

This chapter therefore will explore Helena and Sarah's quest-journeys through mischievous worlds. As discussed above, the two imaginary worlds frighten and punish, but also teach and tempt in mischievous ways.

The aesthetic of *Labyrinth* is subject to much academic discussion. In articles like "Not too Realistic" and Intensified Realistic Approaches of the 1980s' Julie Turnock observes that the ILM approach pioneered by Lucasfilm in the 70s brought a shift in the crafting of film aesthetics, especially in fantasy film, homogenising the aesthetics of cinematic effects; she points out that nevertheless in the 80s several alternative approaches flourished, such as including Jim Henson's and Frank Oz's puppet-animation style in *The Muppet Movie* (Frawley, 1979) and *Labyrinth* (Henson, 1986), and large-scale practical makeup effects, as in *The Thing* (Carpenter, 1982) and *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (Craven, 1984) (Turnock, 240). From a contemporary perspective this accounts for the unique look that *Labyrinth* has crafted for its universe during a decade when the ILM approach was already bending the industry towards a different mainstream approach. In *Crafting the Extraordinary: site specificity and*

liveness, Velez-Serna discusses the actual locations used to film *Labyrinth* and the mastery in selecting and lighting the sets in a way that would enable the musical score to sound both realistic and fantasy-like (151).

Labyrinth, therefore, works against the current of mainstream effects and towards a unique blend of realism and fantasy. This is an aesthetic style which reflects the both quirky and dark subject-matter of the films. The use of puppetry lends a visceral sense of the touchable and the use of living actors also adds to the sense of the uncanny in the production.

There has been some critical writing on *Mirromask*, mainly comparative (*Pan's Labyrinth*, *Spirited Away*), or, also focusing on aesthetics and worldbuilding. The comparative work on *Mirromask* also, like with Henson's *Labyrinth*, focuses on the coming of age journey through a fantastic landscape which allegorizes trauma and addresses numerous issues surrounding girlhood as a challenging and transformative phase of life. An important thing to note when approaching the second line of academic research surrounding *Mirromask*, its effects and aesthetics, is that Jim Henson headed the creative team generating the fantasy scape and that both the conception and the marketing of the production were consciously oriented towards generating a successor of Henson's *Labyrinth*.

In the article 'The Shamelessly Fictive: Mimesis and Meta-fantasy' Neil Easterbrook describes Helena's journey, comparing it to Ofelia's in *Pan's Labyrinth*, as 'the stories of two young girls who wish to break free of oppressive conditions, encounter secondary fantasy worlds that involve completing journeys structured by sequential tasks, and fear the loss of parents.' (p.195). The article briefly discusses the predictability of the plot, for which the film received quite a lot of criticism:

Jim Henson Productions' *MirrorMask*, directed by Dave McKean and written by Neil Gaiman, met with mixed critical reception for what appears to be its excessive faith in a formulaic and schematic understanding of the fairy tale. The most common complaint about the film was that its cinematic achievement—impressive though it was—still was not enough to sustain the viewer's interest in its weak plot and thin characterizations. "The movie is a triumph of visual invention," wrote Roger Ebert, "but it gets mired in its artistry and finally becomes just a whole lot of great stuff to look at while the plot puts the heroine through a few basic moves over and over again" (2005). (p.195).

The article nevertheless chooses to focus on worldbuilding and unusual camera as discernible strengths of the film, arguing that a camera focus on Helena's character effectively further renders all the allegorical characters down to caricatures (p.197). Close reading cinematic style and camera positioning, Easterbrook concludes that:

The simplicity of cinematography matches the simplicity of theme in *MirrorMask*, where the immediate threat to Helena is within her control (as is common for tales that share traits of the *Bildungsroman*) but of an unavoidable, real future (death of both mother and, in the pending bankruptcy of the circus, the death of the father's dream). Whatever we might wish, parents literally die, and since children inevitably grow to adulthood, innocence metaphorically dies. Whatever her rise to greater maturity and self-knowledge, the future cannot be evaded - a profound fact of life, but finally a quotidian one. (p.198)

Bacchilega and Rieder further counter this criticism in 'Mixing It Up: Generic Complexity and Gender Ideology in Early Twenty- first Century Fairy Tale Films' arguing that even though the film follows 'a predictable set of conventions', e.g.

'Helena (Stephanie Leonidas) completes the quest and reenters the real world, the audience understands that the magical experience has equipped her to work through the original problems, or at least discover the personal resources necessary to deal with them—in short to take a crucial step toward growing up and becoming an adult.' (p.38).

Nevertheless, Bacchilega and Rieder argue, in slight contrast to the previous article, which focuses on the simplicity of cinematic style, that here the plot needs to take a step back to leave room for the lavish world of production design:

In *MirrorMask*, the realistic development and rounding of characters in the initial situation is simply abandoned in favour of their visually stunning re-presentation in the fantastic world, where they appear as distorted doubles of their real selves, a doubling accentuated by an overriding moral dualism splitting them into good and evil halves... The charge that fairy tale formula undermines the film's imaginative energy may, however, be countered by calling attention to its generic eclecticism. The fascinating dream world takes its striking stylistic vigour from the protagonist's drawings, which clearly provide the basis for much of its imagery and represent a psychological process of displaced autobiographical representation parallel to the story. (p.38).

In both films the girls perform and aim to author both their roles and their realities, which is especially emphasized through the puppetry employed in the aesthetics of the films. What I would like to focus on next is the specific ways in which the characters and narrative are designed in a manner that in my view reflects the two girls' own flaws. In these terrains the girls' own shortcomings become their obstacles. The secondary characters, which each represent a type of a dysfunctional adulthood, are

also a forewarning of what one could become, if one does not hold on to their identity. Sarah needs to overcome the highly performative nature of Sir Didymus, who is so performative that he cannot ever say anything, the deceits of the labyrinth and of the goblin prince who don't play fair, and finally both Helena and Sarah need to overcome the inconstancy and betrayal of their companions, Valentine and Hoggle. The narrative design of the world is mischievous firstly in that way, it teaches the girls of the inconstancy that adults. Each 'adult' figure that the girls encounter is dysfunctional in some way or other, specific to follies of adulthood, in an ironic manner comparative to the satirical characters in *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen* and *The Fall*. In both films these satirical secondary characters are something for the preadolescent girls to explore and mischievously enjoy for its absurdity, but at the same time, as this is a hero's quest, these dysfunctional adulthoods are also a challenge posed before them – they need to solve the dysfunctionality in order to advance in their quest. This satirizing of adulthood is tempting and mischievous at first sight – something to amuse and laugh at (both as a protagonist and an audience). But at the same time, as argued above, these adulthoods are a challenge to be resolved and much depends on finding the functioning mechanisms behind the pompousness, cowardice and inconstancy of those characters and 're-humanize' them in order to procure their help. This satirical but humane rendering of adulthoods is one of the ways in which the two imaginary universes mischievously confuse and teach at the same time.

Secondly, the two worlds are not ordained by a good force, but ruled by adversaries. Helena must find the 'charm' in order to wake the white queen, her mother, while resisting the dark queen, who is also cast as her mother (Gina McKean). The mischief is that nobody knows what the charm looks like, only that the princess (Helena's dark self) has stolen it. This is a metaphor for wanting to leave the circus

that her father manages to run 'only on charm and peanuts'. In the imaginary world the charm is an object without which the queen cannot be awoken. Out of despair, Helena sets off to search for the charm, without any guidance or any idea what it looks like, much like Sarah, who does not even know how to enter the labyrinth. Helena and Sarah's quests through the imaginary worlds is much like a mischievous rite of passage, which takes her from a post-traumatic home into a coming-of-age experience. The labyrinth through which Sarah must go in order to rescue the baby is in no way a sanctified space, the challenges laid out before her are not the work of a fairy godmother, or good wizard trying to teach her a valuable lesson, but rather the shenanigans of the Goblin King – nevertheless, the fantasy world itself, without the conscious or willing participation of its inhabitants, functions as a coming-of-age mechanism – even more so, because the adversaries and obstacles feel more dangerous, not being ordained by any form of a mentor figure or benign influence, to return to the point of a darker, more problematized and less fully resolved cinematic exploration of imagination and preadolescence.

Entry into Adolescence: Dual Representations of Evil

As Helena and Sarah approach adolescence, 'evil', 'darkness' and their two opponents, the Dark Queen and the Goblin Prince, acquire a dual identity. Much like the design of the imaginary universes themselves, they are at once menacing and alluring. This transformation of manifestations of darkness into forces which also have a charm and a charisma is symbolic of entering adolescence. Sarah is drawn to the charm of the Goblin Prince, which becomes especially clear when he entrances her during the ballroom dance scene. She is so captivated by the dance that she forgets

that she only has hours left to save her little brother. A metaphor for falling in love and losing track of time, this scene demonstrates the fascination that a dark allure can hold over a young girl and it represents the complexities that human interactions begin to acquire when an individual enters the adolescent stage of life. The Dark Queen on the other hand is a one of two representations of Helena's mother – Helena has ruptured her understanding of her mother into two personalities, unable, as many teenagers are, to assimilate her relationship to her mother and her mother's personality into one unified figure.

Helena in *Mirrormask* experiences the need to rupture her mother's identity into two characters – the White Queen and the Dark Queen. The White Queen is asleep, reflecting her mother's stay at the hospital, but the Dark Queen is trying to get her daughter back. While both characters are cast as Gina McKee, Helena denies recognising the Dark Queen as her mother and devotes herself to trying to awake the White Queen. This denial outsources the character design of the Dark Queen to the world itself and not to Helena and makes her the unwitting author of this dual representation of her mother. As Bacchilega and Rieder argue, the imaginary worlds and windows Helena paints, 'also dramatize her confusion about her proper role in her family'; she is unsure whether to what extent she belongs with (and 'to' – as she experiences it) her mother and father. The imaginary world allows her to test this and test herself against the white and dark representations of her mother. The white and dark representations of a parent are symbolic of adolescent anxieties when it comes to family values, a strive for independence and parent-child relationships. The two queens fight over the world Helena has generated, each in her palace – white and dark. Neil Easterbook argues, 'Helena's psychological relation to her mother, as in *Pan's Labyrinth*, is best represented architecturally (p. 197). Indeed, each palace,

strongly connecting to each queen's costume, is almost an extension of the will and nature of each version of Helena's mother. The white palace composed of one single thin shining tower, that unrealistically looks more like one of Helena's doodles than a building harbours the sleeping White Queen. In this palace Helena's Mother is admitted into Helena's imagination and art and she is assimilated by it as the sleeping White Queen. The dark palace, on the other hand, looks like a large building with apartments from the outside, representing reality and Helena's unadmitted fears of what her mother might be. There is therefore allure in the mischievous representation of her mother as a dark possessive figure, a desire to explore her mother as the villain and to either oppose her as the hero or to succumb to the Dark Queen's wishes and to become the dark princess herself. However, in becoming the dark princess Helena also ruptures herself into two characters and finally takes her mother's side against, effectively, herself. This mischievous journey centred around two representations her mother as a light and dark figure are symbolic of Helena's evolving understanding of family, her role in it and anxieties about her mother's role relative to herself. These anxieties resolve themselves as Helena comes to understand her own identity and ruptures her own personality into a light and dark representation in order to ultimately confront herself instead of her mother.

Sarah dreams up the Goblin Prince as having fallen in love with her, as she tries to scare her baby brother with a bedtime story. He is further cast as David Bowie, who is also fictionally a famous actor from cut outs around her mirror. His costume is overtly sexual reflecting both his fairy tale fictional self and his rock-and-roll persona. He appears to his own musical score and is invariably styled with hair and makeup.

The combination of puppetry with David Bowie's body on screen as the Goblin King further enhances both his star status and the sexualisation of his body and character.

In their article 'David Bowie on Screen', Cinque et al write that:

Approaching David Bowie's play with erotic sadomasochism, Rosalind Gait's article finds that his on-screen performances in *Merry Christmas ; Mr Lawrence* (Nagisa Oshima, 1983) and *Labyrinth* (Jim Henson, 1986) inevitably unsettle the viewing position offered in ways that are visceral and corporeal rather than didactic or deterministic. Gait notes that while these films infrequently centre overly on issues of identity, gender, or desire, the resulting sectorial position is nonetheless one where these subjectivities are never taken for granted. She argues that David Bowie tenaciously rearranges cinema's regimes of eroticized vision (p.129).

David Bowie's body on screen is speculated to also symbolise Sarah's character's journey into sexual maturing. The article above traces Bowie's onscreen body representations throughout his career, both as a musician and an actor, and argues that his cinematic representations challenge and 'rearrange' screen regimes of how the (male) body may be positioned, presented and eroticised. *Labyrinth* further comes at a time when David Bowie's star status is peaking and has been established for some time, therefore, there is also a sense in *Labyrinth* of having to present his body in a manner which preserves and perpetuates this star status. In an article called 'David Bowie's Perverse Cinematic Body' Rosalind Galt argues that

Labyrinth offers us the perverse spectacle of Bowie in leather outfits and makeup, casually wielding a black riding crop, and its mode of address similarly invites the young viewer to respond sexually. Narratively, Jareth is the antagonist, but, as with Celliers, the spectator's affective relationship to him is shot through with an erotics of power. (p.132)

This is a very compelling point to make in terms of Jareth's narrative position in the story and the audience (and the female protagonist's) split approach between the presentation of his body and the presentation of his character – an instance in which the spectacle and the narrative aspects of the film are divided, lending the film a visceral and unsettling dimension of audience response to David Bowie's character.

He is therefore also a dual representation of evil and has his own allure in Sarah's narrative, an allure which she most frequently denies, but also can fall victim to, for example during the Masquerade Ball, when he uses his allure as a celebrity and a dark prince in love to distract her and get her to forget her quest of recovering her brother. Further, his character is meant to be in love with Sarah, something which she initially dreams of herself while narrating it to her baby brother. This immediately puts the Goblin Prince into a slightly different paradigm to that of a straightforward antagonist. As he explains at the end of the film, he stole her baby brother also in order to fulfil her wishes. This more complex villain, who is simultaneously a dark prince in love and a thieving king of the goblins, hints at a more complex and pre-adolescent understanding of the world, where evil also can have a dark allure.

In the following section I am going to close read two scenes from each film – the ballroom scene from *Labyrinth* and the dolls/transformation scene from *Mirrors*. I am going to analyze the two scenes comparatively, arguing that they are

both aiming to metamorphosize the girls, tempting them into the 'wrong' type of adulthood. The goblin prince wants to transform Sarah into his lady, so that she won't save her brother, while the Dark Queen transforms Helena into her dark daughter. The scenes suggest that coming of age is a form of transformation and that it can devoid a girl from her identity, as well as giving her one.

The Masquerade Ball and the Doll-room scenes in respectively *Labyrinth* and *Mirrormask* can be read as rite of passage scenes into adulthood. Both scenes happen to the girls as opposed to either of them having an active agency during their transformations. They find themselves in these enclosed spaces and are each taken over by a crowd of dancers, incapable of escaping or of resisting them. This can be argued as symbolic of a representation of adolescence as something that happens to the girl, without her being capable of resisting it or opposing it. Adolescence or adulthood, represented by the dancing figures, is also something that puzzles her, but also gradually entrances her, until her identity transforms into something discontinuous from what she used to be during the film – Sarah gets tempted to dance with the goblin prince and Helena gets physically transformed into the dark princess, both forgetting their missions of saving the baby and waking the white queen, in other words – both forgetting who they were in their families and what their families meant to them.

In *Labyrinth*, the ballroom scene opens with the sphere, which the Goblin Prince is sometimes seen holding on the films' promotional material, DVD-covers, posters, etc. The room therefore both exists and is simultaneously manufactured by him, much like the worlds themselves, and designed for a purpose. The dream-like quality of the music, 'As the World Falls Down', written and performed by David Bowie, makes him appear even more in power of the situation, lullabying Sarah into his control. The

romantic song stretches across the scene, which in a manner similar to that of *Baron Munchausen* and *The Fall*, shows adults as grotesques, creating a strong counterpoint between sound and vision. The sphere reveals a masquerade ball, where caricatured guests dance the night away in a carnivalesque swaying chaos. Tracking shots of the dancing guests intertwine with intimate shots of Sarah's face, as she is trying to figure out where she is, appearing to be searching for someone at the same time. Jennifer Connolly's performance clearly indicates someone who has stumbled into a dream, she looks wonder-lost and confused, but immersed in her environment at the same time. She is the only guest not wearing a mask, or laughing and celebrating in an intoxicated manner, which clearly sets her apart from the other guests and can be seen as symbolic of both innocence and inexperience. Her white ballroom gown strongly contrasts with her attire thus far in the film, while still being reminiscent of her performative costume at the start of the narrative. Her boyish jumper with a tight collar, her loose jeans and her sneakers serve to make her character both relatable to other adolescent viewers, and to make her stand out from her fantastical environment visually by not fitting in with the earthy, dirty, fairy-tale clothes of the goblins – she looks like someone from the real world that has stumbled into a dream. This sense of displacement is repeated in the ballroom sequence (a dream within a dream, perhaps), where she appears transformed in her white gown, with a revealing cleavage, bouffant sleeves, and a silver headpiece. She certainly looks like 'the princess' of the ball and the fairest in the room, while her costume is also evocative of that of a bride. The Goblin Prince, who orchestrates the ball, is presumably also the one who ominously has 'dressed' her for the occasion and is trying to fascinate her, so that she forgets to save her brother. He is tempting her with her own vanity, by putting her in the elaborate gown, as well as with his beauty, projecting himself as her love-interest through the

song and his presence in the ballroom. As discussed above, David Bowie as a presence on the screen (in both film and music) is a highly sexualized one and his mere appearance, through the established tradition of his visual presentation, already hints at eroticization. His own princely long shirt sleeves, ruffled collar and long-tailed jacket, along with the delicately carved goblin mask that he removes, complete his image as the beautiful prince amongst the grotesque monsters. Jennifer Connelly's performance, in consecutive closeups portrays child-wonder fascination along with a degree love-lust (with her lips open in a gasp and her eyes fixed on the goblin prince).



Figures 14 and 15: Sarah (Jennifer Connolly) and Jared (David Bowie) in the ballroom in *Labyrinth* (Henson, 1984)

As they begin to dance her eyes remain fixed on him, while Jared, who both acts in and 'directs' the ballroom dance, is softly singing the lyrics to 'As the World Falls Down' to her – she follows him in a daze until finally being distracted by the clock: Jared then smiles mischievously, as his devious plan to slow her down has succeeded. This double-faced representation of the adult Goblin Prince as both the enemy and lover is indicative of the film's mischievous universe and of Sarah's own flawed nature; furthermore it hints at the dangers of maturing in the wrong way, tempted by the wrong appearances and thus transforming one's own vision and identity in a defacing and dark way. The same idea is prominent in the doll-room scene in *Mirrors*.

Through a digitally made panoramic dive-in shot, the spectator and Helena suddenly find themselves in a cave-like room full of clocks. Helena is dressed in her pajamas, in the tradition of lost girl films, where the attire of the young girl is both relatable to other young spectators, and out of place in terms of the fantastical environment. Her clothes are loose, like those of Sarah; similarly Ofelia, when she finds the faun, and Sally and Alexandria throughout the films, she is also wearing white, to accentuate her innocence, domesticity and vulnerability. She is dazed and does not know where she is, and notices that all the clocks are showing a different time - the room is symbolic of the passage of time and coming-of-age, but also of the disjointed and anti-progressive nature that that process can sometimes have. The hexagons and circles that shape the room bear the reminiscence of a room intended for secret rituals or a cult. Hexagonal boxes open by themselves and mummified dolls with mono-spectacles that are clocks emerge from within. The mummified bodies, as

will become evident from what they do to Helena, demonstrate a perverse desire to preserve the sexualized female body from decaying or transforming in shape. The dolls intoxicate Helena by throwing a magic dust in the air, similarly to the goblin prince who puts Sarah to sleep in order to manipulate her agency and identity. The dolls then begin to dance and caress the intoxicated Helena, who gradually closes her eyes and succumbs to them, as they sing the original soundtrack song 'Close to You', whose high-tone, clock-like lyrics read:

On the day that you were born
The angels got together and
Decided to create a dream come true
So they sprinkled moondust in your hair
And golden starlight in your eyes of blue

That is why all the boys in town
Follow you all around
Just like me
They long to be
Close to you

As they perform the first verse, the dolls, using their caressing hands, put golden eye shadow on Helena, along with bright-red lipstick, and then change her into a black dress with black gloved-sleeves and a black choker. Like the Goblin Prince, they are transforming her pre-adolescence into a type of adulthood to suit their own perception of her, as well as perhaps her own hidden desires.



Figures 16 and 17: Helena (Stephanie Leonidas) in *Mirrorsmask* (McKean, 2004).

Helena is entirely passive during this make-over metamorphosis, with her eyes closed, and swaying in the rhythm of the song. Once she opens her eyes, they have turned black and she has transformed into the missing daughter of the Dark Queen. The metaphoric manufacturing of a daughter and the erasing of her personality visually displays Helena's anxieties surrounding her relationship with her mother, and further enhances her dual-nature, as perceived by her daughter – she is both the passive

White Queen and the manipulative, identity-erasing Dark Queen. These two anti-parenting figures which tempt, transform and preside over the mischievous worlds that Helena and Sarah get lost into are symbolic of adolescence going astray as well as of the imperfections of adulthood. They hint at an uncertainty in the world of adults, of hidden agendas and speak back to the vulnerability of pre-adolescence as a time of transformation, which can easily go astray through types of temptation: both through a girl's own objectifying vanity and through sexual seduction.

Conclusion

The two imaginary worlds of *Labyrinth* and *Mirrorsmask* function based on mischief and temptation to address preadolescent dreams and anxieties. The dual representations of evil and the quests that the girls undertake for their families are reflective of the dual nature of adolescence as a time of independence and rebellion, but also maturity and responsibility. This can sometimes happen through trauma or through overcoming bereavement as is the case in *Mirrorsmask* and especially *Labyrinth*. As Easterbrook argues, in reference to *Mirrorsmask* 'Whatever we might wish, parents literally die, and since children inevitably grow to adulthood, innocence metaphorically dies. Whatever her rise to greater maturity and self-knowledge, the future cannot be evaded - a profound fact of life, but finally a quotidian one.' (p.198) Both girls need to come to terms with their new family situation and acquire a greater sense of responsibility and do so through imaginary rescue-quests for their families. The dream format allows them to test themselves against the mischievous nature of their foes and by extension against their own rebellious desire for mischief. As Sarah Carrol argues, 'Sarah faces the temptation to stay a child, the dangers of budding

sexuality, and her own personality flaws and comes out of the experience a more integrated, controlled, and mature human being. She has learned to control her imagination without losing it, sympathize with other human beings, and interact with the world in a healthy manner. Henson has shown the normal maturing of a young woman in a compressed format, a dream vision, to metaphorically and allegorically explore the trials that girls must endure to become women. (p.111). Both young girls become teenagers at the end of the film and overcome family (pre-)bereavement, but they do not do so traumatically; rather they escape into their own fantasy where mischief becomes both a punishment and a teaching method and evil has a tempting allure to be confronted and overcome.

CHAPTER FIVE: ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN BLOODY WORLDS: Peter Jackson's *Heavenly Creatures* (1991) and Neil Jordan's *The Company of Wolves* (1984)

This chapter, focusing on adolescent girls, as opposed to the previous two chapters, will analyze how the sexual identity of girls is explored through fantasy in two late 20th century films, *The Company of Wolves* (Neil Jordan, 1984) and *Heavenly Creatures* (Peter Jackson, 1994). The chapter will investigate the ways in which the female teenage characters in these late 20th century films, de-sexualized by their school systems and families, resort to exploring their repressed sexuality by generating alternative lives and identities within narratives borrowed from fairy tale traditions. I will explore the ways in which classical fantasy and fairy-tale traditions lend the teenage girls the agency to explore their sexuality – the chapter will argue, however, that these re-worked fairy tales, taken from older historical traditions, fail to

fully accommodate the female characters' need for a sexual identity. The borrowed narrative fantasy structures in both films ultimately fail the female characters in their search for a sexual identity and betray them back to the same patriarchal reality that they have tried to break away from through fantasy, dream and imaginative play. These two films provoke the audience to reflect on female sexuality as opposed to objectifying the characters' femininity and opens up the fantasy and coming-of-age cinema traditions towards discussions of what it means to mature sexually as an adolescent girl – a subject matter which was not widely explored or accepted in the cinema of the 80s-90s. The fantasy universes within which the sexual maturing becomes possible further allegorises the taboos and disregard for female adolescent sexuality, as though the only safe place where the adolescent heroines can explore their notions of sexuality is one removed from reality, in their own imaginations.

Juliet and Pauline take up the classic fantasy structure of a made-up kingdom with made-up nations and play at war with male armies and male kings, enjoying their imaginary claim to power over the imaginary soldiers. As this chapter has argued, their fantasy reflects a way in which the adolescent girls can both interrogate power and sexuality, and experience their desire to defy their patriarchal oppressors. Their fantasy world is made of pottery clay models of castles, fortress walls and houses. Peter Jackson's innovatively homogenous use of clay makes their world look hand-made, undetailed and forged almost through child-play, by two girls playing with their minds, as children's hands play with clay. The construct of the soldiers from an identical light grey clay, not their faces, clothes, or markers of rank or identity. That way the men and their kingdoms are visually one and the same. This artistic choice is especially poignant when the kingdoms are attacked and fired at, as both the soldiers and the fortress walls fall apart, looking identical and indistinguishable from each other

once broken. This serves to dehumanize the girls' armies and to make the violence look likewise natural. They develop an elaborate world of war, and contesting authorities, interrogating the appeal and danger of attaining power through violence, until eventually they fall victim to that idea themselves. When the girls eventually murder Juliet's mother with a brick, they have already murdered countless soldiers with clay weapons in their fantasy war.

In her dream-fantasy of *The Company Of Wolves*, Rosaleen dreams her older sister Alice to be devoured by wolves, which soon makes Rosaleen the most desired girl in the village. A re-creation of the classical tale of forewarning Little Red Riding Hood, I will argue that this rendition of the classical structure explores Red Riding Hood (Rosaleen's) sexual desirability in a relationship to her own sexual desire, and the sense of power that results from the two. The collection interrogates latent issues in the classical fairy tales structure, such as the censorship or expulsion of sexuality or violence from fairy-tale tropes and narratives. These latent issues are unfolded and interrogated in *The Company of Wolves*, using narratives-within-narratives to match Rosaleen's adolescent perspective on sex and power with the Grandmother's tales of forewarning and experience. The Grandmother's tales warn against men's sexual power over women (in her first and last tale). She warns against the animalistic nature of male desire for sex and power, which can turn him into a monster (in her second tale where the Devil offers a boy a potion, which he rubs onto his chest, causing hair to sprout rapidly. The boy is pleased, but shortly thereafter vines grow swiftly from the ground and trap him, as he cries and his face distorts). In her last tale she explains the violent fates of women who succumb to her desire for sexuality and lose their power – a power which can only be reclaimed through violence (in her third tale where a pregnant commoner woman transforms the aristocrat who abandoned her and his

wedding guests into wolves). Meanwhile Rosaleen's own adolescent and inexperienced perspective on sexuality and power is explored through her encounters with male suitors. Her gradual understanding of her own sexual power over the men who desire her develops alongside the gradual development of her own sexual desire. This is explored through the colour red. In this rendition of the classic fairy tale the Grandmother makes the red cape to celebrate her adolescence and 'first bloom', a symbol of her desirability. Later in the film, becoming increasingly aware of both her desirability and desire, Rosaleen puts on bright red lipstick that she finds in a bird's nest in the forest, much like Helena was forced to in *Mirormask*. The act of putting lipstick on as a rite of passage into adolescence is incorporated symbolically in these fantasy universes as an anachronistic detail, which further enhances the dream-like quality of the universes and allegorizes the girls' gradual sexual self-awareness. But the forewarning against pregnancy and motherhood is ever present through the shot of the bird's eggs and Rosaleen's reflection in the makeup mirror. This same fear of pregnancy and motherhood as an unwanted decline of desirability is also present in the grandmother's tales. Nevertheless, Rosaleen applies the lipstick unbothered by the bluebirds' eggs. Unlike the cape that was given to her, this scene demonstrates a transition into self-awareness and more active agency in her sexual maturing and self-perception. Unwilling to relinquish the exploration of her desires Rosaleen confronts the wolves, and finally attempts to supersede her Grandmother's tales of forewarning and claim her power and sexuality.



Figures 18 and 19: Rosaleen (Sarah Patterson) finds lipstick in a bird's nest in the *Company of Wolves* (Jordan, 1984).

I will argue that through their visual explorations of female adolescent fantasies appropriated from historically patriarchal fantasy traditions, *The Company of Wolves* and *Heavenly Creatures* address both historical and contemporary anxieties surrounding adolescent female sexuality. I will explore how the films aim to address

the tabooed screen representation of girlhood as a period devoid of sexual awareness and self-exploration by bringing the adolescent female characters' sexual fantasies openly to the screen through dream narrative and embedded narrative. The chapter will argue that by displaying the teenage 'closet' dreamers' sexual fantasies visually and by constructing narratives in which these sexual fantasies ultimately lead their heroines to violent ends, the two productions challenge the position that teenage female sexuality occupies in late 20th century films and western culture, as I will investigate in the following section. These two films are unique in their time period for investigating female sexuality through the fantastic and giving their adolescent heroines a voice and a perspective on sexuality, unlike their contemporaries, which I will explore in the following section. I will argue that by ending the sexually fantasising heroines' narratives in violence and murder, the films subversively aim to renegotiate cultural understandings of adolescent female sexuality and its position in screen representations of girlhood.

Introduction – Fantasy Screens in the mid 80s and mid 90s.

The Company of Wolves and *Heavenly Creatures* come out exactly one decade apart, during a period in which fantasy cinema mainly focused on adapting myths and legends, such as *Excalibur* (1981), *Clash of the Titans* (1981) or *Thor the Conqueror* (1983), and fabricating new fantasy epics in the same vein, full of action, grandeur and spectacle, such as famously *Conan the Barbarian* (1982), *Legend* (1985), *Conquest* (1983). Within the paradigm of these fantasy adventure quests, female characters mainly occupied the double role of counter-leads and love-interests of the male protagonists.

In films like *Ator* (1982) or *Fire and Ice* (1983) the quest narratives and the female character's backstories effectively allow for a female vision and performance that work towards satisfying the male gaze. As Laura Mulvey argues, 'in a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female' (Mulvey, 1975, p. 808). Splitting the male gaze into 'narcissistic' (looking at an idealised male self- projection) and 'scopophilic' (the pleasure of looking at another person as an erotic object), Mulvey describes the female characters in the screens of the 1970s as 'decorative': 'In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*' (p.809). What is interesting about the female characters' narrative roles in these fantasy productions and important to this chapter's exploration of *The Company of Wolves* is the ways in which female sexual appeal is displayed on the cinema screens from the 80s and how this overt visual display fails to correlate to sexual desire. 80s fantasy cinema, I would argue, effectively nullifies the 'need' for actual female sexuality being displayed on the screen through the archetype of the warrior love-interest / counter-lead. Female sexuality is expelled from the both the plot and the visual aspect of the screen, through a combination of spectacle and narrative decisions. The female characters' sexual desirability is expressed most strikingly through wardrobe and paired with a battle-centric attitude which easily justifies the choice of costume and the athletic figures of the leading actresses in these 80s fantasy productions. The only type of sexuality that is exhibited, in line with male narcissistic and scopophilic pleasure, is the female character's eventual surrender to the sexual appeal of the male protagonist (like, for example, in *Fire and Ice* or in *Deathstalker* (1981, 1983).

The same character-design concept, with a battle-preoccupied female lead, whose sexual appeal is matched by a disinterestedness in sex, is reemployed in later productions where the protagonist is a battle-centric female warrior (*Hundra* (1983), *Sheena* (1984) *Red Sonya* (1985)). I would argue that the 80s archetype of the battle-centric warrior-woman was so prominent and oriented towards male wish-fulfilment that later productions in the decade like *Willow* (1988) begin to critique and subvert this overly commercial archetype and playing with the idea of the warrior-princess, with their heroine dressed for battle tip to toe and wielding full romantic control over the male counter-lead. This later concept of the tomboyed female warrior counter-lead (markedly heterosexual despite trans-dressing) was reincarnated multiple time in the following decade (*Fantaghiro* (1991-1998) *Army of Darkness* (1992)), continuing, as I have argued above, along with the more traditional fantasy archetype of the maiden-princess (*The Heart of the Dragon* (1996) or *The Dragon's Ring* (1994)) to comfortably nullify the need for an exploration of female sexuality as a part of womanhood on fantasy screens. In her overview of girlhood and girl culture in the latter part of the 20th century, Catherine Driscoll addresses female adolescent sexuality by chronicling 'the studies of girls sexual discilpinization as still prevalent' post 1980s, female adolescent conversations on sexuality, unlike male, being limited to a domesticated 'bedroom culture' and, citing Simone de Beauvoir, 'girlhood as something that women must overcome as the very site and performance of patriarchal imposition and gender conformity' (Driscoll, 2008, p. 19). In fantasy cinema especially, the female adolescent child was widely de-sexualised and virginalised, especially in fantasy and fairy-tale cinema from the 80s, for example in *Return to Oz* (1985), *Momo* (1986), *Alice* (1988) – in all three productions the pre-adolescent child actresses are additionally infantilized through costume, in white knee dresses and ribbons, or slightly degendered by

wearing loose clothing without a cleavage, like *Momo* or Sarah (Jennifer Connelly) in *Labyrinth* (1986). In the 1980s there was also the perpetualisation of the female child through the character of The Childlike Empress (Tami Stronach) in *The Neverending Story* (1984), with her hair tightly pulled back and her high-neck dress.

There were, however, representations of female sexuality in other 20th century media – in magazines like *Teen Angel* in the 1970s and *Mad For Boys* in the 1980-90s (Driscoll, 2008: 22), which resulted from girls becoming an economic commercial force in the latter part of the century. But these commercial magazines, oriented towards an adolescent female readership also demonstrate a cultural awareness of female adolescent sexuality, which nevertheless continues to be ejected from fantasy and fairy tale screens from the period, as though it is a tabooed subject, which could hurt the film productions' commercial benefits. Rosemary Jackson, often seen as a leading landmark in fantasy criticism, explores fantasy in terms of desire, operating as dual system of manifestation and expelling. Jackson argues that 'fantasy characteristically attempts to compensate for a lack resulting from cultural constraints: it is a literature of desire, which seeks that which is experienced as absence and loss' (Jackson, 1981: 3). Fantasy's relationship to desire, according to Jackson, is a fulfilled through manifestation or expulsion: 'Fantasy can tell of, manifest or show desire or it can expel desire, when this desire is a disturbing element which threatens cultural order and continuity' (Jackson, 1981: 6). Jackson argues that fantasy functions as a dual system that reworks cultural dreams and anxieties into fantasy universes, through its psychological and social relationship to desire. Therefore, even though in other media there was already an awareness and an engagement with female sexuality, the fantasy screens from the period eject it from their universes, as an undesired, tabooed and disturbing element of reality.

Instead, the female warrior from the screens of the 80s and early 90s is disinterested in her sexuality, while the maiden/princess is herself an object of desire, rather than endowed with sexual agency, since late 20th century fantasy narratives adhere to male 'desire' as coined by Laura Mulvey, 'the male gaze' (Mulvey, p. 815). While the figure of the female child is complexified by anxieties surrounding the loss of sexual innocence, seen as the rite of passage into adulthood – and loss of childhood – and it gets resolved in fantasy through the expelling of sexual desire from adolescent female characters completely, and is manifested through the fulfilling of the dream of the perpetual female child – for example through the figure of The Childlike Empress. Fantasy therefore expels certain aspects from the/its world, such as adolescent sexuality, and manifests others that either no longer exist, like the additionally infantilized preadolescent actresses, or never have existed, like the dream of The Childlike Empress.

If fantasy is, like Rosemary Jackson argues, a system of manifestation and expulsion operating on desire, or, as Jack Zipes claims, 'projections' of society's understanding of 'other and better worlds' (Zipes, 2002: 179), then the expulsion of adolescent female sexuality from fantasy cinema screens speaks back directly to anxieties surrounding the notion of the female child having sexual fantasies and experiencing sexual desire, as being something unsettling, and disturbing the 'pleasure' of a fantasy universe. Despite already being present in girl culture through magazines, posters and bedroom culture in the late 20th century, female sexuality remains expelled from fantasy and fairy-tale film universes, in which there is a gap between the archetypes of the virginal female child and the fully grown maiden or warrior (both, arguably, rather disinterested in sex).

In the 1990s and onwards this gap in archetypes has been partly addressed through a recurrent figure that Alexandra Heatwole refers to as the speculative girl hero:

'While she has earlier and even ancient antecedents, since the 1990s a newly action-oriented girl hero has become especially significant in fiction oriented towards children and young adults. She is not only resilient but wilfully determined; while she will take responsibility for others, she decides which others and under what conditions' (Driscoll and Heatwole 2016: 261).

This new archetype, examples of which include Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Lyra Belacqua from *His Dark Materials*, Katnis Everdeen from *The Hunger Games* and others, inhabits the adolescent age-group that has previously been, as argued, a gap in fantasy screens from the 80s, either infantilized, tomboyed, or fully grown, is indeed a renegotiation of previous screen representations of the figure of the 'fantasy adolescent girl'. Nevertheless, I would argue that in terms of her sexuality the adolescent girl hero can still conveniently fall back on former traditions where potential sexual desirability (this time, also narcissistic, as being oriented towards a female spectatorship as well) does not need to be matched by sexual desire. As Driscoll and Heatwole observe, the girl hero as an archetype is 'rejecting vanity and, quite explicitly, any suggestion that commodified femininity will represent or enable her capacities' (2016: 262).

Again, being a partly degendered, and sometimes action-centred figure, the girl hero as described by Driscoll and Heatwole as effectively renegotiating representations of adolescent female characters on fantasy screens, however, her denial of her femininity means that, as in earlier fantasy film traditions, her own

sexuality can be nullified in a manner which is justified both through narrative and character design. Driscoll and Heatwole cite films such as *The Hunger Games*, *Harry Potter* and the *The Golden Compass*. Apart from the later *Twilight* Series (2007-2012) discussed towards the end of the article in terms of a Persephone Complex, Driscoll and Heatwole also point out that motherhood is brought up in each of these films on an 'afterthought' at the end of each series (2016: 281). However, this afterthought of motherhood, I would argue, still puts the female characters back in the same trajectory of narrative development as its literary predecessors, making the 'eventful action that belongs to girls' an event from their youth, during which they are temporarily empowered and able to break away from the presumed traditional (cultural and fictional) life cycle of womanhood. This is the cinema history backdrop against which Neil Jordan's *Company of Wolves* and Peter Jackson's *Heavenly Creatures*, with their overt visual exploration of adolescent female sexuality stand and are setting themselves apart from their fantasy and coming-of-age film contemporaries. Occupying the sub-genre space between fantasy film and adolescent film these two productions isolate female sexuality in the realm of the fantastic, where the teenage female characters can safely re-negotiate their notions of sex and agency. I will argue that aside from openly bringing girls' adolescent sexual fantasies to the late 20th century fantasy screens, the violent and tragic ends of both films further point to the lack of culture, both social and 'fictional', to support adolescent female sexuality. By creating two fantasy universes centred around an adolescent girl's exploration of her sexuality – and then gradually destroying the worlds and their heroines this chapter argues that *The Company of Wolves* and *Heavenly Creatures* critique the expulsion of teenage female sexuality – both from culture and society, and from their literary and film heritage.

The Company of Wolves (1984) – Critical Context

Angela Carter, whose short story from the collection 'The Bloody Chamber' becomes *The Company of Wolves*, also co-writes the screenplay for the production, dipping in the rich history of the tales and re-tells of the story of Little Red Riding Hood. It is most likely that Little Red Riding Hood's birth was in the Middle Ages, from a long oral tradition, circulating in France and Italy, intended mainly as a fairy tale forewarning children against the dangers that can be encountered in the woods: werewolves, wolves, rapists, or men eating children (the times were severe and the famine caused men to commit atrocious acts). The warning tale was so widespread that it undoubtedly drew the attention of Charles Perrault and influenced his fairy tale of 1697, in which 'he borrowed elements from popular folklore and recreated *Little Red Riding Hood* to suit the needs of an upper-class audience whose social and aesthetic standards were different from those of the common folk.' (Zipes, 1982: 2)

The oral tradition, however, with all the elements censored or expurgated from Perrault, survived independently from the written tale and thanks to the research of Paul Delarue it has been reconstructed and recorded in 1885, entitled *The Story of the Grandmother*. It is precisely this story, featuring all the uncomfortable details omitted by Perrault, that keeps resurfacing in Neil Jordan's *The Company of Wolves* and contesting with the later refashioning of Red Riding Hood's archetype and the fairy tale as a 17th century parable of rape.

In *The Story of the Grandmother* a little girl (with no red cape) goes into the woods to bring bread and milk to her grandmother, where she meets a werewolf, who

asks her which path she will take to her grandmother's – the path of pins or the path of needles. She says the path of needles, and while she is collecting needles the werewolf finds his way to the grandmother's house, kills and eats her, and puts some of her meat in a cupboard and some of her blood in a bottle on the shelf. When the little girl arrives, the werewolf invites her to eat the grandmother's meat and drink her blood. The girl does so and afterwards the werewolf tells her to lie in bed with him. Every time she asks him where to put an item of clothing, he answers: 'Throw it into the fire, my child, you won't be needing it anymore'. She undresses completely and lies in bed with the werewolf, where she begins to make her classic observations about his ears, nails, shoulders, hairiness, etc, until the werewolf says that his mouth is so big, the better to eat her with. At this point the little girl pretends she needs to go relieve herself, he ties a rope to her foot and when she goes outside, she ties it to a plum tree, and escapes. The werewolf follows her, but reaches her just as she enters her house, and safety.

One of the many things that transpire from this version of the fairy tale is that the young girl is far from helpless; she cleverly finds her own escape, without the help of hunters, woodcutters or fathers. Perrault chooses to make the young girl helpless, introducing the red cape (the colour associated with sexuality, seduction and the devil); although the brevity of the tale does not allow for much character development. As Carole Hanks points out in detail in her essay 'Perrault's Little Red Riding Hood': Victim of the Revisers' (Hanks, 1978: 82), 'Perrault does make his heroine lovely and innocent, but gullible and spoiled, thus warning young ladies that being spoiled might lead them to being 'spoiled' in other ways as well' (Zipes, 1982: 26). He omits details that might cause outrage or disgust, like the meat and the blood, the hairiness, Little Red Riding Hood going to relieve herself, and appropriates the tale to the needs of the

aristocracy – adult, adolescent and children – ‘preserving a folk flavour and freshness in the tale which have made it an imperishable masterpiece’ (Delarue, p.383). Older readers, drawn to stories of seduction, could indulge in the tale’s erotic undertones, which would be lost on the younger audience, who could still enjoy the warning side of the fairy tale. Above all, the tale was written for young ladies coming of age, warning them against wolves – and the advances of young men represented by the figure of the wolf, as the moral at the end of the tale points out. As Philippe Aries writes in *Centuries of Childhood*, at the time children’s literature and culture were being developed in order to civilize children according to stringent codes of class behaviour. It is therefore not surprising and without reason that Perrault chooses to alter the character of Little Red Riding Hood to such a degree, making her pretty, gullible and helpless, turning the tale into a ‘parable of rape’, as Susan Brownmiller writes, demonstrating that ‘there are frightening male figures abroad in the woods, we call them wolves, among other names – and females are helpless before them’ (Brownmiller, 1976: 344). This draws a strong contrast to the shrewd, witty and resolute girl from the oral tradition. As Jack Zipes argues: ‘It is obvious from the oral tale that the narrative perspective is sympathetic to a young peasant girl... who learns to cope with the world around her. She is shrewd, brave, tough, and independent. Evidence indicates she was probably undergoing a social ritual connected to sewing communities, the maturing young woman proves she can handle needles, replace an older woman as a rite of passage (Zipes, 1982: 80).

Although Angela Carter takes the classical tale of Perrault and turns it into *The Company of Wolves*, she too is interested in her heroine’s psychologization as a figure of appetite and sexual desire. Carter uses, as Ann Martin puts it, ‘the fairy tale’s flexible cultural status, and perhaps most importantly, its characteristic depiction of

transformations, to explore those sites of identity that slide out from between the sheets of traditional variants' Jordan's *The Company of Wolves* (1984) is a tale of horror, folklore, morality and transformation, following the path of a young girl, maturing into figure of sexual desire and appetite' (Martin, 2006: 57). It is not a standard horror film, Rockett claims: it 'belongs to the sub-genres of the female gothic, the werewolf and the nightmare, as well as to the genres of (sexual) coming-of-age, fantasy, surrealism, expressionism and *film noir* (Rockett, 2003: 37). The *Bloody Chamber* collection itself interrogates latent issues in the classical fairy tales structure, such as the censorship or expulsion of sexuality or violence from fairy-tale tropes and narratives. These latent issues are unfolded and interrogated in *The Company of Wolves*, using narratives-within-narratives to match Rosaleen's adolescent perspective on sex and power with the Grandmother's tales of forewarning and experience.

Rosaleen's Adolescent Sexuality & The Grandmother's Tales of Forewarning

In Neil Jordan's *The Company of Wolves* Rosaleen (Sarah Patterson) dreams about an amalgamation of various traditional and modernised versions of the tale of Little Red Riding Hood. The dream-narrative, adapted from and co-written by Angela Carter (*The Bloody Chamber* (1979)) falls back on older oral folk traditions of the fairy tale, before the most famous penned version by Charles Perrault (1697), and is further intercepted by three tales of forewarning told by Rosaleen's grandmother. The dream-world interweaving the many tales of Red Riding Hood is a meeting point between the grandmother's 'tales of experience', which aim to explain the angst surrounding female sexuality within the social and cultural understanding of girlhood and womanhood, and

Rosaleen's own inexperienced exploration of her sexual identity through her identification with Little Red Riding Hood's character. The rich world generated by the many tales of Red Riding Hood finally resolves itself into Rosaleen's own interpretation at the end of the story, as the wolves from the dream narrative surreally break into her bedroom to devour her. This ending indicates, as argued above, the fairy-tales structure's inability to fully express and accommodate female sexuality and the need for an alternative ending that can do so.

The concept behind the amalgamation of the many versions of the fairy tale and the incorporation of new, modernised additions is, I want to argue, an ingenious borrowing of the rich literary reincarnations of the fairy tale in order to explore the complex notion of late 20th century female adolescent sexuality and the anxieties that still surround it. This is achieved through the contemporary figure of an adolescent girl dreaming herself back into an 18th century village as Little Red Riding Hood. Little Red Riding Hood is arguably a strong trope to use, when discussing audiences and artists coming into a gradual awareness of female adolescent sexuality. Little Red Riding Hood as a literary tradition is a string of narratives, in which female sexuality is initially entirely removed from the child-character's understanding, but, through later retellings, especially in the 21st century, is gradually incepted into a more psychologised version of Little Red Riding Hood, endowed with her own awareness of sexuality and later with her own sexual agency. In *The Company of Wolves* Rosaleen's lack of experience is met by the Grandmother's tales of forewarning, which are embedded within the dream-narrative as surreal dream visions, borrowing their set design from modernity, hinting at both the relevance and sexual undercurrent of their content, in contrast to Rosaleen's 18th century sets.

The Company of Wolves opens with the 14-years-old Rosaleen in 1980s, at the cusp of adolescence, yet still surrounded by her toys and being denied the comparative adolescent freedom of her older sister Alice. Alice's womanly figure, makeup, music and room filled with magazines and teenage clothes is something that Rosaleen intensely wants to be admitted to and have herself. Rosaleen perceives her sister's sexuality as a symbol of maturity and independence, both within the family and within Rosaleen's own understanding. This contrast in status between herself and her sister is experienced as denial of her own claims to sexuality and power (and is making her see them as one and the same – as will be further seen in the fairy tale narrative). Rosaleen sees her sister's sexuality as denoting status and having a type of agency that she herself can't yet have. Therefore, as she begins to dream of the company of wolves, sexuality and power remain closely intertwined.

In her dream-fantasy of *The Company Of Wolves*, Rosaleen dreams her older sister Alice to be devoured by wolves, which soon makes Rosaleen 'the best bed in town'. This chapter will argue that this rendition of the classical structure explores Red Riding Hood's (Rosaleen's) sexual desirability in a relationship to her own sexual desire, and the sense of power that results from the two. Her pursuit of power through sexuality is strives for both sexual identity and individual agency, however the attaining of both proves to be impossible – as the classical male-driven fairy tale narratives fail to support the dreaming adolescent girl and as she symbolically becomes a wolf herself. Her claim to an individual identity is assimilated into her desire for sexuality and agency as she is consumed by her new 'wolf' nature.

The story opens with a dreaming child, whose sense of identity and sexuality are dominated and suppressed by the figure of her older sister, whose free agency and adult femininity are a subject of desire for the younger Rosaleen (Sarah

Patterson). The film opens with a classical dream-frame, only to be subverted at the end, when the traditional 'fantasy-within-reality' structure is surreally penetrated by the fantastic and a pack of wolves breaks into Rosaleen's bedroom. The opening of the narrative reveals a girl on the verge of adolescence sleeping in her room (Sarah Patterson), the toys scattered on the shelves and on the floor symbolic of the childhood nearly left behind, while the magazine on the pillow next to her and the lipstick on her face pointing towards the beginning of the teenage years. The girl dreams a dream set in roughly in the Enlightenment period, in which she, replacing her older sister, who is eaten by wolves, becomes Little Red Riding Hood, called Rosaleen. At the beginning of the film Rosaleen is constantly seen eating – a cookie, berries, an apple, a meal at home. This oral appetite will soon be replaced by a new kind of appetite, one for her grandmother's stories, from which it will evolve into a mature sexual appetite, comingled with childlike curiosity and an innocence, which gradually becomes self-aware and a source of sexual appeal. As Catherine Orenstein argues, 'by the time Carter's dream-heroine sets off for Grandma's house, the traditional fairy tale has become a parable of sexual awakening', following a line of late twentieth century Red Riding Hoods, who 'dominate the plot, sometimes with humour or strength and frequently with a libido more or equal to the wolf's' (2002: 166) Famous examples of this characterization of the two characters include 'Not So Little Red Riding Hood' (Anne Sharpe, 1985), 'Little Red Riding Hood and the Wolf' (Roald Dahl, 1982), *Red Riding Hood*, (David Kaplan, 1997). Following the earlier Little Red Riding Hood narrative traditions, Rosaleen is a headstrong, determined character, striving for independence; however, connotations of forewarning and female prudence, developed through later re-workings of the fairy tale are still present in *The Company of Wolves* through the character of the grandmother. I would argue that when she

exclaims, after Rosaleen's sister's funeral: 'Your sister, all alone in the woods, no one there to save her', the grandmother's character is instantly established as voicing the later traditions of the tale of Red Riding Hood and the dialogue between her and her granddaughter becomes that of two contesting visions of identity of Little Red Riding Hood's archetype. The dialogue between the grandmother and the granddaughter then opens into three stories of forewarning, which take root in Rosaleen's imagination and are then revisited through her own experiences in the film, as she attempts to overcome the fates of the virginal woman, the seduced woman and the wild wolfwoman through her own strive for independence and sexual identity.

Each of the Grandmother's tales warns against men's sexual power over women. She warns against the animalistic nature of male desire for sex and power, which can turn him into a monster (in her second tale where the Devil offers a boy a potion, which he rubs onto his chest, causing hair to sprout rapidly. The boy is pleased, but shortly thereafter vines grow swiftly from the ground and trap him, as he cries, and his face distorts). In her last tale she explains the violent fates of women who succumb to her desire for sexuality and lose their power – a power which can only be reclaimed through violence (in her third tale where a pregnant commoner woman transforms the aristocrat who abandoned her and his wedding guests into wolves). Meanwhile Rosaleen's own adolescent and inexperienced perspective on sexuality and power is explored through her encounters with male suitors. Her gradual understanding of her own sexual power over the men who desire her develops alongside the gradual development of her own sexual desire. This is explored through the colour red. In this rendition of the classic fairy tale the Grandmother makes the red cape to celebrate her adolescence and 'first bloom', a symbol of her desirability. Becoming increasingly aware of both her desirability and desire, Rosaleen puts on bright red lipstick that she

finds in a bird's nest in the forest. Unlike the cape that was given to her, this scene demonstrates a transition into self-awareness and more active agency in her sexual maturing and self-perception. Unwilling to relinquish the exploration of her desires Rosaleen confronts the wolves, and finally attempts to supersede her Grandmother's tales of forewarning and claim her power and sexuality.

Early on Rosaleen is warned, in the tradition of Perrault, that 'A wolf may be more than he seems. He may come in many disguises.' In this case the grandmother means a man can be a werewolf, however, these forewarning words could also mean 'Perrault's wolf... the dapper charmer of Parisian high society, seducer of young women and a threat of the family patrimony – he is as one folklorist called him, the "unsuitable suitor", who insinuated his way into the best beds in town, deflowering young women and robbing their value as virgin pawns in the *mariage de raison*.' (Orenstein, 2002: 38). The gentleman-werewolf that appears at the end of the film is both, he is 'hairy on the inside' and his 'bite' 'drags you straight to hell' (Jordan & Carter, 1984), deflowered and thus, as symbolised in the 17th century tale of forewarning, degraded in value according to the socio-cultural traditions of the period.

Rosaleen would be one of 'the best beds in town', as is evident from everyone's fascination with her, the village people whispering in awe, when she comes out of church next to the Amorous Boy. Her play with him evolves, as she does, reaching her first transformative moment in the forest, after his kiss. First the spectator sees her pouring water over the boy's head: a childish game, but she soon matures into a different kind of playing. In the woods she gives him a kiss, after he challenges her, and afterwards she uses her childhood vocabulary to tease him and play with him in a new, sexual way: 'You have to catch me first' (Carter & Jordan, 1984). Rosaleen strays from the path and goes deeper and deeper into the forest, and deeper into her

own maturing and sexuality. She climbs a tree, choosing a dangerous, self-exploratory path, and finds the nest with the mirror in it and a pot of lipstick. She puts lipstick on her face and smiles at her reflection in the mirror, a smile very similar in its self-appreciating innocence to that of David Kaplan's Red Riding Hood character (1997) and in particular that of Anne Sharpe's *Not So Little Red Riding Hood* (1985). At this precise point the eggs in the nest hatch and tiny foetuses erupt from them, symbolising her entry into adolescence. Only one shot later, however, we see a wolf having slaughtered a cow, blood on his muzzle. The danger for Rosaleen intensifies as she enters adolescence, the wolf observing her as she walks home, from a branch above.

The film subversively plays with the idea that adolescence verging into adulthood is the most potent moment in a girl's life. Motherhood as a yoke on a woman's individual and sexual identity is warned against in the first of the grandmother's tales: the young mother's children are screaming, her makeup and wardrobe introduce her worn out, dissatisfied and faded, in juxtaposition with Rosaleen, who, at her age, is at the very top of her sexual potency as a young woman. Rosaleen begins to realise that, within this 18th century society especially, once a woman has been sexually possessed, she loses her power. as becomes evident from the second tale about the woman going to her ex- lover's wedding to take revenge. However, Rosaleen believes that womanhood can still prevail, with the wolves as allies. The concepts become comingled in her mind, the wolves become allies against men, who seem to be decent and upright at first, but turn out to be wolves on the inside, or perhaps even against the constraints of society.

When Rosaleen meets the handsome werewolf she is cautious, but flirtatious as well. Dressed as 'a fine gentleman', he appeals to her immensely – compared to

him, the village boys are 'clowns' (Jordan & Carter, 1984), yet, like Kaplan's Red, she shies away from his kiss, when biting the biscuit off his mouth, her two appetites connecting. Unlike in Kaplan's film, here the wolf woos the (willing) girl, caressing her face, holding her hand, lying her on her back, leaving her breathless – she is succumbing to his charm. Once the gentleman-werewolf leaves, she looks in the mirror again, only this time she isn't smiling, with a slight concerned frown. This symbolic episode may be interpreted as her questioning and assessing her beauty, as someone having just now passed beyond the more self-exploratory stage of adolescence and entered a more mature understanding of her own womanhood.

When Rosaleen enters the house, the werewolf does not pretend to be her grandmother and the classic exchange 'what big eyes you have...' is fractured and given erotic undertones. The dream-heroine is not afraid, she has surrendered herself to the experience, be it to be deflowered or eaten. In Carter's 'The Company of Wolves' Rosaleen, though barely a woman, 'knows she is nobody's meat' and simply laughs 'full in the face' at the wolf'. In that one act, she frustrates his power over her. It is only in this way that she 'repositions herself so that she can be free to seduce him, not as a victim, who enjoys her seduction, but as an active agent' (Rockett, 2003: 47). In the film no such act of resistance or subversion happens. However, when the wolf almost bites her as he 'kisses' her, she jumps back, as Carter writes, the werewolf has shown her 'how to shiver' (Carter, 1979: 114). Rosaleen takes control over him with his rifle, wounding him in the shoulder, and after the werewolf's eroticised transformation (his body abstracted and sexualised, similar to Kaplan's wolf) she caresses him gently, telling him the story of the she-wolf, short before her own transformation occurs at the end of the film, surrealistically penetrating the narrative frame of her reality, beyond the dream of Little Red Riding Hood.

In Rosaleen's version of the ending of Little Red Riding Hood the huntsman, who in the original fairy-tale saves her from the wolf, is a werewolf himself. As Rosaleen tells him the story herself, replacing her Grandmother, of a she-wolf, who tries to live in the human world, but understands that she doesn't belong and descends back into the underworld. This story sums up Rosaleen's rite of passage from innocence to experience and her understanding of the impossibility of female power and sexuality within her culture and society. As she draws towards the end of the dream, Rosaleen, dreams herself becoming a werewolf and freely running with the wolfpack into the wood. However, despite her attempt to re-tell the tale her way, the surrealist ending of the film demonstrates that she herself unable to escape the fate of 'wolf-women'. In her own bedroom, in her own present-day home, a pack of wolves gather outside and one of them breaks through her window, crashing her toys and causing her to scream in horror. The surreal ending of the film symbolizes a violent entry into adulthood and/or the end of innocence.

Despite her final metamorphosis, Rosaleen's final encounter with the werewolf makes her his equal in terms of sexual identity. However, at the ultimate cost of her individual and personal identity as she herself becomes one of the pack of werewolves, thus only partly managing to overcome the destiny of the grandmother's fairy tales of the women seduced by 'wolves'. As Orenstein writes: 'This revision unravels the tale's underlying sexual currents and imbues the heroine with animal instincts that cause her own transformation. Carter explores female lust – healthy, but also challenging and sometimes disturbing, unbridled and feral lust that delivers up contradictions.' (Orenstein, 2002: 36).

Rosaleen is unable to fully overcome the classical fairy tale structure of Little Red Riding Hood and tell the story of her own sexuality – instead she falls victim to the

same patriarchal pattern, becoming one of the wolf pack that break into Rosaleen's pre-adolescent room to devour her. The ending symbolises the fairytale structure's inability to fully support the heroine in the discovery of her sexuality and her transformation into a 'wolf-woman' allegorises the taboos surrounding female sexuality and its place in 18th century society, 80s cinema screens – and beyond.

Heavenly Creatures (1994) – A Dialogued World of Agency and Sexuality

In *Heavenly Creatures* (1994) two teenage girls, Juliet (Kate Winslet) and Pauline (Melanie Lynskey), generate a jointly narrated and visually displayed fantasy world which functions as a shared mindscape where they can vicariously experience their fantasies of sexuality and active agency. While the two girls gradually develop a romantic interest for each other and their friendship begins to be perceived as interfering with 1950s notions of proper upbringing, the fantasy universe which they have generated gradually becomes more violent, more sexualised and eventually is fully destroyed in a final battle, which leaves no remains of either the imaginary city or of the characters they created. The film is adapted from the autobiographical novel by Juliet Hulme (Kate Winslet), narrating her relationship with Pauline Parker which was at the time advertised as detailing the 'notorious murder case of Parker-Hulme'; Peter Jackson's film adaptation, however, is more interested in the psychological and fantastical aspects of the narrative and moves away from his first low-budget monster and gore films in order to explore the Parker-Hulme relationship, leading to *Heavenly Creatures*, which was the first film to establish his name as a film director. Devising a technique of fluidly crossing-over between imagination and reality, which he revisits in *The Lovely Bones* (2009), Jackson adapts Juliet Hulme's novel in a way that visually

prioritises the two teenage girls' perception of their relationship and environment. Jackson is concerned with showing the constraints of their culture and society and chronicling how their environment leading to first the genesis of their fantasy universe, 'The Fourth World' and second the disintegration of their fantasy and real worlds into violence and murder.

The backdrop against which the relationship begins is an all-girls Christian college in the 1950s; both girls are from traditional conservative families, requiring academic excellence social propriety. Any sexuality implicit in their adolescent age is approached with a degree of denial, particularly at their Christian college, where the girls are further infantilized, de-sexualized and de-womanized, propagandising asexuality until marriage. Juliet and Pauline befriend each other upon discovering that they both enjoy defying school rules and wider cultural norms shaping their girlhood, like religion and family values advocating excessive restraint and propriety. Meeting as school girls at an all-girls' college in the 1950 and both coming from traditional conservative families, Juliet and Pauline strike an instant friendship in a shared defiance of their school and family situations. At home the adolescent girls are treated as children in terms of their personal relationships with their parents, the fact of their adolescence approached with a degree of denial. At college the girls are further infantilized, de-sexualized and de-womanized, pushing the concept of sexual innocence and asexuality until full adulthood/marriage have been reached. The college's classes are taught on the principle of obedience and authority, with the students learning not to question the tasks or concepts that they are given. Juliet and Pauline befriend each other discovering that they both defy their social environment and cultural norms surrounding womanhood, particularly in terms of sexuality and power. Both the sexual liberation and the fascination with power that dominate the

fantasy kingdom which they invent are fantasies developing in defiance against the infantilization and social restriction of their gender and age.

During a discussion of whether there is a Heaven, Juliet invents a fantasy universe called 'The Fourth World', where there is no Christianity and art and music rule over everything, with certain artists and musicians, like Mario Lanza, having the status of saints. Gradually, the two girls develop the made-up kingdom of Borovia which they intend to turn into a novel, and which gradually becomes an embedded narrative in the film. Before, becoming a fantasy universe fully displayed on the screen, the kingdom is represented through models and games of make-belief, where the two girls author stories appropriated from medieval chivalric legends and knightly romances. Working on a small budget scale, Jackson ingeniously incorporates the narrative detail of Juliet being gifted at crafting models, which becomes a visual gateway into of the girls' fantasy universe and which gradually overtakes the narrative (and the screen!). The girls' models become more elaborate, as their games of imaginative play become more obsessive and sexualised, until all that is visible to the audience is what takes place in the made-up fantasy world.

During the scene on Port Levy Beach, where the girls have gone on a trip with Juliet's family, they construct an elaborate sand castle, which Peter Jackson uses to begin to visually cross-over between fantasy and reality, fluidly joining the 'real' and 'fantasy' screens into one. This serves to visually demonstrate how the fantastic universe is beginning to be perceived as real by the two girls and as increasingly equal in importance to their reality.



Figures 20 and 21: Juliette (Kate Winslet) and Pauline (Melanie Lynskey) on Port Levy Beach in *Heavenly Creatures* (1991).

The scene opens with a hand-held, jarring camera movement towards the sandcastle's main gate (Figure 20), accompanied by the sound of horse-hoofs, and the two girls eye-lines pretending to track the imaginary horseman as he 'moves in' on

the palace. When he fully approaches the gate (Figure 21), the camera movement cuts on matching action into a shot within the castle, pretending to become the POV of the imaginary horseman.



Figure 22 and 23: The interior of the sandcastle in *Heavenly Creatures* (1991).

As the camera continues to move up the imaginary staircase, where the two girls cannot see, they are heard to continue narrating the story of the knight going toward his beloved's 'private boudoir', where, according to the narration, 'he throws himself on the bed and ravages her' – at which point the camera shows the two girls' heads peeking through the sandcastle's windows looking towards the 'bed' where the imaginary knight and lady are meant to be. The elaborate design of the interior of the sandcastle, which cannot be seen in detail by strangers, or, in some cases, not even by the girls themselves, is another way for the set design to visually demonstrate the secretiveness and the obsession with which this fantasy universe is being constructed. The denial of the two girls claim to sexuality and a sexual identity by their society initially results in a search for agency and identity through the fantastic. Juliet and Pauline take up classic narrative structures of medieval legend and romance, constructing a made-up kingdom through models. From the start, slaying enemies and breaking into the castle to bed the lady, and killing enemies 'in the name' of one's lady is how this fairy-tale world functions narratively. Since the very beginning too, the two girls enjoy their imaginary claim to power over the imaginary male knights bedding their maidens, while their fantasy world gradually becomes more sexualised as they come to realise their attraction for each other. Their fantasy reflects a way in which the adolescent girls can both interrogate power and sexuality and experience their desire to defy the patriarchal asexualised reality they inhabit.

The excessive sexualisation of what had started as a chivalric novel is another indication of the girls' own sexuality being repressed and finding vent only in imaginative play instead of being allowed to be explored openly and healthily. The scene is followed briefly after by Juliet pretending to have her first 'experience' of 'The

Fourth World', after feeling desolate that her family are going to England without her and clutching her eyes very hard. She keeps beckoning Pauline to 'Look!' and experience the world with her, at which point the two girls share an imaginary landscape of the Fourth World which morphs before them (Figures 22 and 23).



Figure 24 and 25: Juliette (Kate Winslet) and Pauline (Melanie Lynskey) entering their imaginary world in *Heavenly Creatures* (1991).

This imaginary world erupting from within an empty landscape once again, like in Chapter Two on *Tideland* and *Pan's Labyrinth*, demonstrates how the female characters struggle to find spaces free from domestic and social constraints, and, like Ofelia and Jeliza-Rose, let their imaginations overtake the empty landscapes like atemporal, wide canvasses on which they can build their fantasy worlds.

From this point on, the two girls begin to 'transcend' into the Fourth World and walk around the landscapes around their homes, perceiving them as their fantasy universe, which gradually becomes one and the same with the narrated kingdom of Borovia. The fantasy world's genesis is gradual and takes place alongside the development of the girls' relationship. It starts off as is made of stone models of castles, fortress walls and sandcastles but then as the girls' environment fails to accommodate their need for agency and sexuality, it grows into a shared mindscape-world projected onto landscapes, until it finally becomes a fully lucid world of fantasy in which the clay models become actual castles in the shared mindscape of their fantasies. As Andrew Schall argues, 'This article argues that *Heavenly Creatures* is a queer love letter to the power of cinema, revealing how queer consciousness may indeed be constituted from foreclosed possibility by the medium—providing a landscape, a stage, and a *mise-en-scène* of desire.' (Schall, 2012: 365). Peter Jackson's budget film of 1992 innovatively displays the ways in which the restricted sexual relationship of Juliet and Pauline unfolds through the fantastic, as it is impossible for it to develop in any other direction. Through the homogenous use of stone in order to make their fantasy world feel simultaneously hand-made, childlike, but also hard - forged through imaginative play by two girls playing with their minds, as children's hands play with stone and clay. But by constructing the soldiers from an

identical stone material, as argued above, Peter Jackson also portrays the inhabitants of this fantasy world as dehumanised. That way all the soldiers and their kingdom are visually one and the same. This artistic choice is especially poignant when the kingdom falls victim to chaos, which starts as an orgy and ends as a battle. With all the knights and ladies looking identical and indistinguishable from each other both sexually and once broken, reflecting the two adolescent girls' defiance against a patriarchal familial and social system which dehumanises and desexualises adolescent women, depriving them of sexual identity.

As the concept of model-making was initially incorporated in order to visualise the genesis of the fantasy universe, it can now be further used to differentiate reality from fantasy, and to demonstrate both the childlike perception of the fantasy world, and, later, the same innocent reinterpretation of characters being made of clay serves to de-humanise them, when the two girls imagine the disintegration of their kingdom. At first, the inhabitants of Borovia are cast as human actors covered in clay (Figure 5); however, later in the film, when the fascination with violence and sex begins to dominate the fantasy narrative and the two girls are asked to separate, the character design gradually becomes one and the same with production design, leading to the dehumanisation of the characters in it. When Pauline first enters the fairy-tale kingdom of Borovia she is first met by dancers and musicians; then, meeting one of their story's leading knights, Diello, he salutes her by suddenly splitting a presumed enemy-character standing nearby with his sword, exclaiming 'In your honour, Milady!' (Figure 6).



Figures 26 and 27: The kingdom of Borovia in *Heavenly Creatures* (1991).

When Juliet and Pauline's relationship starts to be broken down by Juliet's parents leaving to go aboard and sending her to South Africa, the two girls re-intensify it through sex, first by imagining having sex with their favourite musician, and then with each other. In order to ceremonially put their obsession with their favourite musician

behind, Juliet and Pauline burn his records, and, as they have sex, they imagine their entire universe crumbling into a mixture of an orgy and violence, shots of sex intercepting with shots of swords and decapitation, crossing over into the real world where the two girls are having sex, sometimes with clay male characters, sometimes with each other. Failing to accommodate queer fantasy, the world's order breaks down into chaos dismembered into violence and sex, as the two girls replace the sex between knights and ladies with sexual encounters with each other.

As Juliet and Pauline's relationship develops into romantic interest and sexual encounter, their intimacy begins to be regarded by their family and society as disruptive to their everyday lives, as well as failing to support notions of proper upbringing. Their romantic relationship starts to become censored and is seen as going against traditional patriarchal order. As Juliet and Pauline start to become villainized and othered by their family and school, they fall back on their shared fantasies and devise a plan which will protect the autonomy of their relationship, which is initially to run away together. But when that plan proves to be impossible, and as the departure of Juliet begins to near, the two girls decide to murder Pauline's mother, perceiving her as the primary obstacle to their relationship.

Janice Loreck argues, building on earlier research by Lynda Hart (1994) and Andrea Weiss (1992), 'the violent lesbian archetype can be traced to the way women's violence is connected to feminine sexual dysfunction' (Loreck, 2016: 75). Therefore, Peter Jackson's take on the Parker-Hulme case falls in strong contrast to representations of teenage sexual agency and homosexuality – in attempting to trace the origins of violence beyond the mere fact of homosexuality, as it might have been regarded at the time and into social repression and a lack of a cultural context within which adolescent female sexuality can be explored openly.

By the final scene of the film, Juliet and Pauline have developed an elaborate world of war and romance, and contesting authorities, interrogating the appeal and danger of attaining the power over the lives of their characters, and the sexual agency that they are being denied through fantasy. Until eventually they fall victim to that idea themselves and begin to experience themselves as the authors not only of their fantasy universe but of the real world as well. When the girls eventually murder Juliet's mother with a brick, they have already murdered countless stone soldiers in their fantasy wars, until their made-up kingdom symbolically undergoes one final violent orgy turning into a battle, after which the plan to kill Pauline's mother in order to preserve their relationship is rendered into action. Killing Pauline's mother with a stone, which looks like the building blocks of their fantasy kingdom. The brick is additionally put in hosiery, which Jennifer Henderson reads as a 'a privileged sign of female masquerade, of spectacular and erotically-suggestive femininity' going against the 'regime of discipline' in which the two girls are being brought up (Henderson, 1997, p. 44). The murder of Pauline's mother itself represents a violent attempt to preserve the girls' claim to their relationship, which is also symbolic of their shared claim to sexual identity and independence. This claim, the film subversively implies, can only exist within a made-up kingdom, which itself falls apart failing to accommodate queer sexual fantasy. As Juliet and Pauline's relationship develops into romantic interest and initial sexual encounters, their intimacy begins to be regarded by their family and society as disturbing socio-cultural norms, as well as disruptive to their own development and maturing. Their romantic relationship starts to become censored and is seen as going against traditional patriarchal order. As Juliet and Pauline start to become villainized and othered by their family and school, they fall back on their shared fantasies and devise a plan which will protect the autonomy of their

relationship, murdering Juliet's mother. Their adolescent crime is an intense act of violence against teenage repression and sexual othering. Killing Juliet's mother with a brick, which looks like the building blocks of their fantasy kingdom represents a violent attempt to preserve their relationship, their imagination and to reclaim their right to power and sexuality, both of which are being increasingly denied by their environment.

Conclusion

The films are an exploration of the teenage girl's struggle against the socio-cultural restrictions surrounding the adolescent female desire for sexuality and power. In both films the tension deriving from the adolescent girls' socio-cultural suppression ultimately results in violence as a form of defiance. In *Heavenly Creatures* and *The Company of Wolves* female sexual repression, the restriction of the adolescent girl's notion of power and her deprivation of an active agency is an oppressive act which leads to violence. The films explore female desire and female power, as their protagonists use classical fairy tale structures to construct their own worlds, in which active agency and sexuality are possible. The films present this fantasy for sexuality and power as a shared hushed-down dream between women, as both imaginary worlds are generated through the sharing of fairy tales with a female companion. In both films the adolescent narrators find that the traditional fairy tale structures need to be altered to better accommodate their own notions and desires. As a result, the fantasy worlds they invent finally break down into violence and chaos, and their exploration of sexuality and power ends in violence breaking into their real lives. The films therefore demonstrate that classic fairy tale traditions, while less suppressive than the female characters' real-life circumstances are still incapable of reflecting and sustaining their adolescent searching for sexuality and power. Instead, socio-cultural

notions of womanhood and maturing are imposed on the female protagonist by their family and society, further complexifying their own dream of sexual desire and active agency. Finally, the bloody voluntary death of Rosaleen and the bloody deliberate murder of Juliet's mother are a symbol of this denial of female power and sexuality and are the bloods that the two protagonists choose to spill – bloods of violence and protest, instead of bloods of sex, compliance and maturing.

Like in *The Company of Wolves*, in *Heavenly Creatures* this is a shared, dialogued world, negotiated between grandmother and Rosaleen, at the same time as being created and displayed on the screen. In both films the fantasy narratives that the young girls develop are narrated through their female bosom companions – for Rosaleen this is her grandmother, for Juliet with her best friend and love-interest Pauline. These traditional and ultimately male-dominated narratives allow the teenage girls to temporarily explore their adolescent notions of sex and individuality, but the traditional fairy-tale structures that they have borrowed eventually fail to support their female fantasies and 'crumble', violently leading them back into their reality. In *The Company of Wolves* Rosaleen finally summons the wolves to devour her and make her one of the pack, and in *Heavenly Creatures* the two girls murder Pauline's mother, perceiving her as a danger to their increasingly censored relationship.

In *The Company of Wolves* and *Heavenly Creatures* female sexual repression, the restriction of the adolescent girl's notion of sexual power and her deprivation of an active agency is an oppressive act which leads violent ends, as the fantastic exploration of male narratives betrays the female co-authors and surrenders them back to reality. The films explore female desire and female power, as their protagonists use classical fairy tale structures to construct their own worlds, in which active agency and sexuality are possible. The films present this fantasy for sexuality and individuality

as a dialogued dream between women, as both imaginary worlds are generated through the sharing of fairy tales with a female companion. In both films the adolescent narrators find that the traditional fairy tale structures need to be altered to better accommodate their own notions and desires. As a result, the fantasy worlds they invent finally break down into violence and chaos, and their exploration of sexuality and identity ends in violence breaking into their real lives. The films therefore demonstrate that classic fairy tale traditions, while less suppressing and limiting than the adolescent characters' real-life circumstances are still incapable of reflecting and sustaining a female adolescent searching for sexuality and agency.

Conclusion

Tackling issues of girlhood and lostness, these ten directors from different cultural backgrounds push the boundaries of the fantasy genre forwards and make a strong claim for authorship and academic gravitas within the genre, while reaching out towards the same archetype of the lost girl, as a figure that epitomize childhood and coming of age, as well as allegorizing anxieties surrounding society and culture.

As the research of these five pairs of films demonstrates, in the lost girl subgenre the clash between imagination and reality is used by the filmmakers to demonstrate what expectations social norm places on girls and girlhood and how their desire for an identity and an active agency combat against the norms and demands of society in the only way possible – an unreal way. Fantasy is used, therefore, to highlight the limitations of reality, however, it is not used merely as an escapist vehicle in this cycle of films. Instead, it is a way to dramatically demonstrate the norms, censorships and taboos towards aspects of childhood and adolescence. What 'toolkit' are the girls left to fight with: make-belief, goofing and pretending, in *Baron*

Munchausen and *The Fall*, a belief in one's own dreams and identity, in Pan's *Labyrinth* and *Tideland*, a desire for independence in *Labyrinth* and *Mirrors* and a desire to explore and understand one's own sexuality in *The Company of Wolves* and *Heavenly Creatures*, an escape from the mother-figure and from an unwanted home in search of agency in *Spirited Away* and *Coraline*. These suppressed aspects of girlhood, ignored or repressed by contemporary/late 20th century social norm and Western culture, find vent in the fantastical representations of young female imagination in this cycle of lost girl films. The fantasy worlds are designed to inform the audience through a contrast with reality what girlhood at various ages desires and what it is being denied by social convention - lost girls can only be found and rescued in fairy tale, not in reality. The films further probe the fantasy genre further, beyond escapism, turning sets into mindscapes of girl psychology or shared narrated universes and demonstrating that fantasy is a vital part of helping society understand what is neglected, suppressed, or misunderstood.

This pairing of films reveals that 'fantasy girlhood' enables suppressed lost girls to strive for an identity and for active agency through the fantastic. In all ten films the girls aim to overcome the passive roles that they are placed in by their families and their culture through imagination. There is an inherent drama in this plotline in itself, since no other opportunity presents itself to endow the lost girl with the active agency that she strives for. This is the first level of the girls' lostness – their lack of agency at the outset of the films. As discussed above, Sally and Alexandria as confined to the roles of 'little girls', unneeded and unimportant, Coraline and Chihiro are not given a choice when moving away to a new home, Jeliza-Rose and Ofelia, also moving away against their will, are confined within toxic households and Rosaleen, and Juliet and

Pauline, are personally and sexually repressed by their families to the degree of being prohibited from seeing each other.

These circumstances, while certainly not unheard of, are a part of the reality of being young girl in all of these respective cultures. While a family might need to move away and poverty and warfare can be an inevitability, the young girl experiences herself as passive, helpless and confined as a result of that and her agency is crippled. The films preoccupy themselves a lot more with the girls' subjective experiences and perspective on their reality than on the objective reality of upbringing and social convention. This is a telling choice in itself, as the films appear to argue that the subjective experience of the female child should be discussed at an equal footing to traditional norms of education and that normative social convention is not necessarily superior to individual subjective experience.

Each family, therefore, exacts upon the girls' the upbringing and values inherent in their respective societies and cultures. Sally is a member of the 18th century 'Age of Reason' society, where imagination is discouraged, and the pre-Victorian understanding of the child is that of an unfinished adult, who does not yet occupy a useful and adequate role in society. Further, her gender renders her completely passive, as women, even in the fantastical sequences of the film, are represented primarily as former lovers and love-interests. Sally is the only one who actively partakes in the adventure, while Venus and the Queen of the Moon effectively arrest the narrative by charming the Baron and making him sway from his journey to admire and court them. In *The Fall*, the only other female figure is similarly the princess/nurse who betrays the Bandit Prince, a flawed love interest. Sally and Alexandria, however, are the loyal sidekicks of the impaired mentor-heroes that guide them through the fantastic universe and they both push them forward and restore them to their identity

and manhood, both mimicking their attire and behaviour – learning their agency from a male hero, who, as argued above could be seen as representing the fantasy filmmakers themselves. This notion that active agency is associated with manhood rather than girlhood is one that perhaps exposes some of the limitations of male directors filming stories of young female children: while a female child can (temporarily?) surmount the social passivity and sexualised norm of her gender, she needs to do so by mimicking an aged male hero, as opposed to a female role model. Aside from presenting the feminist critic with a potential issue, this does however also hint at the inevitability of the girls' coming of age as women in societies which, beyond their imaginations, are still unaccepting of strong female agencies. The passivity of the little girls is overcome through the mimicking of heroic manhood, which, though in pretend, lends them a sense of agency and importance.

Coraline and Chihiro, coming from Japanese and British backgrounds, are moving away despite their wishes and their nostalgia is neglected and downplayed by their parents, who while not physically absent are concerned with other things and ignore their daughters. The unimportance of children's wishes in the circumstance of moving away seems to be a transnational phenomenon, and one with which the subjective experience of the female child is perceived by both directors are burdened. Both films use low angles, POV, OTS and tracking shots to exemplify the two girls point of view. They further use the freedom of animation for their character design, making them lanky and thin (vulnerable and weak), tomboyish (degendered and introvert) and round-faced (child-like, desexualised). They are both relatable and symbolic of a certain archetype – the lost girl, who has grown tall too fast, but is still wearing child-like degendered clothes, with a baby-face, which enhances how her age should be read – a still-child as opposed to a pre-woman.

The two girls are therefore transported into worlds of monstrous motherhoods – of anti-mothers who can't let go of their child. Coraline wishes for more attention and is granted the dark-double of her wish, indulged and loved, in the perfect other home, while Chihiro is enslaved in another house where she is locked against her will, by the anti-mother figure of the witch Yobaba. The girls' slavery to anti-mothers teaches them active agency through overcoming toxic care and a deprivation of free will. In both films the monstrous women suppress the men who ultimately provide help for the lost girls – perhaps another giveaway of a gendered male perception on womanhood. These in-house worlds of horror and gothic wonder ultimately help the young girls to learn care and acceptance and acquire an active agency through these (also gendered) virtues. Their passivity is in this case overcome through active acceptance.

Ofelia and Jeliza-Rose are left to their own devices outdoors and threatened by psychotic adulthoods indoors. They are forced into lives of violence, obsession and control – Ofelia is at the mercy of Captain Vidal, with an impotent mother, while Jeliza-Rose needs to face another monster-mother, Dell, in search for shelter from solitude and starvation. Their passivity, being moved and then left to fend for themselves in toxic households and abandoned landscapes, leads them to creating a self-projection of themselves as princesses/queens and generating a myth around their imaginary identity in which they can be heroes, brides and loved members of a family, as a form of emotional survival. The imaginary quests that they map for themselves across the desolate empty landscapes loan them an imaginary sense of agency, as they are trying to survive their real-life circumstances, where agency and choice are fully denied. Their disobedience resolves itself through a cataclysmic end of the dysfunctional worlds they inhabit. They both bring this end about themselves, Ofelia through her death and Jeliza-Rose through reaching out to a stranger on the train that

Dickens has tried to explode. She finally finds a world beyond the horrors of her own, while Ofelia can only acquire a sense of agency through death. In these films, one way or another, only an imaginary agency is achieved to give the suppressed, abused girl a temporary sense of power and the illusion that she can surmount her circumstances.

In *Labyrinth* and *Mirormask* the two pre-adolescent girls are tempted into entering the wrong type of adulthood through their own flaws. Their perceived passivity derives from the fact that their parents are placing responsibilities on them and defining their lives; the girls therefore feel deprived of agency. The subversive worlds of mischief lead them into a newfound appreciation of their families. They embody the wrong type of adulthood temporarily and in pretend, only to overcome it in reality. An active agency here may also mean to transgress in order to come to terms with family expectation and responsibility, and restore the nuclear nature of family values.

In *The Company of Wolves* and *Heavenly Creatures*, by contrast, the heteronormative, religious society of 1950s New Zealand, and the imaginary 19th century village of Rosaleen's dream repress their sexuality, by placing a ban on the girls' queer friendship and on Rosaleen's fascination with the figure of the wolf. Rosaleen's dream is one of a gradual maturing into having an active sexual agency, while world that Juliet and Pauline generate is one where they can manipulate events such as love affairs, warfare, and the lives of their subjects, and explore their own sexuality while in reality they are rendered into a state of sexual passivity. However, the patriarchal, heteronormative fairy tale tropes that they borrow from, much like the real world, fail to support their desire for sexual agency and they are all sanctioned and come to bloody ends.

The interplay between agency and passivity in the lost girls' films is a complex one, as the passivity that social role and cultural convention drives the girls into can

never be fully overcome. It can resolve itself into acceptance (*Coraline*, *Spirited Away*, *Mirrormask* and *Labyrinth*), or overcome in pretend (*Baron Munchausen*, *The Fall*, *Tideland*, *The Company of Wolves*, *Heavenly Creatures*), and only lends the lost girls the sense of agency. Therein lies the drama and complexity of the lost girl film – it needs to exact in pretend the active agency that reality cannot provide to girlhood in the represented societies that keep them in a state of individual, social and sexual passivity.

In terms of age groups and identity, the role of the fantastic and of fantasising also dramatically changes over time, with the youngest girls (little and young) delving into it without reprimand or dramatic outcomes, while in the case of the elder girls (growing, pre-adolescent) there is a sense of relinquishing the fantastic, and if failing to do so, coming to bloody ends (*Pan's Labyrinth*, adolescent). This shift of what role the fantastic occupies within a young girls' life can be argued to allegorise a coming of age and coming to grips with reality. Nevertheless, these films offer an alternative to the standard coming of age genre, by making the girl encounter the world, but also letting her author her own and experience an adventure of her own fashioning, with a tailored identity and an active agency transcending both the perceived conventions of both her age and gender. Girlhood is a time of and for fantasy, the lost girl genre suggests, transient and inevitably coming to an end. Fantasy is perceived as an inherent part of childhood, yet also symbolises what literary and childhood cultures teach young girls to expect of the world and of their own identities, dramatically juxtaposed with what social, cultural, political and religious norms expect from female children and young women. The fantasy universes themselves feed from myth, fairy tale, folklore, horror and of female material cultures, often generating an *Alice*-like dream aesthetic, where incompatible elements of production design generate a surreal

feeling to the made-up universes, often imbued with symbolic meaning (such as Rosaleen lipstick in the bird's nest). These complex aesthetics are typical of the lost girl film genre, and point both to the girl's self-authorship of her universe and of its ephemeral and unreal nature – it is a world that cannot be logically sustained, it is only make-belief. Similarly, the tropes borrowed from traditional fairy tale and myth need to be refashioned from their patriarchal origins into serving the girls' perspective, but, much like the ephemeral nature of the film's visual aesthetic, these traditional male narratives fail to support the young female character beyond the confines of her own imagination, and, in some cases, even within. It is a borrowed world, taken temporarily out of literary and childhood traditions, which is needed for the lost girl's emotional sustenance and occasionally even for her actual survival during her childhood and adolescence. It is why the girls usually remain clothed in their domestic, white, out of place, tomboyish clothes – they are visitors in their own imaginations, fugitives from the limitations of reality, and, after being nurtured back into a sense of identity and agency, must be brought back to reality. The lost girl film therefore serves to epitomise the drama of contemporary and historical girlhood stereotypes and limitations, by celebrating the girl's internal self, placing her interiority on the screen at an equal footing with exteriority, thus subjectivity and individuality are placed against social normativity and cultural convention, and the lost girl becomes, however immaterially, an author and a hero. Fantasy nurtures her where reality fails her, much like the fantastic as a genre supplies both subversions and critiques of reality and celebrations of human dreams and anxieties, reaching beyond the limitations of what screen-worlds a single culture and society can offer. The lost girl film celebrates and defends the fantastic and its role in human life, in particular at pivotal times such as childhood and adolescence and for suppressed individuals such as female children facing war,

abuse, neglect, abandonment, and censorship. The way to overcome and evade the inevitable can happen only through the tools of childhood and human imagination – playfulness, mimic, subversion, narration, creativity, performance mischief and sexual curiosity. Thus, the lost girl film demonstrates, lostness can be faced, digested and even overcome and the limitations of girlhood can be addressed and juxtaposed with imagined agencies and identities.

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