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Labyrinth without Walls: The Uncanny and the Gothic Modes as Forms of Haunting in *La casa del padre* by Justo Navarro

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Only very recently, Spain has embraced the memory boom that currently characterizes most of the Western world, and started dealing with its traumatic past. The year 2006 was declared *Año de la memoria*, year of memory, and the themes of the Civil War of 1936-1939 and the ensuing dictatorship of Francisco Franco are inspiring a stream of publications, documentaries, parliamentary discussions, and scholarly investigations. This discourse of remembering forms quite a contrast to what came before. When Francisco Franco died in 1975, the general fear of a new war and the shared wish for democracy resulted in a politics of silence and consensus, to which both the powerful right and the recently legalized left agreed. Well into democratic times, this discourse of forgetting remains very viable in Spain. Now, however, a new discourse of remembering is successfully breaking the taboo on the past.

Contemporary Spanish literature has played its own part in breaking this taboo. Well-known authors such as Antonio Muñoz Molina, Javier Marías, Javier Cercas, Rafael Chirbes, and Álvaro Pombo have recently incorporated the war and the dictatorship into their literary works. Interestingly, studies of this type of works show that in them the past often returns as a process of haunting. Jo Labanyi, for instance, finds the ghosts of Spain's traumatic dictatorial past in simulacra, such as film stills and photographs, which she discovers in a host of contemporary Spanish novels and films: "Photographs, like film stills, play an important role as images of a fragmentary, discontinuous, spectral past" (69). And in a convincing study, Isabel Cuñado shows how haunting takes place in the works of contemporary Spanish author Javier Marías by searching for all elements that

cause estrangement: the double and photography, for example, but also antique books and other objects (31).

Haunting, or the spectral, is described by Fredric Jameson as "[. . .] what makes the present waver: the vibrations of a heat wave through which the massiveness of the object world—indeed of matter itself—now shimmers like a mirage" (38). Haunting processes in a novel cause a sense of a ghostly presence that goes above and beyond straightforward descriptions of the (fictional) object world. Rather than treating the past through a form of realism, such works often contain surreal and disturbing elements. It is remarkable, to say the least, that so many Spanish novels dealing with a traumatic past depart from realism and allow for haunting. Is this a symptom of the discourse of forgetting and consensus, which are still prompting Spanish authors to treat the painful theme in roundabout ways and only with the utmost delicacy?

Justo Navarro's novel, *La casa del padre* (1994), is yet another novel dealing with the traumatic Spanish past that departs from realistic conventions by incorporating disturbing elements. It contains "un poderoso claroscuro [visto] como a través de una cornucopia en la que los objetos se exaltan y la realidad entera aparece desfigurada por una distorsión de carácter expresionista, afín a la que tiene lugar en las novelas de terror" (Echevarría 153). Also, the novel is characterised by a "[. . .] frecuencia [. . .] de las asociaciones verbales, de la ambigüedad, de lo fantasmagórico, de lo monstruoso, de lo extraño" (Masoliver Ródenas 473). This article sets out to show how these elements open up the novel to haunting. It also intends to investigate how does this haunting process reverberate in the novel, and to illustrate the effect it has on portraying of the past.

Upon reading *La casa del padre*, a literary scholar cannot help but wonder: did Navarro read Freud's famous essay on "das Unheimliche" (1963), or the uncanny? It certainly seems that way, because the novel literally contains all uncanny motifs Freud summarizes. There are plenty of *Doppelgänger*, severed body parts,[1] and haunted houses present on its pages; a boy who suffers from a frost bite appears as "un ingenio mecánico" (66), who "crujía como un autómata" (65), bringing to mind the "Motiv der belebt scheinenden Puppe"[2] (61); and characters are missing eyes or wear the wrong glasses, so they "[entrecierran] siempre los ojos turbios" (62)—according to Freud (1963), it is "eine schreckliche Kinderangst [. . .], die Augen zu beschädigen"[3] (59).

The story of *La casa del padre* revolves around an unnamed protagonist, who is also the first-person narrator. From a latter-day perspective, the narrator recounts the six months he is supposed to have left of life on his return from the hospital after fighting for the *División Azul*, the Spanish army division that helped Nazi-Germany on the Russian front. His limited life expectations, due to machine gun pellets in his lungs, do not prevent his mother from sending him to study law in Granada, because disease in their home town of Málaga is threatening to kill him even before the six months are over. In Granada, he moves in with his father's brother. Since his late father married beneath his social class, the protagonist and his mother fall out of grace with the family, and he does not know his uncle, whose regular donations nonetheless enable his mother and himself to survive. He soon gets used to the big, dark house and its inhabitants, as well as their daily routines; he also gets to know his grandmother, who lies ill and whom he is not supposed to visit, and two mysterious inhabitants of the second floor, the Bueso siblings. The drive to Granada results in the protagonist making friends with: the journalist Portugal, who also comes from Málaga and asks to make the journey with them, and the eccentric property hustler, the Duke of Elvira, whom they meet in a hotel after the car breaks down. Though the protagonist does not like Portugal in the least, he soon realizes that the reporter is his ticket to spending many happy afternoons with Elvira and especially his wife Ángeles, with whom he has fallen in love instantly. Eventually, however, Elvira's vocation of blackmailing people into selling him real estate below market value results in his murder. Portugal, too, seems to disintegrate, and the only person who wins is the protagonist: he lives much longer than the allotted six months, finishes his studies, and marries Ángeles. At the end of his six months of life, moreover, he discovers that his uncle is actually his real father.

La casa del padre is full of uncanny conventions—most importantly, that of the double. It seems as if almost everybody in the novel has a double or pretends to be someone else. The protagonist, though he is portrayed as an outsider, is no exception. Many mothers of the young soldiers, who went to the Russian front with the protagonist, ask him if he has any news of their sons; out of pity, he lies that he knows them and that they are well. He is not the only one who lies in this way; for example, when an acquaintance tries to unmask

him as a liar by bringing him to a fellow soldier from Russia, whose extremities are severely corroded by a frost bite, the invalid pretends to know him. He does not really recognize him, but merely calls him by the nickname all soldiers from their town had: "Málaga, ya has vuelto tú también" (46). There is, it is suggested, no real difference between one and the other; they suffered similar fates and this makes them interchangeable.

Additionally, uncanny is Portugal's rumoured assumption of his brother's identity: "Muchos empezaron a decir que el Portugal que había muerto en un tejado de Granada era el falangista y que el Portugal que vivía era el comunista que se había puesto las gafas de su hermano" (62). This suspicion is fed by Portugal's inexplicable, uncanny behaviour: during the trip from Málaga to Granada, he brings a suitcase with him, which he got at an auction—the contents of which the protagonist recognizes from an advertisement in the paper (104). Once in Granada, Portugal seems to be doing badly, appearing more and more disheveled and drunk in his eternal summer suit. Finally, his troubled gaze through the spectacles that supposedly belonged to his brother gives him something uncanny, always "mirándonos como si no nos viera" (76).

However, one must note that the narrator is not to be trusted completely: his jealousy of Portugal and his enviable rapport with women in general, not to mention Elvira's wife Ángeles, makes him an especially unreliable narrator. "Portugal hechizó desde la primera visita al Duque de Elvira y a la mujer del Duque de Elvira. [. . .] Y yo me moría de celos," the narrator confesses. "[S]i no llevaba a Portugal, no me admitían en la casa del Duque de Elvira" (174–6). Whether Portugal is really masquerading as his brother, or whether the narrator merely suggests this out of jealousy, remains unclear for a long time. Even with the apparition of a photograph depicting the two brothers together, near the end of the novel, the ambiguity remains.

The most uncanny doubles are the Buesos, a truly monstrous brother-sister duo, abjectly impoverished and living amidst layer upon layer of filth. The Doppelgänger-motif is further developed through chauffeur's, Don Julio linking them to the Portugals, as well as to another pair of brothers, whose betrayal he relates. As the narrator recalls: "Don Julio sólo hablaba de parejas de hermanos, todos más o menos viles e infelices, dos hermanos, los Bueso [. . .]" (108). The uncannily one-eyed Bueso sister is particularly hideous:

> Había vuelto a taparse el ojo derecho con una gasa, iba vestida con ropa de hombre [. . .] y las vendas y la carne de la mujer tenían el mismo color de la ropa [. . .]. La mujer tenía ceniza y telarañas en el pelo, y la gasa que le cubría el ojo derecho era como una telaraña tupida, y no se sabía si el olor agrio y corrompido de la casa impregnaba a la mujer [. . .] o si el olor [. . .] de la mujer impregnaba todas las cosas. (146)

The narrator is terrified of her, and because of that she posesses him. She forces him to return to her house with oil she and her brother can feed on, threatening that she will tell the police that the protagonist is her friend, vanished or non-existent older brother if he does not obey. All in all, the Buesos are hardly human. It is not clear who they are or whether they really have a brother. The only thing the reader can discover of them with certainty, through a comment of Don Julio's, is that their father was executed (108). For the rest, these larger-than-life filthy characters are a horrific presence in the narration; their roles in it are vague and disquieting.

Other pairs of siblings and friends, who turn on each other, cause similar ambiguity in *La casa del padre*. Most notably, the uncle of the protagonist turns out to be, and assumes the role of, his father (261). Also, both Don Julio and the protagonist wear the dead man's old clothes, which creates a bizarre rivalry between them (135). The result of all this mirroring, reflection, and dis- or replacement, is that a sort of general ambiguity comes into being: no one is as he seems, and the reader is left in constant doubt about characters' identities, their lies, and their truths. Thus the uncanny Doppelgänger-motif gives the novel a general feel of instability: the apparently stable novelistic world is constantly unbalanced by the many masks its inhabitants appear to be wearing.

Thus we are left considering what effect do these uncanny conventions have in the novel, and whether they allow for haunting. Freud provisionally defines the uncanny as "[. . .] das Heimliche-Heimische [. . .] das eine Verdrängung erfahren hat und aus ihr wiedergekehrt ist"[4] (*Das Unheimliche* 75). It is the unfamiliar return of what was once familiar, and what disturbs us now. Freud gives some examples of the uncanny: the already mentioned *Doppelgänger*, severed body parts, and dolls which, through mechanisation or otherwise, appear

to be alive. Incidentally, many have called Freud's famous essay *itself* uncanny (Wolfreys 16): proof that not just the motifs mentioned by its author provide such an effect. In a footnote of his *Spectres de Marx*, Jacques Derrida comments on Freud's uncanny. He points out the apparent contradiction in Freud's analysis of the ghost in Hamlet. Freud is convinced that this ghost is *not* uncanny. After all, within the realm of fiction, such a breach of the conventions of the real world is to be expected. Derrida finds that the rest of Freud's essay contradicts this, since, he exclaims: "[. . .] tous les exemples de *Unheimlichkeit* sont dans cet essai empruntés à la littérature!" (275). Contrarily, John Fletcher argues in his analysis of *Spectres de Marx* that Derrida is mistaken here: Freud did not suggest that *all* fiction prevents supernatural events from appearing uncanny. It really depends on the text's genre and its conventions (33). It follows, then, that the uncanny is an effect that *can* occur in texts, and also in real life. It *can* be, but does not *have* to be, aroused by the appearance of supernatural things like ghosts; it *is*, however, dependent on conventions, expectations, laws; and it is the disruption of those. As such, it really is just another name for an incarnation of the spectral.

The spectre, and the spectral in general, are often referred to in fantastic literature and horror films as the 'undead.' Like a vampire, the spectre can manifest itself in the world of the living, and therefore, it is not dead; neither alive, nor a part of the world of the living, it is a mere apparition. By this reasoning, the spectral cannot *be*, just as it cannot *not* be. It has no ontological status, but rather occupies its own category, which Derrida calls a "hantologie." There is no way of defining it, because it simply *is* not. According to Derrida, the spectral is a concept without concept (Marx c'est quelqu'un 23). At most, it can be described by analogy, as Fredric Jameson does when he compares it to the "vibrations" of a heat wave (38).

Jameson's so-called "vibrations" are the manifestations of the spectral that we can observe in our world, and that produce a particular distorting effect. Julian Wolfreys considers this analogy particularly well-chosen, because not only does it pretend to define the undefinable, but it also illustrates how we can perceive the spectral, yet not see it. "A trace registers itself in the field of vision," Wolfreys explains, "but this trace is not that which causes the registration. Caused by that which affects the visible it is the trace of something else, something which cannot be seen, as such" (77). Wolfreys appears to take his own

description of haunting from this image of the spectral: "Haunting might best be described as the ability of forces that remain unseen to make themselves felt in everyday life" (110). The manifestation of this haunting is not the spectre, or ghost, but its trace: the ghost retracts itself as soon as it manifests itself. Simon Critchley calls this "the ghosting of the ghost" (10).

All this means that the motifs of which Freud speaks are not, in themselves, the uncanny. The motifs are what causes the invisible to "vibrate" and make itself perceptible. They are not ghosts, nor traces of ghosts; they are simply circumstances that allow for the spectral to manifest itself. Those circumstances do not have to be Freud's *Doppelgänger* or severed body parts. Derrida has suggested in 1997, for instance, that modern technology is the locus *par excellence* of haunting because modern modes of communication—television, the telephone—provide reproduction. And, as Derrida further points out, reproduction is linked to repetition and representation, creating a phantom structure. What is reproduced is always altered, fragmented and reduced, and at the same time, it is perpetuated or prolonged. In this manner, uncanny motifs in a text may point towards haunting, especially if they succeed in causing estrangement.

As discussed previously, *La casa del padre* certainly does not lack uncanny motifs. And there is yet another textual element that suggests the possibility of Navarro's novel being haunted. The haunted house motif, central in the novel as indicated by its title, both represents the typically uncanny and also, significantly, refers to another literary genre: the Gothic novel. At the start of the novel, while the protagonist is living with his mother in Málaga, the narrator describes the house they inhabit as asphyxiating: "[M]i madre [. . .] había empezado a transformarse: no podía respirar en aquella casa [. . .]. Fue pisar aquella casa y empezar el asma, el ahogo, el miedo a morir asfixiada" (82). What is more, he states that "[. . .] el piso que mi madre y mi padre compartían era el signo de la maldición" (83). In other words, it has come to represent the father's mistake of marrying a simple waitress and the shame of his being thrown out of his family's house in Granada where the uncle still lives. The narrator thus explicitly attributes metaphoric meaning to the houses that appear in *La casa del padre*.

The actual 'haunted house,' the house of the father, is a single floor in a larger building, and initially, it does come across as particularly scary. To the protagonist, however, it is like a prison, since almost all

doors are locked to him: "Todas las puertas tenían llave en aquella casa y todas las puertas estaban cerradas siempre" (144). Even worse, his uncle obliges him to rest constantly, making him feel like "Houdini, un mago que se lanza al fondo del océano atado con cadenas [. . .] y ha de liberarse antes de que lo mate la asfixia" (144). Eventually, however, he manages to make copies of all the keys of the house, and one night, he starts investigating it. In the dark, the house reminds him of "[. . .] la nieve, un laberinto sin muros en el que había estado encerrado una vez" (211). Massive and unknown in the darkness, the house is like a labyrinth. Indeed, its walls confine its own monster: the protagonist's demented grandmother: "Vi al monstruo, una vieja con la cabeza blanca, vestida de negro de pies a cabeza, deforme [. . .]" (212). At night, the house can turn into a "mundo de fantasmas" (215), while in the daytime, it is no less strange with its eccentric, black-haired maid, Beatriz, whose face exhibits strange red spots: "[. . .] las manchas rosa en la cara de Beatriz como mapas de Groenlandia y Gran Bretaña" (215), and with its rather tyrannical owner: "[. . .] todas las cosas estaban siempre como disponía mi tío" (135).

Strangest of all, perhaps, is how the house is mirrored in that of the Buesos, on the second floor: "[. . .] era una casa extraña porque era exactamente igual que la casa de mi tío, pero putrefacta [. . .]. En la pared [. . .] no había un cuadro como en la casa de mi tío, sino un gran rectángulo de un ocre más pálido que el ocre del resto de la pared" (147). Here, the motif of doubling and that of the haunted house work together to create a strange sense of ambiguity. This is further manifest in other houses, such as the Duke of Elvira's, which similarly personifies his illusive splendour, hollowness, and meaninglessness. As the narrator describes it: "Era como una película, como una casa que sólo es una fachada de telones pintados y bastidores de madera, en una habitación que quizá sólo tuviera las tres paredes que veías. Y quizá estuviera hueco el piano vertical con dos candelabros de plata y velas negras que no habían sido encendidas nunca" (154). More than fictional settings, the houses reflect the character and history of their inhabitants. Accordingly, a house can feel like a prison, a labyrinth, or a symbol of shame.

A house can also be tomb-like, a grave for the living dead. The Bueso siblings are said to have buried themselves alive in their own home, "[. . .] se habían enterrado en vida" (108). The same goes for the grandmother, who hides as if buried in her own home. Effectively,

for half a year, the protagonist resides in the realm of the living dead. Believing he has only six months left to live, he feels he has no life to look forward to, and discards his future, no longer making plans: he cannot live, and has yet to die. Repeatedly, he mentions that people look at him to see "[. . .] cómo operaba la muerte en mí" (187). Besides, he is paralyzed by a fear of dying, which is all the more significant since his father literally died of fear: "[. . .] se murió de miedo porque creía que llegaba la Marina nacional" (29).

Aside from the haunted house-motif and the *Doppelgänger* with which the novel is filled, then, there surfaces yet an additional convention of the Gothic novel: that of the living dead. In *La casa del padre*, these elements evidence an unstable reality in which the haunted house is perhaps the defining trope of the Gothic genre. This is usually defined as "[. . .] a genre given principal expression through the novel, [with] a life span of approximately 56 years" which was "given life in 1764 with the publication of Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*" and "died allegedly somewhere around 1818 or 1820" (Wolfreys 8). Eve Sedgwick suggests that the Gothic novel, however defined, is the "[. . .] great liberator of feeling through its acknowledgement of the 'non-rational'" (11). Jacqueline Howard further informs that "studies [on the Gothic novel] have tended to proceed by cataloguing and codifying the literary conventions perceived to be common to the form" (13). Indeed, it is for its conventions that the Gothic novel is most known and easiest to distinguish. Howard names a number of these constituent elements:

> [. . .] a remote castle, monastery, or gloomy house with its confining crypts, vaults, and underground passage-ways [. . .] the persecuted heroine, tyrannical parent, villainous monk, Faustian overreacher [. . .], vampire-like apparition, [. . .] dreams, mysterious portents, animated portraits and statues, magic mirrors, and the like [. . .], embedded stories, letters, diaries, [. . .] broken-off manuscripts. (13)

The Gothic novel, then, is to be recognized as belonging to the Gothic genre by its moment of appearance, by its attention towards the emotional and irrational, and by its use of the previously named tropes.

Nonetheless, Julian Wolfreys argues that a broader view is necessary. Countering definitions of the gothic in terms of "genre," he

reconceptualises it as a "mode" (11). Genre, according to Chris Baldick, is "a recognizable and established category of written work employing such common conventions as will prevent readers and audiences from mistaking it for another kind" (90). In the case of the Gothic, we are dealing with a genre Baldick would qualify as a "specialized sub-category" (91) of literary art. Wolfreys suggests the existence of a "gothic mode" (13), that exists independently of the genre, a mode being in Baldick's definition "[. . .] an unspecific critical term usually designating a broad but identifiable kind of literary method, mood, or manner that is not tied exclusively to a particular form or genre" (139-40). Like the ironic or comic modes, the gothic mode thus becomes something that can be 'called up' in any literary work. The gothic as a "mode" liberates itself from the limitations imposed by "genre."

The consequence of this liberation of the gothic is that it loses its proverbial body, materiality, and attachment to a limited selection of literary works. If we accept Wolfreys's definition, and talk of the "spectralization of the gothic," we find that the gothic becomes "[. . .] one proper name for a process of spectral transformation [. . .]. Cast out of its familiar places, the gothic is dematerialized into a somewhat unpredictable tropological play" (Wolfreys 7). In other words, the gothic mode is, in fact, a process of haunting. As such, it can leave its traces in any number of places: in the real world, and, for that matter, in a fictional world as well. In doing this, it causes a sense of disruption. Wolfreys reaffirms: "The gothic is thus one name for acts of spectral troping which we otherwise name the ghostly, the uncanny, the phantom" (14).

As a form of haunting, however, the gothic mode does have its own particularities. Of course, it appears where the Gothic genre's conventions are apparent. These conventions are, in a way, typical for the spectral in general, and in this way overlap with the uncanny: the haunted house, the *unheimlich Heim*, is a trope that we also see within the uncanny, which is essential to the concept of haunting itself. After all, haunting is a disruptive element within a structure—and the mention of a structure (in the sense of a whole whose parts are related) indicates an importance of place within haunting; the haunted house is the most literal illustration of such a structure. The conventions traditionally associated with the Gothic genre cause the gothic mode to be activated, or to put it another way: to allow for a haunting process that I would be inclined to denominate "gothic."

Because of its similarities with the gothic mode, we can now begin to speak of an uncanny mode, both forms of haunting being complementary to each other. Each emerges in a text through certain tropes, and they *can* but may not necessarily imply haunting. In determining whether this is the case in a text such as *La casa del padre*, I look to Bakhtin's theory of the novel. Jacqueline Howard suggests an approach based on Bakhtin: she sees the novel as an arrangement of many voices or discourses. Though one discourse may be privileged, the text may contain many others; what is more, every text possesses a "potential for subversion" (5). Howard focuses on the disruptive force that exists within the text's structure—if the text is a house, she is looking for its ghosts. This haunting process *inside* the novel may be called the uncanny, the spectral or the gothic, depending on the circumstances giving rise to this particular case of 'estrangement.'

Just how the privileging of a discourse and the subordination of others is effectuated in a text becomes clear when we take into account Philippe Hamon's discussion of a text's "effet-idéologie" (9). Hamon shows that ideology as a textual element or effect comes into being in places in the text where such an evaluation takes place. He explains that every evaluative point in a text has its own specifics or *appareils normatifs*: the form of the evaluation (positive or negative), the nature of what is evaluated (action or person), the instance or instances who perform the evaluation and the norms that are called up may differ from evaluation to evaluation. Together, these four aspects produce what Hamon calls a *dominante normative* (28). From Hamon's description, we may conclude that ideology in a text is the result of constant comparison of norms, and that, since eventually a dominant norm results, the text's ideology is hierarchically structured. Furthermore, it is important to realize that though a text may appear to have a single dominant hierarchy, it is possible for this dominant to vary according to its point of evaluation. In Hamon's words: "Hiérarchies et dominantes peuvent varier à l'intérieur d'une même texte, ou d'une texte à l'autre" (39).

Hamon's and Howard's approaches to the hierarchical structuring of discourses in a text are quite similar. This becomes clear when we look at Howard's analysis of Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, where he states:

> In *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, the discourses of sensibility and taste function to establish aesthetic and moral norms [. . .]. Sensibility, however, is also repeatedly criticized by the narrator for its dangerous potential to destabilize and weaken individuals, particularly women [. . .]. At the same time, working dialogically against such criticism, is the recontextualization of superstitions, folklore, and a discourse of the sublime which operates as a more or less unproblematic extension of the 'real,' and encourages belief in the uncanny [. . .]. (6)

What Howard has really found is a number of loci in the text whose dominant norms seem to be in conflict. Apparently, there are quite a few places where sensibility and taste stand out as positive norms. Then, there is the narrator, who evaluates one of these norms differently and warns against sensibility. And the discourse of the supernatural, uttered by that same narrator, undermines this warning yet again. Howard looks at evaluation points and, contrasting their normative dominant, identifies different discourses, or 'voices.'

Jacqueline Howard's analysis of *Udolpho* also illustrates how the different places of evaluation are hierarchically structured. She points out that the dominant norms (in this case, those underlying the discourses of taste and sensibility) are undermined by what she calls "women's assertiveness" (7). She concludes: "*Udolpho* can be said to disturb unquestioning acceptance of upper-middle-class patriarchal, social, and cultural order" (7). What Howard detects in the text is a subversive potential, a discourse that undermines the general, dominant discourse. In a limited number of textual places, the local *dominante* differs from the ones that occur most frequently in evaluative points. In Bakhtin's terms, the text has both centripetal and centrifugal forces (47). However, while analyzing the contrasting normative systems and their hierarchical order in the text, whereby one dominates the other, Howard leaves aside the actual presence of gothic conventions in Radcliffe's novel. The gothic mode that is opened up by the novel's villains, mysterious castles, and so on, is not fully undone by any logical explanations there may be given to the ghostly occurrences that scare the female protagonist. It is not just this protagonist, but also the reader who is affected by the haunting. What haunting does in a work like *Udolpho* is to undermine an ideological

structure—not as a *part* of such a hierarchy, as a dissonant voice or centrifugal force, but as a thing that is both incorporated into it and strange to it. This is not merely the case in a Gothic novel like *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. It also occurs in Navarro's *La casa del padre*.

In *La casa del padre*, the narrator's voice is the most important one. Therefore, the narrator is usually the evaluating instance. This narrator looks back from modern, democratic times upon the first years of the Francoist dictatorship, and so, his evaluation of such a society may contrast with the norms held valid at the time. In many places, however, the narrator avoids passing such a judgment, commenting on his incapacity to remember. He frequently states that "no tengo memoria", that "[. . .] siempre he querido perder la memoria" (67) or that "sólo tengo memoria para lo bueno" (295). All in all, he maintains that he has been lucky and happy in life.

A considerable part of the narration is focalized through the narrator's younger self. Interestingly, the narrator positions this protagonist firmly as an outsider, a spectator. Upon returning, traumatized, from Russia, the boy can only see the world around him conscious of the inevitable decay of all that is beautiful. When he gets to dance with Paula, the girl he is in love with, he is suddenly overcome by an awareness of her fate: "Vi bailar a la hija del farmacéutico con muchos, y era emocionante: estaba predestinada, dentro de diez años habría envejecido, estaría fea, y luego se pondría más vieja y más fea, y luego se moriría" (58). The contrast between his tender age and lack of experience with women, and his experience with putrefaction and death becomes painfully clear. To make matters worse, he feels constantly stared at: "me miraban y querían descubrir en mí la marca de la muerte" (187).

The young man's view on Spanish society of the 1940s is thus an outsider's view. What becomes most clear of all in his observations about the period and its value system, is: that in his eyes, there *are* no values. He is living in a moral vacuum. Perhaps the best illustration of the amorality that prevails in the society of *La casa del padre* is the corrupting influence it has on the protagonist himself. He is dominated by fear, a fear of standing out, of attracting attention: "Nadie se miraba dentro del tranvía [. . .]. Un hombre no desvió los ojos, y me imaginé que era uno de la policía secreta o un confidente" (153). He is afraid of being "[. . .] interrogado sobre un asunto del que no sabía nada" (196), which happened to a boy he knew. Perhaps as a

consequence of this fear, he lies constantly. He lies mostly to please people, "[. . .] sólo era para agradarle" (264). He lies to the Bueso sister that he knows her older brother. Eventually, he even starts inventing stories to tell his uncle, and makes up tales about his life in Russia to impress Ángeles. The narrator states that he did this because he discovered that "[. . .] era agradable mentir: mentí por comodidad, por hablar lo menos posible. [. . .] Era insoportable decir la verdad: daba sueño" (232). This is an obviously evaluative moment: the narrator 'defends' himself against possible recriminations, stating that lying was the most comfortable option in those days.

La casa del padre is populated with characters who let themselves be dominated by fear, who behave immorally, or who do both. Often, focalisation shifts from the young protagonist to them when their story is told, thus implicitly including their voices in the narration. There is, for example, Larraz, the director of the cinema in Málaga, who is terrified to be associated with either 'suspicious' people like the lawyer called Pleguezuelos, whose son was executed, or with a fascist known for his cruelty, "porque no quería destacarse" (22). It is clear that in those years, such fears were omnipresent, as the narrator remarks, "[. . .] quien está solo es sospechoso" (20). The Duke of Elvira exemplifies the amorality that is omnipresent in the novel. He handily makes use of the situation of the immediate postwar: as a distinguished falangist who has met Alfonso XIII, Franco, and José Antonio Primo de Rivera, he is in the position of blackmailing the less fortunate with their pasts. Journalist Portugal also behaves amorally: he writes propaganda for fascist newspapers. However, the protagonist manages to find out that before the war, Portugal, his brother, and the leftist son of Pleguezuelos were good friends. This means that Portugal was not originally on the nationalist side. The same goes for another member of their group of friends: Portada, now army officer and head of the police. It turns out he personally killed the young Pleguezuelos.

The young protagonist lives in what Navarro himself has called "[. . .] la atmósfera de grisura moral y mezquindad afectiva que impusieron los vencedores en los años cuarenta: un mundo de máscaras en estado de congelación" (qtd. in Márquez). In such circumstances, one either selfishly takes advantage of others whenever one can, like the Duke, or one lives in fear and lies to save one's own skin, like the protagonist does. All through the story, he has professed great admiration for the Duke of Elvira, even though he realized all along his behaviour

was unethical. This sympathy for Elvira is understandable: amid a nation consisting mostly of cowards, Elvira is a flamboyant risk-taker who does not mind standing out. A frightened, shy outsider, it is not surprising that the protagonist looks up to this worldly man.

As the novel progresses, it becomes clear why the narrator, in spite of the fact that he is constantly remembering, is very keen on forgetting the unpleasant sides of the past. After Elvira is murdered, it is the protagonist who ends up as the winner: he gains Elvira's wife and daughter. The protagonist has taken Elvira's place unscrupulously. What is more, upon Elvira's death, he comes into the possession of documents and photos painfully incriminating those who Elvira tried to blackmail. It is no wonder, then, that he claims to have "[. . .] muchos y excelentes amigos" (294), among them, the King himself. Worst of all, he suggests that he may have had something to do with the suicide of his childhood bully, the cousin of Elvira:

> Sólo guardé por diversión algunos papeles del Duque de Elvira que recogían debilidades juveniles del ingeniero Espona-Castillo Creus, primo del Duque de Elvira y nuevo Duque de Elvira, mi antiguo condiscípulo en el colegio jesuita de Málaga. Espona-Castillo Creus [. . .] se pegó un tiro cuando se rumoreaba que dormía la siesta con un novillero [. . .]. Entonces destruí también los papeles que conservaba sobre Espona-Castillo Creus, porque hay que olvidar, la memoria feliz y limpia está hecha de olvidos. (295)

Following the lack of norms he was faced with upon his return from Russia, the narrator has developed from a scared liar into a happy opportunist. Clearly, he knows that such behaviour may seem right to *him*, but it clashes with the value system of the society he currently lives in. That is why he likes to forget: to keep his memory 'clean' in the eyes of a new time.

It may be concluded that there are two different normative discourses at work that determine the ideology of the novel. First of all, there is the amoral discourse of the narrator—which echoes the discourse of forgetting that has dominated Spanish society for so long. In his description of the early Spanish 1940s, the narrator makes it perfectly clear that, in the absence of justice and morals, anything could get you killed and that violence was frequent and random. What

is remarkable is that the narrator does not openly attach a negative value to such amorality. This is, of course, a consequence of the fact that he has been so influenced by the lack of norms and values that he has appropriated them. In fact, on the last pages, he points out that his amoral value system has done him all the good in the world: he is influential, happy, and married to the woman of his dreams. Secondly, however, there is a normative discourse that is largely implicit: that of the narratee, that of the present. In the end, the narratee is openly addressed by the narrator: "Mañana le seguiré contando" (295). Here, the 'real' reader may feel spoken to, and in this way, the text indirectly incorporates his or her own normative discourse.

The dominant discourse here is not, as might be expected, that of the narrator. Though the text is apparently dominated by the narrator, and most of the characters adapt to or behave according to his value system, this discourse can only be described *in relation to* what came before it or in this case, after it. In other words, we can only speak of a moral vacuum when we define it through a discourse that is *not* a moral vacuum. Here we see an example of Bakhtin's concept of double-voicedness: one discourse implies the other. The narrator is an unreliable liar, whose admission to a-morality reads, at times, defensive. The narrator knows that he is judged by his narratee; he explains his motivations, but realizes where the narratee may disagree with him.

This hierarchy of dicourses is apparently stable throughout the novel. Nevertheless, a process of haunting disturbs this stability. This haunting is caused by trauma, the nature of which becomes clear when the narrator finally explains what happened in Russia, and why he won the Second Class Iron Cross. As they were stuck in a shack in Possad with a wounded corporal called Carré, his sergeant Leyva had ordered him to try and fix the wire that provided radio contact with headquarters. Exhausted, confused, and blinded by snow, he had not followed orders but instead shot at one of the two hand grenades Leyva had hanging around his neck, causing an explosion and the death of the two others: "Y entonces pensé: ¿si le disparo a una de las bombas, se estallará? Y apunté. Creo que disparé: me dormí, desaparecí. Y mucho después desperté en el Hospital de Riga con la Cruz de Hierro de Segunda Clase" (288). It can be deduced from the text that the boy acted in a fit of insanity and that he is thus not a true murderer. Nevertheless, the fact that his insane action was immediately rewarded with an Iron Cross is quite bizarre.

Though gothic or uncanny conventions as such need not imply the presence of a ghost, in this case it can be argued that they do cause disruption within the novel. This is evident in the way in which these conventions are connected to the traumatic episode in the Possad cabin. The house of the father reminds the protagonist-narrator of that snowy 'labyrinth without walls.' He also mentions that his uncle smothers him in it: "Me cuidaba mi tío, me tenía entre algodones, y era muy cansada la vida cómoda y feliz" (143). Just as in the cabin, the protagonist's world is muffled in snow, and it makes him mortally tired. As in Possad, he is waiting for death, and once again, he miraculously survives. The Possad episode is, like any true trauma, completely separated from the fictional world of Málaga and Granada in which the protagonist now lives. It is distant both in space and time, and having experienced the Russian front like the protagonist or the boy Rafael, it sets you apart. Nevertheless, the Possad scene keeps intruding into the consciousness of the protagonist-narrator. All houses are potential graves, like the Possad cabin: a snow or cotton padding keeps out the outside world. It may be concluded that in *La casa del padre*, a process of haunting takes place: trauma disrupts the fictional world, making use of phantom structures like reproductions and duplications or a haunted house.

For the ideological hierarchy of Navarro's text, the haunting gothic and uncanny work as an undermining force. While in the text's evaluative points, two normative discourses are opposed, the trauma disturbs those, blurring their boundaries. The Possad trauma works as a sort of explanation of the narrator's amoral stance: it justifies his holding on to the value system of a past era. In the Possad cabin, the protagonist felt trapped, excluded from the outside world, and he was driven to an act of insanity. Back in the world of the living, he receives a medal for his wartime performance. From this point on, behaving morally seems absurd to the narrator-protagonist: his only development between the 1940s and the democratic present is from a coward to an opportunist. The continuous intrusion of the Possad episode in the narration makes this almost understandable to the narratee, or implied reader: the feeling of being smothered and buried alive is constantly invoked by spaces and situations that remind the protagonist of the cabin in the snow: labyrinth-like houses, or the bed that his uncle forces him to spend much time in.

Interestingly, the haunting of the trauma, though it serves as an explanation for the narrator's amorality, does not allow for his

discourse to become dominant. The protagonist's trauma does not let him forget; the past continually intrudes in the present and cannot be silenced. The narrator may therefore claim to live a happy and forgetful life but in reality, there is no escaping the ghosts of the past. Clearly, then, the departure from realism in *La casa del padre* does not imply a return to or echo of the Spanish discourse of forgetting.

Instead, trauma vibrates within the novel, superimposing itself upon a more rational narration of the past. Navarro's novel *without* a gothic or uncanny mode would have been a confrontation of the narrator's provocatively amoral discourse and the implicit narratee's ideology—the latter of which, of course, many a contemporary reader would identify with. The novel would thus invite a reader to compare both discourses. This rational act, interesting as it may be in itself, cannot, however, make the trauma of such a past *felt*, like the traces of a ghost can be felt. The recasting of Navarro's protagonist's life in the early dictatorship through a trauma such as that of Possad, which causes him to experience it as something grotesque, uncanny, causes the structure of the novel, with its stress on morality, to become unstable. What the novel gains, though, is the presence of ghostly traces, which create an atmosphere so oppressive that it may make the postwar society somehow almost tangible to the reader.

Notes

1. "Abgetrennte Glieder [. . .] haben etwas ungemein Unheimliches an sich", Freud contends. (*Das Unheimliche* 73). ["Dismembered limbs [. . .] have something peculiarly uncanny about them" (*The Uncanny* 636).]

2. "[. . .] theme [. . .] of a doll which appears to be alive" (*The Uncanny* 629).

3. "[. . .] the fear of damaging [. . .] one's eyes is a terrible one in children" (*The Uncanny* 628).

4. "[. . .] secretly familiar [*heimlich-heimisch*], which has undergone repression and then returned from it" (*The Uncanny* 637).

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