

Left Behind

Child Ghosts, The Dreaded Past, and Reconciliation in Rinne, Dek Hor, and El Orfanato

by Brenda S. Gardenour



Screenshot El Orfanato

Summary:

In recent years, the locus of the horror industry has shifted from American milieu to East Asia and increasingly to the Spanish-speaking world. Conversations with the past will form the backbone of this analysis. The article examines cryptomnesia, sorrowful nostalgia, the advocacy of the living for the dead, the weight of the past, and the fulfillment of the present in three films from developing horror traditions. At the center of each of these films rests the plight of displaced, orphaned, and institutionalized children and their encounters with child-ghosts, reminders of a tragic past that has been forgotten but demands to be remembered.

Author:

Brenda S. Gardenour, PhD, Assistant Professor of History/History of Medicine, Saint Louis College of Pharmacy.

Keywords:

Ghost, childhood, memory, nostalgia, displacement

Quotation:

Gardenour, Brenda S. (2012) "Left Behind. Child Ghosts, The Dreaded Past, and Reconciliation in Rinne, Dek Hor, and El Orfanato", in: *manycinemas*, issue 3, 12-25.

“When something terrible happens, sometimes it leaves a trace, a wound that acts as a knot between two time lines. It’s like an echo repeated over and over, waiting to be heard. Like a scar or a pinch that begs for a caress to relieve it.”

Aurora in *El Orfanato*

A decaying hotel on the slopes of a sleeping volcano north of Tokyo, Japan; an abandoned swimming pool and a darkened bathroom in a boys’ dormitory in Thailand; an old orphanage on a craggy cliff by the sea in Asturias, Spain. Such haunted spaces are the playground for child ghosts in three horror films, Takashi Shimizu’s *Rinne* (2005), Songyos Sugmakanan’s *Dek Hor* (2006), and Juan Antonio Bayona’s *El Orfanato* (2007). Born in disparate cultures, these films nevertheless share a similar sense of dread, a horrible premonition rooted in a sorrowful memory hidden just out of reach, buried in the haunted attic of the mind. In each film, a tragic event has been carefully hidden or willfully forgotten and ultimately obscured by the quotidian demands of the present; unwilling to be orphaned, the past resurfaces in the form of a child ghost who demands that the living remember and bear witness to its suffering. Children make effective symbolic agents for such repressed memories because of their liminality; they embody our nostalgic visions of childhood as a time of innocence and wonder, a time of boundless promises for the future.¹ A child’s death cuts this short, leaving its ghost suspended in a state of hopeless potentiality, left behind by time itself. Suspended in single moment, these orphans relive their tragic deaths in endless cycles — like severed memories spinning in the dark — a process represented in *Rinne* by a doll that repeats the phrase, “Together Forever,” in *Dek Hor* by a skipping record, and in *El Orfanato* by the echoes of the children’s deaths “repeated over and over, waiting to be heard.” In order to find their way home, these orphans must lead the living on a journey into the haunted mind-crypt where long-buried memories are exhumed and life breathed into them anew.² In *Rinne*, the journey into the self is terrifying; the child-ghost Chisato serves as an agent of revenge, dragging those connected to her death back into their own hidden and inescapable pasts. In *Dek Hor* and *El Orfanato*, however, ghost children are agents of reconciliation extending their little hands to the living, befriending those who are willing to bear witness to dreadful events so that both living and dead might move forward into a peaceful future.

“Together Forever:” Reincarnation and the Inescapable Past in *Rinne*

Takashi Shimizu’s *Rinne*, or Reincarnation, opens with three school girls laughing at a phone app that discerns a person’s past lives. One girl looks into the cell phone and sees only a blank screen. A strange puff of air stirs her hair and she turns away, but no one is behind her. As she glances back at the dark screen, her reflection is not her own but that of an older woman with vintage glasses. In one of several vignettes that follow, a trucker looks into a restroom mirror and sees his reflection momentarily morph into that of another man. Later, while driving down a treacherous road, he hears a radio report about the filming of *Memory*, a movie that will retell the story of a thirty-five year old murder case in which a professor brutally stabbed and killed eleven people, including his own two children, at the Ono Kanko hotel in the mountains north of Tokyo. Not wanting to remember such things, the trucker snaps off the radio in disgust, a distraction that leads him to hit a grey man lolling in his headlights; upon investigation, he finds that the dead man’s face is the same one that he saw in the bathroom mirror. Terrified, he tries to hide but is confronted by eleven dead faces that crowd into his truck and ultimately spirit him away. We later learn that both the school girl and the trucker are reincarnations of people murdered at the Ono Kanko and that their hidden pasts have come to claim them. These opening scenes introduce the thematic core of the film: the dread that our identities might not be our own but shared with a not-so-distant other through reincarnation, and that the act of remembering our past lives might stir hungry ghosts who demand reparations in the present.

In the Japanese Buddhist concept of reincarnation central to *Rinne*, an individual soul is not reborn in *toto* into a new body after death, nor are the memories of the older soul completely lost. Instead, the new soul is an aggregate of past self and present self, with only the basic dispositions and karmic actions of the former carrying over into the new life; those who live lives of bad karma carry this burden into their next incarnation. Although the new soul generally does not remember its past, an individual might catch brief glimpses of its former self through premonitions, what the west calls *déjà vu*. This conception of reincarnation means that each person lives in at least two separate

timelines, that of the living present and that of the hidden residual soul's past.³ Likewise, the film *Rinne* has two timelines, the first of which is centered on the murders at the Ono Kanko hotel in 1970, and the second of which follows the filming of the movie *Memory* in 2005. In interpreting and retelling the story of the Ono Kanko murders, *Memory* becomes a cinematic reincarnation of the events at the hotel, one that awakens angry ghosts in both timelines.⁴ Bound together forever through reincarnation, the ghostly dead of 1970 stalk the living of 2005, filling them with a dread of something both familiar and terrifying that lurks in the darkness of memory.

In *Rinne*, the act of remembering reincarnates a haunted past long buried. Since she was a child, a young woman named Yayoi has drawn pictures of a strange hotel that she has never visited. Meanwhile, Yuka, an aspiring actress who was born with strange ligature mark around her neck, often remembers things that could not have happened in her lifetime; "They must be experiences from before I was born as who I am now." Like Yayoi, Yuka dreams of the strange hotel with the steep orange roof; unlike Yayoi, Yuka has done research at the library and knows the history of the Ono Kanko and the reasons that it haunts her. For Nagisa and Matsumura, the realization that they are connected to the Ono Kanko murders comes through their participation in the movie, *Memory*, and the ghosts that it awakens. Nagisa is untroubled by her past life until she auditions for a part in the film; from the moment she hears the tale of the Ono Kanko, she is stalked by the ghost of a little girl who carries an enormous doll. On the set, Nagisa learns that she has been cast in the role of Chisato, the six-year-old girl murdered at the hotel by her father, Professor Omori — the very child whose ghost has been haunting her. At first, Nagisa believes that she is the reincarnation of Chisato. Running her fingers over photographs in old newspapers, however, she comes to the dreadful realization that she is actually bound to Professor Omori and that Chisato's visits are not compassionate but vengeful. Matsumura, the director of *Memory*, is likewise haunted by the Ono Kanko. Obsessed with memorializing the experiences of the murder victims on film, Matsumura hopes to "lay their vengeful souls to rest" while ensuring that they will not be forgotten. Surrounded by newspaper clippings, photographs, notebooks, and artifacts from the murders, Matsumura works on the script and is visited by Chisato. Rising up through the pages of *Memory*, the child ghost guides Matsumura through the touchstones of a horri-

ble past to a realization of who he once was, Chisato's big brother, Yuya Omori.

For both Nagisa and Matsumura, the child ghost Chisato is a doorway into the terrifying memories buried in their mental crypts; the key to this doorway is Chisato's doll, "imbued with all her bitter fury."⁵ Given to Matsumura in a dusty old box as he wrote *Memory*, the doll waited silently for him to open its secret chamber and reveal the memories of Chisato's short life and tragic death. To look upon the blood-soaked doll with its crushed face is to see in an instant the convergence of Chisato's past and present. In newspaper photographs, Chisato's smile illuminates the otherwise dead page; in a home movie shot on the day of the murders, she runs through the streets of a village with sweet curiosity, wonderfully innocent and alive. Such images make us tremble at what she has become, a bloodied corpse in a closet, a vengeful and hungry ghost suspended in the dark crypt of memory who holds out her hand in order to pull others into the shadows. Chisato and her doll reach out to the living, repeating a single phrase, "Together forever." For those who remember the Ono Kanko, it is a sorrowful plea to be remembered and not forgotten. For Nagisa/Omori, however, it is not a question but a demand that the Professor fulfill his promise to be with his daughter beyond death. Chisato forces Nagisa to confront Professor Omori's horrible reflection within her own soul, to claim her inherited karmic actions, and to care for the children that s/he once left behind. At the conclusion of the film, Nagisa/Omori does not die to be reborn again. Instead, driven insane by the memory of who s/he once was, s/he remains alive and straightjacketed in a locked cell, forgotten by society. The crypt-like room is empty save for a small red ball and a doll containing the suspended spirits of the children; Nagisa, Omori, Yuya, and Chisato will be "Together forever" after all.

The true horror of *Rinne* rests in our fear that, like Nagisa, we might all be captives to a tragic past from which we cannot escape, unknowingly living out our lives according to a film already made, a script already written. The thought that we might be held responsible for the actions of previous generations fills us with dread; like the trucker, we would rather turn off the radio in disgust and forget it entirely.⁶ Like Chisato, however, our memories refuse to be left behind, pressing upon us like a needful child, grabbing our hands and

dragging us backwards in time, often into sorrow. It is through such memories that the past lives again, reincarnated in myriad forms, haunting us, binding us, and sometimes confronting us with our own dreaded reflection in the mirror.⁷



Screenshot Rinne

Dek Hor: Dread, Memory, Rebirth, and Reconciliation

Songyos Sugmakanan's Thai film *Dek Hor* (2006) shares several themes with *Rinne*. Parallel timelines intersect in a dreadful space and converge through the agency of a dead child who, connected to tragic events buried and spinning in the dark tomb of memory, persists in reaching out to the present, demanding to be known and remembered. The intentions of the ghost-children in each film, however, are quite different; *Rinne*'s Chisato reaches out to the present in vengeance, dragging the living back into her darkened closet-crypt, while *Dek Hor*'s ghost-child, Vichien, reaches out to the living in order to bring all into the light of love and reconciliation. Through friendship, Vichien and the living boy, Ton, clasp hands and walk through death together, pulling each other from their respective crypts so that each might be liberated from the past and reborn. Both *Rinne* and *Dek Hor* take reincarnation and rebirth as central themes; unlike *Rinne*, however, where reincarnation is a form of punishment that demands a perpetual return to a dreadful past, *Dek Hor* presents rebirth as a promise fulfilled through love, one that allows all of the characters, living and dead, to move into the light of a new future.⁸ And while the characters of *Rinne* become trapped in eternal cycles of dread and memory, the characters of *Dek Hor* use remembrance as a path to reconciliation and peace.

Dek Hor, or *Dormitory*, is the story of Ton Chatree, a young boy who witnesses his father's infidelity with the family maid and is subsequently sent to Saichon Witaya boarding school. Watching his parents drive away, Ton not only fears being left behind and hidden like his father's crime, but also dreads sleeping in the dorm with its dark shadows and seemingly sinister faces. One night, he is brought into a circle of boys hunkered between the cots where they are telling "the history of the school" through ghost stories. One boy tells the story of a girl who hung herself from a Po tree; an autopsy later revealed that she was pregnant, and "a pregnant ghost is the nastiest kind around."⁹ A phantom school master reportedly haunts the grounds, and a ghost stalks the bathrooms, especially on nights when the dogs howl in unison. Worst of all is the story of the seventh-grade boy who slept in their dorm, in Ton's very bed, who drowned himself in the swimming pool. That night, Ton gets up to use the bathroom; in the shadowy darkness, he hears the dogs howl, sees a figure standing behind him, and runs back to his bed to hide. The next morning he has wet his bed and is teased and shunned by the other boys except for Vichien Chumchong, a loner who helps him navigate his new environment and eases his sense of abandonment. It is not until the boys gather in an outside theater to watch *Hungry Ghost 4*, a movie that encapsulates traditional Thai and East Asian pop-cultural assumptions about vengeful and hungry ghosts who have it in for the living, that Ton discovers he has himself befriended a ghost.¹⁰

Much like uncovering a long-buried memory, Vichien and Ton's parallel timelines are slowly revealed through short vignettes. In one flashback, we learn that Vichien, like Ton, bears the burden of his father's misdeeds. Accused of corruption, Vichien's father is stripped of his police badge and sentenced to twenty five years in prison. The schoolmistress Miss Pranee tries to protect Vichien from the truth, but he discovers a newspaper detailing the case in her office; she catches him reading the paper, hits him repeatedly, and he falls into the record player, gouging the record. A second vignette reveals another connection between Vichien and Ton — both boys sense that they do not fit in, that they are somehow invisible and forgotten. Even Ton sees that "We have a lot in common, you know? Nobody cares about either of us." For Vichien, loneliness and longing for acceptance are the catalysts of his death. After discovering his father's crime, Vichien goes swimming with the other boys at the pool. When one boy feigns that he is drowning, the others rush to save him.

Unwisely, Vichien decides to try the same ruse, but his plan backfires when he develops a leg cramp and begins to drown. Dismissing him as a pretender, the boys ignore his cries and head to dinner while Vichien dies alone at the bottom of the pool. A third vignette unearths an even deeper connection between Vichien and Ton; both boys are trapped in the past, compelled to relive one dreadful moment over and over again. Vichien's ghost is forced to drown in the now empty pool every night at 6:00 pm, the moment of his death, just as Ton repeatedly drowns in his feelings of anger and rejection towards his father. Vichien and Ton are not alone in their compulsion to repeatedly relive a single moment; believing that her inability to protect Vichien from the news of his father's crime led to his "suicide," Miss Pranee continually listens to the gouged record skip like a rift in time, staring into her empty drawer, unable to let go of the past.

In *Dek Hor*, the friendship between the ghost-boy Vichien (past) and the living Ton (present) acts as a catalyst for rebirth (future) across two timelines. Vichien, who rightfully lives in the past, cannot bear to see the living trapped there with him, stuck in a moment, unable to move forward. To this end, he confronts Ton about his selfish obsession with his father's rejection: "You said no one cares about you. How about yourself? Do you care about anyone else but yourself?" Shocked, Ton realizes that Vichien has given him a great gift in rescuing him from the darkness of his selfish anger and wants to return the favor. Using ether from the science laboratory, Ton liberates his soul from his body, crosses back into the past, and saves Vichien at the moment of his drowning. This selfless act releases Vichien from the dark cycle of death and enables him to step fully into the light. No longer encumbered by past anger or loneliness, Vichien and Ton walk side-by-side down the school's entry road, bathed in late-afternoon sunlight. As they joke about who will get to date the cafeteria lady's daughter, Vichien turns to Ton and says, "I have to go now;" he places his hand on Ton's shoulder then pulls it away, severing the two timelines, and walks into the light of rebirth alone, waving his hand, never looking back. Ton suddenly awakens, surrounded by his living friends who, after all, would never leave him behind. Having liberated the past, Ton redeems the present, most notably his relationship with his father. When his parents come to collect him, Ton approaches his father and tells him that he likes his new school. His smile lights up his father's face, and the two hug; at last, the past is no longer

between them, but behind them. Unwilling to leave anyone behind in the darkness, Ton visits Miss Pranee who sits listening to her broken record. Giving her a memento from Vichien, Ton tells her that she is not responsible for Vichien's death, adding that "He knows that you were concerned about him. Thank you, Miss Pranee, for always taking care of us." At these words, the record stops skipping and the song continues its melody to the end.

In *Dek Hor*, the ghost child embodies the trauma of a tragic event that lurks in the darkness, waiting to be remembered. Unlike Chisato or the stereotypical ghosts from *Hungry Ghosts 4*, however, neither Vichien nor the collective past seeks to consume the living in revenge for its own misfortunes. Instead, the past and its child-ghosts reach out to the present in order to befriend us, reveal our true reflections, and — if we listen carefully — lead us into the light of the future.



Screensbot Dek Hor

El Orfanato: The Dark Key to Eternal Childhood

In *Rinne*, characters are dragged unwillingly into a past that they have no wish to remember, while the characters of *Dek Hor* confront the past in order to redeem it and move into the future. Completing the circle, the Spanish film *El Orfanato*, directed by Juan Antonio Bayona, presents characters who must exhume tragic events hidden in the recent past in order to enter a beautiful world beyond death where forever-children play in dappled sunlight. This Neverland exists not in the future, but in a distant past that pre-exists the tragic deaths of the orphan-ghosts that haunt the film. The agents for this process are the

ghost-child Tomás and five orphans, all murdered; a living child named Simón who is very close to death; and Simón's nostalgic mother, Laura — also an orphan — who must unlock her own dark memories in order to return with Simón to her own idealized childhood.

El Orfanato opens with Laura as a little girl playing toca la pared with her fellows in the orphanage play yard; small leaves drift down from the bluest of skies and golden afternoon sunlight bathes the past in luminescence. A phone rings, and we learn that Laura is to be adopted that very day, separated from her friends forever. When the story resumes, the adult Laura and her husband, Carlos, have purchased the old orphanage in order to open a home for disabled children. For Laura, the return to the orphanage by the sea is also a return to her mythologized childhood, an experience that which she would like to recreate for her six-year-old son, Simón. As a mother, Laura sees the world with a child's eyes, giving credence to Simón's imaginary friends and telling him stories that she knows will spark his wondrous imagination. She takes him on an adventure to a cave down at the beach, telling him tales of pirates and hidden treasure; inside the cave, Simón encounters Tomás, a new imaginary friend hiding in the darkness. He asks if Tomás can come home with them, and she acquiesces, not realizing that she has just adopted a child-ghost who holds the key to her own dark past. One rainy afternoon, Laura and Simón sit together while he finishes *Peter Pan*. Upset that Wendy isn't allowed to return to Neverland, Simón asks, "If Peter Pan came for me, would you come too?" Looking away sadly, she responds, "No, I'm too old to go to Neverland, darling." Despite her child-like spirit and aching for the past, Laura seems to know that such a return is impossible.

Laura and Simón's idyllic relationship is first shattered and ultimately reconciled by horrible secrets buried on two timelines, that of Simón in the present, and that of Tomás and his friends in the past; Laura, it is revealed, bridges both. Simón's past resurfaces with an unannounced visit from Benigna, a woman claiming to be a social worker assigned Simón's case. She presents Laura with a folder on Simón, who we learn is adopted and HIV positive. Laura sends Benigna away, locking the secret folder in a kitchen drawer and hoping that it will remain buried in the forbidden darkness; as in *Rinne* and *Deke Hor*, however, the past refuses to remain silent. That afternoon, Simón tells Laura

about a game that his invisible friends like to play; the ghosts hide your greatest treasure and you must follow the clues to reclaim it. If you are successful, the ghosts grant you a wish. The two hunt for Simón's golden coins and are ultimately lead to the drawer in the kitchen and the secret folder where the treasure is hidden. As the coins hit the floor, Simón jumps up and down and confronts Laura with the truth, that he is adopted, that he is dying, and that she is a liar. When asked where he learned such things, he says, "Tomás told me the truth, that I'm just like them!" Tomás appears again the next day as Laura and Carlos host a party to celebrate the opening of the group home; when Laura comes to get Simón so that he can meet the children, he lashes out, demanding that she come to see Tomás' little house, *NOW*. She hits him and leaves the room; when she returns to reconcile, he is gone. Running around the house frantically, she is confronted with a boy wearing a vintage orphan's frock and a strange sack over his head. The boy pushes her into the bathroom and locks her in, holding the key to the window, a foreshadowing of all the hidden secrets yet to be revealed. From this moment forward, Simón is missing; her greatest treasure has been stolen, but Laura doesn't remember how to play.

In order to find Simón, Laura must excavate that which has been buried in the dark crypt of the past, including the hidden history of Tomás and the orphanage, and bring it into the light. Several months after Simón's disappearance, Laura learns that Tomás was Benigna's son and that because of his deformities he was secreted away in the dark cellar, his face hidden behind a one-eyed mask. One day, the other orphans — Laura's playmates before her adoption — brought him down to the cave on the beach and stole his mask, betting that he would not emerge without it. The tide came in, and Tomás died hidden in the darkness beneath the cliffs rather than face the light. Convinced that Tomás is the key to her son's recovery, Laura hires a medium who enters the darkness of the past and discovers the ghosts of the dying orphans locked away, poisoned by Benigna in retaliation for Tomás' death. Their suffering revealed, the ghosts lead Laura to an old storage shed where she exhumes flour sacks containing their burnt little bodies from a dark crypt.¹¹ Simón's recovery, however, requires Laura to tunnel even deeper into the past, into a time before the children's deaths. To this end, Laura recreates the orphanage the way it looked in her childhood. Wearing an old frock, she makes the beds, sets the table, and attempts to bring her memories alive. Ultimately, it is a game of *toca la*

pared that exhumes Simón; she is tagged by a ghost who leads her to a closet and locks her in. There Laura discovers a secret door covered with wallpaper and, behind it, a set of stairs descending into the darkness and Tomás' hidden room. At this moment, Laura remembers what she had tried to forget: Simón wanted to show her this room on the day he disappeared. On the cold cellar floor, she finds Simón's festering corpse, dressed in Tomás' clothes and mask. Another memory surfaces: on the night of Simón's disappearance she heard banging in the walls and a crash from below — his failed attempts to get her attention and escape the darkness.

Standing in the dark cellar of the orphanage, the dark core of her own memory, Laura realizes that all of the forbidden drawers, haunted closets, and buried secrets have been unlocked and illuminated. Having exhumed her old memories, Laura reconsolidates them with the help of the ghosts, her fellow orphans. Cradling Simón in her arms, she raises him out of the cellar and into the main bedroom where she rocks him in the darkness. Unable to bear the horrible memory of Simón's death, she denies the validity of the present, rejects her future with Carlos, and taking a handful of pills, chooses to die so that she might return to a golden past and regain her son. Lifting her head she says, "I want Simón back," and with these words the lighthouse once again shines its beacon into the orphanage, calling her home. Simón awakens in her arms, telling her his wish — that she would stay to take care of him and the other children forever. Laura's playmates, the long-dead orphans, rise from their beds and hug her, amazed that she has returned, "grown old, like Wendy!" As they gather around her, she tells them a story about a house of "where the lost children lived." In this strangest of happy endings, Laura resurrects her deepest and oldest memories, reconsolidating them to accommodate her most recent experiences; through this process, Laura and Simón might share her own distant childhood and live with their fellow orphans in golden Neverland forever.

In *El Orfanato*, as in *Rinne* and *Dek Hor*, characters both living and dead are haunted by a pervasive sense of dread that rises from repressed memories too unpleasant to remember. Like a child ghost, these memories refuse to remain buried in the mind-crypt and demand to be revealed, to be brought into the light. Repressed memories and child ghosts necessitate the intersection of

two timelines — the living present and the dead past. The nature of the past varies in each of our films. In *Rinne*, for example, the past is a terrifying place that cannot be escaped; past lives and the karmic actions of previous generations haunt the living like Chisato, dragging them back into the darkness against their will. In *Dek Hor*, however, human beings have the power and obligation to redeem the past; Ton and Vichien work together to unearth dreadful memories and through them, heal the present and open the path to future enlightenment. In *El Orfanato*, the distant past and the memories of childhood are a wondrous place in which to hide from the horrors of the present and a terrifying future; Tomás helps guide Laura deep into her own memory, into a place of golden light beyond pain that she would never wish to escape. In all three, the journey into dread is really a passage into the most haunted space of all, the human mind, with its memories, like orphaned ghosts, reaching out their hands to the present.

References

- Colmeiro, José (2004) “Nation of Ghosts?: Haunting, Historical Memory and Forgetting in Post-Franco Spain,” in: 452°: Electronic Journal of Theory of Literature and Comparative Literature 4 (2011), 17-34.
- Andrés del Pozo, M. Natalia (2010) “Dealing with the Uncomfortable Relative: The Silent Mass Graves in the Orphanage,” in: More than Thought (Fall 2010).
- Kim, Ji-Hoon (2011) “Learning About Time: An Interview with Apichatpong Weerasethakul”, in: Film Quarterly 64:4, 48-52.
- McRoy, Jay (1995) *Nightmare Japan: Contemporary Japanese Horror Cinema*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 75-77.
- Nelson, Lindsay (2009) “Ghosts of the Past, Ghosts of the Future: Monsters, Children, and Contemporary Japanese Horror Cinema”, in: Cinemascope, Issue 13.
- Punter, David (2002) “Spectral Criticism”, in: Julian Woffreys (ed.) *Introducing Criticism at the 21st Century*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 259-278.

Filmography

- Rinne*, Japan, 2005, dir. Takashi Shimizu, Japanese and English. Original: 輪廻 (Reincarnation).
- Dek Hor*, Thailand, 2006, dir. Songyos Sugmakanan, Thai and English, Original: เด็กหอ (Dorm).
- El Orfanato*, Spain, 2007, dir. Juan Antonio Bayona, Spanish.

Notes

- ¹ Lindsay Nelson, “Ghosts of the Past, Ghosts of the Future: Monsters, Children, and Contemporary Japanese Horror Cinema,” *Cinemascope*, V: 13 (2009).
- ² On the idea of cryptonymy, see David Punter, “Spectral Criticism” in *Introducing Criticism at the 21st Century*, Julian Woffreys, ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002).
- ³ As if this was not horrifying enough, each elder soul contains a secondary soul from a more distant past, and so on, back to origins. In such a system, the present has very little freedom, and all are culpable of ancient crimes.
- ⁴ Throughout *Rinne*, the medium of film itself serves as a type of reincarnation. *Memory* is a reincarnation of the original events at the Ono Kanko. Likewise, the original Super 8 recording of the murders that appears in Nagisa’s bed is another form of reincarnation, one that might be played again and again. As an experiment, Professor Omori may have been attempting to trap the souls of his victims in the film as each died. As Nagisa’s agent watches Omori’s home movie, the murders are reenacted at the now abandoned Ono Kanko with the reincarnations of the original victims. As a commission views raw footage from the filming of *Memory*, still more ghosts are released, yet another reincarnation.
- ⁵ Chisato’s doll is the modern reincarnation of the ancient *Hinamatsuri*, or spirit doll, which recurs in Japanese horror as well as supernatural survival games such as Tecmo’s *Fatal Frame* series.
- ⁶ For a concise introduction to memory, identity, and the national past, see the introduction in José Colmeiro, “Nation of Ghosts?: Haunting, Historical Memory and Forgetting in Post-Franco Spain,” *452º: Electronic Journal of Theory of Literature and Comparative Literature* 4 (2011), 17-34.
- ⁷ On the loss of free will, see Jay McRoy, *Nightmare Japan: Contemporary Japanese Horror Cinema* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1995), 75-77
- ⁸ On time, memory, reincarnation, and ghosts in Thai cinema, see “Learning About Time: An Interview with Apichatpong Weerasethakul,” *Film Quarterly* 64:4, (2011), 48-52.
- ⁹ In Indonesian mythology, the pregnant ghost is called a *kuntilanak* and is said to linger beneath Po trees and along the edges of the water where they eat curious children.
- ¹⁰ This movie within a movie pokes fun at the Chinese Hopping Vampire genre, the ultimate vintage B-horror movie in East Asian culture.
- ¹¹ M. Natalia Andrés del Pozo, “Dealing with the Uncomfortable Relative: The Silent Mass Graves in the Orphanage,” *More than Thought* (Fall 2010)