



MONTCLAIR STATE
UNIVERSITY

Montclair State University
**Montclair State University Digital
Commons**

Theses, Dissertations and Culminating Projects

1-2022

“To Feel Myself Beloved on the Earth” : Hauntology and Memory in the Films of Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu

Elizabeth Denny Hook
Montclair State University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.montclair.edu/etd>



Part of the [Film and Media Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Hook, Elizabeth Denny, ““To Feel Myself Beloved on the Earth” : Hauntology and Memory in the Films of Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu” (2022). *Theses, Dissertations and Culminating Projects*. 873.
<https://digitalcommons.montclair.edu/etd/873>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Montclair State University Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses, Dissertations and Culminating Projects by an authorized administrator of Montclair State University Digital Commons. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@montclair.edu.

Abstract

This paper examines themes prevalent in the works of Mexican director Alejandro González Iñárritu, particularly familial bonds, responsibility, memory and legacy. Through a lens of hauntology, a term first coined by Jacques Derrida in reference to the persistent or haunting qualities of social, cultural or political ideas, this analysis considers the “ghosts” of Iñárritu’s films and the demands they make on the living.

Keywords: hauntology, family, liminality, Alejandro González Iñárritu, *Beautiful*, *Birdman*, *The Revenant*, responsibility, memory

MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY

“To Feel Myself Beloved on the Earth”:
Hauntology and Memory in the Films of Alejandro González Iñárritu

by

Elizabeth Denny Hook

A Master’s Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of

Montclair State University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Master of Arts

January 2022

College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Department of English

Thesis Committee:



Dr. Alexios Lykidis
Thesis Sponsor



Dr. Jeffrey Gonzalez
Committee Member



Dr. Art Simon
Committee Member

“To Feel Myself Beloved on the Earth”:
Hauntology and Memory in the Films of Alejandro González Iñárritu

A THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of Master of Arts

by

Elizabeth Denny Hook

Montclair State University

Montclair, NJ

2022

Contents

1. Introduction..... 6

2. Liminality of Characters as Evidence of Hauntology..... 10

3. Injunction of the Specter—and Spectator..... 24

List of Figures

Figure 1. Scene from *Beautiful*..... 14

Figure 2. Scene from *Birdman*..... 18

Figure 3. *Manao tupapau* by Paul Gauguin..... 30

Figure 4. Scene from *The Revenant*..... 30

1. Introduction

The 1892 painting *Manao tupapau* by Paul Gauguin features a young woman, believed to be his 13-year-old Tahitian lover, Tehama, lying naked on her stomach and glancing back at the spectator. Legs crossed at the ankles, her palms flat on the pillow and fingers (with the exception of one pinky) held tightly together, it is as if she has wings, but clipped: she wants to take flight but is firmly held in place by an unseen force. Behind her sits an ominous figure, cloaked and hooded in black, perched upright against a carved wooden bed post, face in profile. The one eye that is visible regards at an odd angle; its gaze could be directed at the girl, or at us. Also in the background are daubs of white which flutter and spark outward like fireworks. The painting's title is usually translated as *The Spirit of the Dead Watching* (*tupapau* is the Tahitian word for spirit or spirits). Gauguin observed that the white sparks were *tupapau* flowers, which "show that the specters take an interest in us humans" (Gauguin qtd in Danielsson 55-6). He explained that the painting's title could have two meanings: "either [the girl] is thinking of the specter or the specter is thinking of her" (Gauguin qtd in Danielsson 55-6; see fig. 3).

In recent decades, the figure of the specter that haunts Gauguin's painting has become an important theoretical lens through which to understand contemporary politics. The word "specter" figures prominently in Jacques Derrida's 1993 *Specters of Marx*. Initially appearing in Marx's *Communist Manifesto* in reference to the perceived threat that Communism posed to European authorities ("A spectre is haunting Europe"), Derrida expanded on the term in his plenary address at the UC Riverside conference "Whither Marxism? Global Crises in International Perspective" (Marx qtd in Derrida 4). The conference was convened after such

seismic events as the fall of the Berlin Wall and the protest in Tiananmen Square seemed to signal the death of Communism and the victory of free market capitalism, prompting Francis Fukuyama to claim society had reached “the end of history,” and for countless others to dissect and autopsy Marxism itself (qtd in Cullenberg and Magnus introduction viii). In invoking the specter Derrida sought to “(take) his position for a certain spirit of Marxism,¹” to “not . . . flee from a responsibility” (qtd in Cullenberg and Magnus introduction x). In *Specters*, Derrida uses Hamlet’s father’s ghost to underscore this responsibility: “Swear,” it says, thereby issuing an injunction to the listener (Shakespeare qtd in Derrida 3). Marx’s specter demanded of Derrida, who in turn demands it of us: acknowledge Marxism’s legacy, outside of time, presence, place, history. *Remember me*. Looking for a way to characterize this persistent ideology, Derrida coined the term “hauntology.” A play on the word ontology, the former “replac(ed) the priority of being and presence with the figure of the ghost” who is “paradoxically neither present nor absent, neither dead nor alive, yet their appearance—when they return—marks an indisputable set of circumstances” (Davis 373; DiFrancesco 26).

Since then, the concept of hauntology, a somewhat ambiguous, loosely defined term to begin with, has been applied to everything from music to painting to psychoanalysis to literary theory. As Colin Davis observes, in literary criticism especially, hauntology has proven a rich means of examining, outside “the order of knowledge . . . our relation to the dead [and] . . . the

¹ Another specter was haunting the culture wars that raged at the time when Derrida wrote his treatise: deconstructionism, and the threat it posed to the right’s understanding of truth, values, and even meaning itself. Derrida’s concept of play figured prominently in his philosophy, celebrating the lack of center and the resulting displacement of meaning—what he called the “disruption of presence” (6). The specter in Derrida’s hauntology could thus be seen as a doubling down on this sense of play, its existence and appearance a challenge to true form, an “almost unnamable thing” (6). *Specter’s* suggestion that “deconstruction was all along a radicalization of Marx’s legacy,” however, was met with much skepticism by Derrida’s contemporaries (Davis 373).

elusive identities of the living” (379). Most significantly, he argues, observing art through the lens of hauntology allows for a “productive opening of meaning,” a way to expand, exceed, or even obliterate ontological boundaries and dichotomies.

Using the framework of hauntology, this paper will observe the work of Mexican director Alejandro González Iñárritu, in particular three films: *Biutiful* (2010), *Birdman or (The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance)* (2014), and *The Revenant* (2015). In each film, the director positions the dead and their relation to the living within a genre of gritty realism imbued with elements of the supernatural, without ever demanding we choose between what is real and what is not. Rather, Iñárritu uses the spirits of the dead to underscore a theme common throughout his body of work: the importance of family, memory, and remembrance, of honoring loved ones and of keeping their memory alive. While other recent scholarship has examined Iñárritu’s work through a lens of hauntology, the focus has tended to be along socio-economic and/or cultural lines (with particular emphasis paid to labor, immigration and colonialism). As Davis observes, “(a)ttending to the ghost is an ethical injunction . . . whose otherness we are responsible for preserving” (373). In what follows, however, my focus will be on the ways in which Iñárritu employs the presence and non-presence of his characters, the spirits of both the living and the dead, to underscore the recurrent themes of familial and memorial responsibility. Sometimes, the characters are haunted by a lost loved one. In others, the protagonists themselves are the ones haunting, existing somewhere between life and death. The liminality and spectral presence of both, evinced in their ability to seemingly slip back and forth between life and death, alter forms of consciousness, cross boundaries and thresholds, die and be reborn, suggests a haunting; they remain stuck in the present, between

the past and a future in which they risk being forgotten lest they make amends, repair relationships, and/or provide needed guidance to loved ones. Further, their tenuous existence speaks to an underlying theme of impermanence in Iñárritu's films: the fleeting, fragile, evanescence of life, which renders it all the more precious. Serving as visual cues to convey characters' hauntology are the recurring motifs of floating and flight, which will also be explored.

The films being discussed here vary in style, story, and language, but, as with many of Iñárritu's films, each concerns the bond between fathers and children. In these three stories in particular, the fathers are grappling with their mortality and seek to ensure the safety of their children in their impending absence. *Biutiful* is Iñárritu's second Spanish-language feature film and stars Javier Bardem as Uxbal, a father who learns he is dying of prostate cancer. Unlike in the film that inspired the story² Uxbal's relationship with his children, while not immune to the stress caused by the impoverished conditions in which they live, is one of mutual love and respect. Uxbal fears leaving his children with an unstable mother who cannot properly care for them and worries he will essentially render them orphans when he dies. *Birdman* stars Michael Keaton as Riggan Thompson, a middle-aged actor whose relationship with his wife and daughter suffered during his rise (and subsequent fall) as a Hollywood superhero star. The film follows Riggan (and his alter ego, the eponymous Birdman) as he prepares to premier his adaptation of Raymond Carver's short story "What We Talk About When We Talk About Love"

² Iñárritu has cited Akira Kurosawa's 1952 film *Ikiru* as inspiration for *Biutiful*. That film, the title of which translates to "to live," features a dying Japanese civil servant who, though jaded by years of paralyzing bureaucracy, fights to build a children's playground in his final days. Both *Ikiru* and its inspiration, Tolstoy's "The Death of Ivan Ilych," feature fathers whose children have given up on them.

on the Broadway stage, and in the process prove to himself and his daughter that he's lived a life of meaning and purpose and is worthy of love and respect. *The Revenant* stars Leonardo DiCaprio and is loosely based on the real-life Hugh Glass, a tracker in mid-nineteenth century North America who is traveling with a crew of fur trappers, among them his half-Native teenage son Hawk. When Glass is attacked and mauled by a Grizzly bear, his crewmate Fitzgerald convinces the hunting party that Glass will not survive and should be killed in an act of mercy. Hawk objects, provoking Fitzgerald's ire, whereupon Fitzgerald fatally stabs him as a near-dead Glass helplessly watches on. Glass survives, and travels across the wintry landscape to find Fitzgerald and possibly avenge his son. Throughout the film, Glass's wife and later, his son, appear to him in dreams, flashbacks, and fever dream sequences.

2. Liminality of Characters as Evidence of Hauntology

The idea of liminality figures prominently into many of Iñárritu's films, which often portray characters at the threshold between two places, lives, decisions, or states of existence. In these three films in particular, the director suggests his characters' liminal metaphysical state of being from the very first diegetic sounds and images, which are evocative of the womb and natural world and which complement the parent-child dynamics he will go on to explore more fully. *Beautiful* opens with, it is later revealed, a man who is actively dying, and the first diegetic sound heard over the film credits is that from an open window: distant street traffic and, closer, the chirp of crickets. Below that sound, closer still, is the sound of someone breathing peacefully. In *Birdman*, (separate from the syncopated drum heard when the title sequence begins, which itself oscillates between diegetic and non-diegetic sound over the course of the film) there is again the sound of crickets, and a shimmering sound effect as an image of a

meteor falling to Earth appears onscreen. In *The Revenant*, what sounds like an underwater heartbeat is overlaid with peaceful breathing, crickets chirping, tree branches creaking, and finally, the voice of a father speaking to his young son. Though the stories then veer in vastly different directions, these opening sights and sounds allow Iñárritu and his cinematographer to situate their characters on the precipice of substantial change and transformation.

“Is it real?” a young girl whispers in *Biutiful*.³ “Yes,” replies a man, “that’s what my father told my mother. She was pregnant with me, and she never saw him again.” The mention of pregnancy reinforces the womb-like effect of the muffled diegetic sound and marks the first moment of birth in a film that focuses on life, death, and the places in between—and beyond—each. This opening scene is repeated at the film’s end, and its cyclical nature is something of a recurring motif in Iñárritu’s films.⁴ The first image we see is that of the clasped hands of the speakers, Uxbal and his daughter, Ana. When the scene plays again it becomes clear that we are witnessing the final moments of Uxbal’s death. The two are lying on the bed looking at the diamond ring that belonged to Uxbal’s mother, which he then gives to Ana. In the latter version of the scene, a graphic match shot of Uxbal’s serene, dead face, eyes open, dissolves to him in a snowscape, understood to be the afterlife. As a young man approaches him, with an open look on his face, Uxbal’s and Ana’s conversation continues in voiceover. He tells her about a radio station from his childhood that would play the sounds of the sea, which frightened him. The sea, too, suggests the womb, and a place between two worlds. The young man, we later learn,

³ All quotations from *Biutiful* are English language subtitle quotations taken directly from the 2010 film.

⁴ In addition to this scene, there is dialogue that is repeated by different characters (Uxbal’s son Mateo and his father) over the course of the film narrative. In *The Revenant*, Hawk whispers the same words to Glass as his father once uttered to him (which in turn were first spoken by Glass’s wife). In *Birdman*, the cyclical nature of the film is evident in that it arguably begins and ends with Riggan’s attempted suicides.

is the father Uxbal never met in life (he died in Mexico at twenty years old, fleeing the Francoist regime) and appears younger than Uxbal is now. Lying in the snow, one eye open, is a dead owl. “Do you know that when owls die, they spit a hairball out of their beak?” the young man asks Uxbal, who smiles, seemingly in recognition. Later in the film this same question is asked by Uxbal’s young son, Mateo, underscoring the narrative’s theme of eternal recurrence, and linking father to son to grandfather. Further, Iñárritu’s choice to begin the film with scenes of the afterlife speaks to Derrida’s notion of the specter as “a revenant [who] *begins by coming back*” (emphasis in the original, 11).

Uxbal’s liminal identity is imparted in ways both overt and subtle in Iñárritu’s and cinematographer Rodrigo Prieto’s images and narrative. The director has described Uxbal as a *charnego*⁵, essentially an immigrant in his own country. Further, he lives in Barcelona, referred to by Iñárritu as “the queen of Europe” and often rendered beautifully if rather sentimentally in many contemporary films (e.g. Woody Allen’s *Vicky Christina Barcelona*, which also starred Bardem) shot since the city’s emergence as a cultural mecca post-1992 Olympics (Iñárritu Cannes interview). The Barcelona depicted by Prieto, however, is more like that of an “urban purgatory” (Connolly 547). Uxbal and his children, along with his ex-wife and a brother who live nearby, inhabit a poor, working class neighborhood that attracts immigrants from all over the world, the “twisted twin” of the halcyon Hollywood version, filled with “poverty, darkness, distress and chaos” (Connolly 548). Further positioning Uxbal as a liminal being is his work as a

⁵ A derogatory term used by Catalonians to refer to Spanish nationals hailing from rural, impoverished regions in Spain during the Franco regime. Incentivized by Franco to migrate to Catalonia during the 1960s, they did not speak Catalan and were discouraged from learning it, serving to disrupt any cohesive Catalan identity while rendering them unwelcome immigrants in their own country.

middleman on the black market, where he brokers deals between the Chinese immigrants who oversee a sweatshop producing counterfeit handbags and the African immigrants who sell them on the streets.

Having established Uxbal as a character who, like many of the people with whom he interacts in his professional and personal life, exists on the margins, Iñárritu cements his protagonist's liminal nature by portraying him as a *vidente*, a seer or spirit medium who communes with the dead. Early in the film, after a grim trip to a clinic where he endures a painful exam and it is suggested that, when the test results come back, the prognosis will be poor, Uxbal visits what appears to be an evangelical church in the neighborhood, where a wake for three young boys is taking place. Making his way upstairs and through a cramped hallway where grieving parents are pressed tightly together, he greets one of the boy's fathers from the doorway of the room where the children's bodies are laid out in coffins. (Prieto takes care to frame Bardem as he pauses in the doorway before entering, in a literal and figurative crossing of the threshold into the room where the dead lay). As Uxbal takes a seat in the room, the camera captures a close-up of his face, breathing in and out calmly. The next shot is a point-of-view shot from Uxbal's perspective, across the room over the open coffins in which the boys are dressed in dark suits, eyes closed. In the following close up, there is a flash of recognition on Uxbal's face and then a medium shot of one of the young boys, dressed in his suit, now sitting across the room from him, gazing down at his own cadaver in the coffin (see fig. 1). Uxbal stares for a moment before closing his eyes and chanting softly: "Still are your lashes, and so is your heart." The voice of the young boy is then heard, speaking quickly but indecipherably, in a hauntological moment in which "the voices and deeds of the past, present and future dialogue

and echo, in concert” (Connolly 546). Uxbal approaches the coffin and picks up the cadaver’s hand (the boy in the chair no longer visible in the medium shot as Uxbal stands over the coffin), again chanting. “Why can’t you leave?” he asks the boy, whose eyes are now open but who remains motionless. “What’s keeping you here?” In this case, it turns out to be his regret over having stolen a watch that is holding him back. Uxbal later tells the boy’s parents that he was able to help their son “cross over” after listening to what he needed to say (*Beautiful*). In crossing the threshold to commune with the dead, here Uxbal’s liminality intersects with that of the deceased child.



Fig. 1

In *Birdman or (The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance)*, Riggan Thompson’s liminality is suggested in the duality of his conscious waking life and alter ego, the latter personified by the masked superhero he once portrayed years earlier in a film franchise. Brilliantly captured by cinematographer Emmanuel Lubezki and made to appear as one continuous long take, the film follows the actor-director Riggan as he prepares to debut his adaptation of Raymond Carver’s short story “What We Talk About When We Talk About Love” on Broadway. With the long take

technique (the actual cuts of which are carefully hidden⁶) Iñárritu sought to “engage audiences with Riggan’s world so they would feel what the character is going through as his life unravels [and] ‘put the audience in this guy’s shoes in a radical way’” (Lockley 109; Iñárritu qtd in Lockley 109). Metaphysical feats of telekinesis and scenes in which Riggan appears to soar over the theater district provide visual cues to his deteriorating mental state while injecting the black comedy with elements of magical realism.

Riggan’s position as a liminal figure is evident from the opening title sequence. The production company logos appear on the screen, over which can be heard the non-diegetic voice of drummer Antonio Sánchez, who scored the film’s (almost strictly) percussive soundtrack. Then, against a black screen, text begins to appear, red letters, in alphabetical order, forming the words of the poem “Late Fragment” by Raymond Carver:

And did you get what

you wanted from this life, even so?

I did.

And what did you want?

To call myself beloved, to feel myself

beloved on the earth. (Carver)

Slowly, and to the (off)beat of Sánchez’s rat-a-tat percussion, the letters spelling “Birdman” appear next, horizontally, across the (disappearing) Carver poem; though, unlike the latter’s red font, these are white and blue, as if the black title card had been punched out,

⁶ See David Bordwell’s blog *Observations on Film Art* for a detailed analysis of what he estimates to be the film’s approximately 16 cuts.

allowing the gradient of the sky to show through (this is also the moment in which the crickets mentioned above are first heard). Notably, the last letters left onscreen, fragments from the Carver poem, spell out “*amor.*” Just as love vanishes from the screen, the black of the title card is replaced—for all but a few seconds—by a still image: a beach at dawn, on which ghostly white, monstrous jellyfish have washed ashore. This is later revealed to mark Riggan’s epiphanic moment years earlier when, after fighting with his wife, he attempted to kill himself by walking into the ocean, only to be foiled when he was stung by dozens of jellyfish⁷. If the jellyfish are representative of Riggan’s suicide attempt and subsequent desire to live, the story that then unfolds may plot his attempt to right his wrongs, earn his family’s acceptance and the respect of his peers, and strive “to feel . . . beloved on the earth.” However, as its subtitle *or (The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance)* seems to suggest, Riggan will be foiled again, unable to slip the grip of his ego and his own selfish desires. Finally, the title disappears altogether, leaving in its place a fiery meteor tearing through the sky as it plunges to earth at top speed, over crickets chirping and what sounds like an orchestra warming up, growing louder and more pronounced until: silence. The ticking of a clock. And our first encounter with Riggan: crossed-legged, in his underwear, levitating in midair. A gruff, curmudgeonly voice, which is later revealed to belong to his alter ego-slash-nemesis Birdman, is heard over the ticking of the clock:

VO: How did we end up here?

This place is horrible.

Smells like balls.

⁷ As the analysis in *Reflections on Film* points out, the shot of the jellyfish is one of only a few “hard edits” in a film that otherwise suggests one long, continuous take.

We don't belong in this shithole.⁸

The question raised by *Birdman* could just be a washed-up actor musing over his dreary surroundings. Or, combined with the images that precede it, what follows may be purgatory, or hell, or something wholly imagined by a man whose grip on reality is slipping. As with *Beautiful*, however, *Iñárritu* does not demand we categorize what we see on the screen as real or imagined, heaven or hell; perhaps it's both at once. When Riggan displays telekinetic powers or the ability to fly, for instance (not to mention his earlier feat of levitation), there are suggestions that what we see indeed occurs only in Riggan's mind (e.g., his agent enters the dressing room and observes Riggan merely throwing objects around, versus him sending them hurtling through the air with his superpowers). Rather than diminish the magic, though, the long take helps situate us in Riggan's world, for better or for worse, by:

telling a story about a person in a spiritual crisis who might actually be losing his mind.

He might actually be going crazy. We're not sure, and . . . don't ever want to leave the bubble of his anxiety . . . [we want to] be with him inside the bubble of his mounting panic and all the things that happen to him without any break [so that we can]

experience life in this seamless way [as] he's experiencing it. (Norton qtd in Mallin 145)

Additionally, scenes which appear to unfold outside of the chronological narrative, or at least prefigure Riggan's actual death, further suggest the idea that he is a spectral presence who exists in some sort of purgatory or afterlife. One such scene takes place on opening night.

During intermission, Riggan is backstage in his dressing room. His ex-wife Sylvia finds him there lying on his back on his dressing room table, his arms folded across his chest amidst the soft

⁸ All quotations from *Birdman* are taken directly from the film.

glow of the domed bulbs and dozens of flower arrangements. The effect is that of a corpse laid out at a wake, and prompts Sylvia to remark, “You seem abnormally calm” (*Birdman*; see fig. 2).



Fig. 2

Adding to the film’s self-reflexivity while emphasizing Riggan’s liminality is the fact that he inhabits multiple roles: in addition to Riggan himself whom we follow throughout the film there is his alter ego Birdman (the latter whom we first encounter only audibly, but later, as a physical manifestation), as well as the Carver characters Riggan plays in the stage adaptation: Nick, who delivers some choice soliloquies on the nature of love, and also Ed, who commits suicide in the play’s final act.⁹ Over the course of the film, more than one of these characters

⁹ Jane Barnette points out that the characters in Riggan’s adaptation of Carver’s work “bear remarkable similarities to Riggan’s own past” (138). Among the changes Riggan makes to Carver’s original work are that he assigns his character, Nick, the “chemical depression” originally attributed to Mel, the character played by Mike (Edward Norton). Perhaps most tellingly, Riggan adds a flashback scene that was not dramatized in Carver’s story: Ed’s botched suicide attempt in the hotel room where he finds Mike and his ex Terri (Lesley, played by Naomi Watts). Barnette writes: “On the page, Ed attempts suicide alone in his room and is kept alive for three days. It is a ‘botched’ attempt because he shoots himself in the mouth, but instead of dying immediately his head swells twice its normal size and Terri stays with him in the hospital until he passes. On the stage, Ed (played by Keaton/Riggan in a bad 1980s wig/moustache) bangs on the motel door where Terri and Mel are spending the night, and enters the room to confront her, asking if she loves him (she does not). At this revelation, Ed says, ‘I don’t exist. I’m not even here. I don’t exist. None of this matters’. Following this proclamation, he points his gun at Terri, then at Mel,

die, are killed off, or take their own lives, sometimes more than once (the hotel scene in which Ed kills himself is portrayed three times). Riggan thus operates in a constant state of transition, between consciousnesses, roles, and existence.

The theme of transition and the idea of Riggan hovering in a sort of intermediate state (between life and death, or at least between self-denial and self-acceptance) is further emphasized by the filmmakers' positioning of their main character in hallways and doorways, which get tighter and more suffocating as the story progresses. Iñárritu intended for "Riggan's dressing room to be a kind of refuge for the character, while the expansive stage was where he hoped to find success, (with) '(t)he hallways serv(ing) as areas of uncertainty, transferring him from one place to the other'" (Oppenheimer; Iñárritu qtd in Oppenheimer 59). Further, Riggan's gradual mental disintegration is reflected in the narrowing of the corridors through which he passes, mimicking the sense of claustrophobia and mounting anxiety he feels as opening night approaches (Barnett 137). Also, recall that the film is meant to appear as one continuous long take, another effect of which is that the plot seems to unfold at a rather frenzied pace. And yet there is one scene in which time seems to stop for a few beats, taking place, not coincidentally, in one of the drab backstage hallways. The camera had previously been tracking Riggan's agent and friend, Jake (Zach Galifianakis), as he took a phone call, but as he walks out of the shot, the camera remains fixed, hovering, in an extreme long shot facing a long, dark, dank-looking hallway. At the end of the hall there is a fluttering movement, but it is too far away to make out what it might be. Meanwhile, the scene playing out on stage is the one in which Ed kills himself:

then at his own head, successfully killing himself and ending the play" (139-40). On opening night, Riggan swaps out the prop gun with a real one, botching his own suicide attempt in front of a live audience.

we hear the gunshot, the gasp, the applause. Riggan then enters the shot from behind the camera, presumably just having come from curtain call. Slowly, the camera starts to move again, following Riggan from behind as he walks down the hallway, fake blood from the prop gun and fake head wound dripping down his back. Then, just as he turns right to enter the haven of his dressing room, we glimpse what was fluttering at the end of the hall: an old *Birdman* promotional poster, which Riggan had earlier destroyed in a fit of rage, using his seemingly telekinetic powers. Here the hallway is not only a transitional space through which Riggan moves but instead seems to capture two Riggans simultaneously, one being the ego he is attempting to bury or leave behind, flapping there in the hall, but refusing to leave for good. His image fluttering in the hallway's airshaft suggests Riggan's body and spirit are separating: the latter Barthes' "luminous shadow" without which it is just a sterile body (110).

In her essay on dramaturgy, Jane Barnett uses Iñárritu's *Birdman* as a case study, noting its somewhat rare position comprising three mediums, it being a film about a play based on an adapted short story (132). She describes what she calls the "Janus effect": using the Roman god Janus and his capacity to look forward and behind (with his dual or sometimes even multiple faces) as well as his association with doorways, thresholds and beginnings, she highlights the skills necessary to successfully adapt a written work for performance. Interestingly, though she addresses the phenomenon of liminality in the film, her focus is limited to the hallways and corridors as transitional places, and the duality of the auteur-director. But it is her connection of what she calls "adapturgy" to Janus as a liminal and multi-faced god that seems most resonant to the character of Riggan and his own liminality. Riggan's character, it was previously mentioned, inhabits multiple roles in the film. As he progressively unravels, he becomes more

and more entangled with the adaptation he's undertaking, to the point where it too assumes a personification of sorts. He remarks to his daughter Sam after final preview performance: "this play is kinda starting to feel like a miniature, deformed version of myself that just keeps following me around and like, hitting me in the balls with a tiny little hammer" (*Birdman*). The fragility of Riggan's mental state and well-being grows more pronounced as the boundaries between his various identities begin collapsing. Further, this self-reflexivity points to a likely conclusion in which Riggan's attempts at redemption and reconciliation will again be hindered by his ego.

In her memoir about being attacked by a bear in the remote Siberian mountains of Kamchatka, Nastassja Martin writes of being "transformed into a 'blurred figure,' . . . her torn face 'slicked over with internal tissue,' *as if a birth had taken place*, 'for it is manifestly not a death'" (emphasis added; Szalai; Martin qtd in Szalai). *The Revenant*, with its infamous bear attack scene based on a real-life event in which tracker Hugh Glass was savagely mauled by a Grizzly, likewise positions him, on the precipice of death but decidedly, defiantly alive. Indeed, the term revenant, from the French word of the same spelling, means (literally or figuratively) someone who comes back, who returns—from the dead, or to a place—both of which apply to Glass's story. The notion of returning, the cyclical nature of his figurative deaths and rebirths, and just as importantly the moments in between, underscore his position as a liminal figure.

This idea of returning is evident from the beginning of the film, as in the opening scene (which is later understood to be a flashback or dream sequence) in which Glass is sleeping peacefully with his wife and young son. After the womb-evoking sounds of a heartbeat, breathing, and those of the natural world—crickets chirping, wind blowing and trees creaking—

Glass is heard in voiceover, speaking to his son, Hawk: "It's ok son, I know you want this to be over . . . I'm right here" (and later) "But, you don't give up, you hear me? As long as you can still grab a breath, you fight."¹⁰ We learn that Glass spoke these words to Hawk when the child himself was at a point near death, having been badly burned in an attack on their settlement that also left his mother (Glass's wife) dead. Later, after the trapper crew is prepared to perform a mercy killing on the battered Glass, Hawk convinces them to spare his life, and whispers the same words in his father's ear. The motif of repeat discourse between father and son calls to mind that of *Beautiful* and reinforces the idea of hauntology as a dialogue of echoes between the past, present and future.

When it becomes clear that an immobile Glass is hindering the trapper party's progress back to the safety of Fort Kiowa, the captain decides to take the crew forward but offers a reward for whomever will stay behind with Glass in order to give him a proper burial after death, which appears imminent. The young, naïve Jim Bridger volunteers, as does Hawk, and a reluctant Fitzgerald (Tom Hardy). Fitzgerald later attempts to suffocate Glass when they are alone, only to be discovered and outed by Hawk. In a panicked rage as Hawk screams for Bridger's help, Fitzgerald takes out his knife and mercilessly stabs the boy repeatedly in the gut, as a despairing Glass looks on in agony. Eyes bloodshot and mouth frothing, Glass helplessly watches as Fitzgerald then drags his son's body away. The camera quickly pans up from Glass's face into the tall pine trees which sway wildly. By the time Bridger returns from fetching water, Glass is in a near catatonic state, unable to articulate the horror he just endured. Fitzgerald lies

¹⁰ All quotations from *The Revenant* are taken directly from the film.

to Bridger, saying the Arikara (Ree) tribe is approaching and they must therefore leave Glass and flee. He hastily drags Glass's battered body into a shallow grave that he's dug and starts flinging dirt over him. Bridger hesitates to leave Glass behind but ultimately does so, leaving Glass his water flask, into which he has carved a symbol of the snail, a powerful symbol of rebirth.

Some time later, Glass comes to, still in the shallow grave. He fights his way out, wheezing and dragging himself across the snow on his belly. This is the first of many scenes of rebirth and resurrection, of him going in (or being put in) to spaces and subsequently fighting his way back out, to life, or what's left of it. In these moments, the filmmakers take care to pause at the interstices, to capture Glass in the in-between states: underwater¹¹, fleeing the Ree tribe; in a small copse of trees a friend has fashioned into a sweat lodge; even inside another (formerly) living thing, as in the scene in which Glass uses the carcass of his horse to save his own life. After plunging hundreds of feet off a cliff and into a snow-laden ravine (his fall is broken when he crashes into a giant evergreen on his way down), Glass lies in the snow next to his dappled horse. To prevent hypothermia, he adeptly slits open the dead horse's belly, cracking its ribs and removing its giant stomach and other steaming entrails before stripping down and climbing inside the carcass for warmth and protection from the elements. The next morning, covered in the frozen sludge of the horse's viscera, Glass emerges from the cavity, a fetus, reborn.

¹¹ This scene, in which Glass dodges bullets and arrows as he floats downstream underwater, is reminiscent of the soldier's extended fantasy sequence at the moment of his death in *The Twilight Zone's* adaptation of Ambrose Bierce's "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" and further underscores Glass's hauntology.

3. Injunction of the Specter—and Spectator

Thus far, I have attempted to establish the liminality of Iñárritu's characters, and to suggest they regularly appear at the threshold between two worlds, two consciousnesses, and/or two planes of existence. Their liminality suggests a haunting; they remain stuck between the past and a future in which they risk being forgotten. It also underscores their fluid ontology; sometimes, it is unclear who is the specter and who is the spectator, who is watching, or haunting, whom; often these characters assume both identities: "neither soul nor body, *and* both one and the other" (emphasis added, Derrida 6). They are the ghosts, whose absence, according to the concept of hauntology, take precedence over "the priority of being and presence" (Davis 373). They possess an inherent spectrality, regardless of their existence as living or dead, and in their persistent return is a "call for responsible action" (DiFrancesco 26). And if we are to attend to the injunction of those "whose otherness we are responsible for preserving," Iñárritu seems to suggest that the demand they make is to honor their memory (Davis 373).

Remember me. In a scene late in *Beautiful*, Uxbal's daughter Ana confronts him in the bathroom, where he is slumped over on the toilet, racked with pain. Though he has never admitted to her that he is gravely ill, it is clear to Ana that her father's death is imminent. "Look in my eyes. Look at my face. Remember me, please. Don't forget me, Ana. Don't forget me, my love, please" (*Beautiful*). Uxbal's pleading words speak to his biggest fears: of leaving his children behind, and of them forgetting him and his love for them. These are the affairs he must put in order before he dies, to ensure their safety and well-being after he is gone, concerns that are shared by both Riggan and Glass.

In *Beautiful*, Uxbal walks among ghosts, both living and dead. As he nears death, he is haunted by his own spectral phenomena (not unlike Gauguin's *tupapu* flowers, large black moths appear on his bedroom ceiling at night as he lies in bed, their numbers increasing as he comes closer to death and his despair mounts). He is also haunted by his own spirit, pulling away: soon after he receives his diagnosis, there is a scene in which Uxbal stands in front of his ex-wife's apartment door. She is not home but as he lurches away, his reflection in the glass door remains in place, a ghostly apparition of self-regard. Later, as he counts his money at his bedroom dresser, his reflection, a separate spirit self, looks on. And yet in spite of the aforementioned scenes, which inject the film with elements of the surreal and supernatural, the overarching tone and genre of the film remains grounded in a grim realism. This is not the case, however, in the following scenes which have a decidedly pronounced horror element. Uxbal brokers a deal that will enable the illegal Chinese immigrants working in the sweatshop to get work on a construction project with a contractor who is willing to look the other way in order to cut costs. The immigrants, among them Lilli, a young Chinese woman with an infant child who occasionally babysits Uxbal's children, sleep in the basement of the factory, where they are locked in every night and must endure harsh winter temperatures. In a moment of benevolence, Uxbal purchases gas heaters from a discount store to help heat the basement. Days later, when the factory overseer goes to unlock the basement door, he finds all those inside dead, having asphyxiated on the gas from the faulty heaters. Upon hearing the news, a distraught Uxbal races over to the factory. He enters the basement and observes the grotesque scene of the dead, covered in vomit and their faces contorted in agony. The only diegetic sound that can be heard is the high-pitched whine of the fluorescent lightbulbs overhead. He runs

over to Lilli, checking for a pulse before scooping her up, presumably to drive her to the hospital. In the medium shot of Uxbal driving away with Lilli slumped over in the seat next to him, Iñárritu has muted the diegetic and nondiegetic soundtrack completely so that what follows is eerily absent of any sound. Uxbal soon stops the car, accepting that Lilli is dead. He tenderly carries her body back to the basement, and lays her down next to her infant son, clasping their hands together (a nod to the earlier shot of his own hands entwined with Ana's) and chanting softly. The whine of the lights becomes more pronounced, and transitions to a nondiegetic sound. Uxbal realizes in horror that the ghostly apparitions of the dead factory workers are floating near the ceiling, trapped there. The diegetic sounds (that presumably only Uxbal hears) are the whispers and muffled screams of the dead, and below that, the squelching sound of wet mud and what sounds like the slosh of waves. This latter sound calls to mind Uxbal's conversation with Ana about the radio station that would play the sounds of the sea when he was a child, and how it frightened him. It also prefigures a later scene in which the bloated bodies of the dead, having been hastily disposed of in the sea, wash ashore. Such details invoke elements of the horror genre and "are appropriated quite specifically by Iñárritu to signal what is horrifying in modern life: exploitation at the hands of a corrupt system and disregard for human dignity" (Connolly 552). Nevertheless and perhaps paradoxically, the film maintains its bleak realism, as "the metaphysical is part of Uxbal's daily life" (Prieto 31). Notably, in the aforementioned beach scene, Prieto switches the film's aspect ratio from the standard widescreen of 1.85 to 2.40, a move he explained as representing Uxbal's acceptance of his own inevitable death and transition "from tight control to ultimate release" (32). This

acceptance, Connolly observes, allows Uxbal to “[open] himself up to what comes next” and is in line with the specter’s presence serving to open meaning itself (553; Davis 337).

I’ve noted that in *Birdman*, there is a possibility that the entire plot of the film takes place in Riggan’s mind after his (successful) suicide by drowning. This would support the idea of Riggan as a spectral presence, haunting his ex-wife and daughter, unable to move on until he makes his amends or settles his affairs. This could also explain the sequences in which Riggan is flying, and when he jumps off a rooftop only to soar rather than fall. Or, perhaps the figure of Birdman is the ghost haunting Riggan. Recall that earlier in the film, only a disembodied voice is heard—the physical manifestation of Birdman appears much later. As Derrida notes of the ghost of Hamlet’s father, “(s)ince we do not see one who orders ‘swear,’ we cannot identify it in all certainty, and we must fall back on its voice” (7). In the scene below, Riggan tries to convince himself that “Birdman” is dead, or at least just a mental formation, but his ego argues otherwise:

RIGGAN: What part of that don’t you fucking get? You’re dead.

BIRDMAN: We are NOT dead.

RIGGAN: Oh please, just stay dead.

BIRDMAN: We are NOT DEAD.

RIGGAN: STOP SAYING WE! THERE IS NO WE. I’M NOT FUCKING YOU. I’M RIGGAN
FUCKING THOMSON.

BIRDMAN: No, you’re Birdman. Because without me, all that’s *left* is you—a sad, selfish, mediocre actor grasping at the last vestiges of his career.

(RIGGAN telekinetically tosses poster; it shatters.)

BIRDMAN: What the hell did you do that for? I liked that poster. It's *always* "we," brother. (*Birdman*)

The injunction here, that it's "always we," calls to mind Kristeva's notions of the *Heimlich-unheimlich*:

which, familiar as it might have been in an opaque and forgotten life, now harries me as radically separate, loathsome. Not me. Not that. But not nothing, either. A 'something' that I do not recognize as a thing. A weight of meaninglessness, about which there is nothing insignificant, which crushes me. On the edge of nonexistence and hallucination, of a reality that, if I acknowledge it, annihilates me" (230).

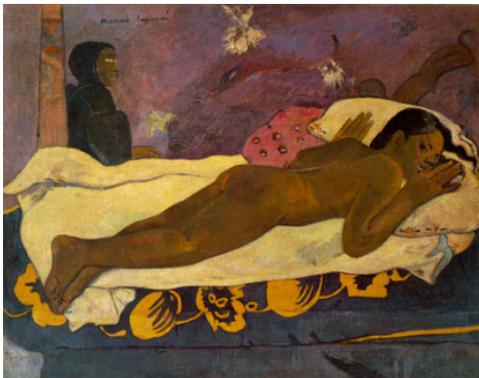
Riggan is haunted by his own ego: he cannot affirm or deny its presence, and it will ultimately destroy him.

On the play's opening night, Riggan shoots himself with a real gun in front of a live audience. This supreme act (or "unexpected virtue") of ignorance would seem to have put an end to a life that was ultimately about suffering. Riggan dies without really having made amends with his daughter Sam, and without ever proving to himself and to the world that he's more than just a washed-up Hollywood actor in a bird suit. And yet, again, his suicide attempt seems to have failed. After a montage scene that itself recalls earlier scenes (the meteor, the hotel room set, dust motes in the sunlight of his dressing room window, and finally, the jellyfish) Riggan regains consciousness in a hospital bed. He is surrounded by Sam, his best friend Jake, (who, in a nod to Janus, exclaims "I've been reborn, brother, and I can see the future . . . this play is gonna last forever") and his loving ex-wife Sylvia. We learn that his play was a huge success and garnered stellar reviews, even from a tough *Times* critic. But, as

Barnette points out, “(e)verything that occurs in the hospital room is suspiciously perfect . . . [and] (n)one of this make sense” (143). Is this a dream? Heaven? That is, until Riggan goes into the bathroom and removes his bandages to see his reconstructed nose. There, sitting silently but nonetheless menacingly—and on the toilet, no less—is Birdman. Realizing he will never truly escape the limitations of his own ego, perhaps this is the moment when Riggan embraces them, and *becomes* Birdman. The infamous ending is rather ambiguous. I like to think he soared.

It has been established that *The Revenant* contains multiple instances of Hugh Glass’s suggested resurrection, and his many near-death experiences facilitate moments in which he sees and hears the spirits of his deceased loved ones. Not long after Glass is mauled by the bear, he lies on a rack of branches that have been lashed together to form a makeshift stretcher. Night has fallen, and in the waking dream/reverie that follows, we learn what happened to his wife: their encampment was attacked and burned by white soldiers. Over the image of her being shot and dropping to her knees, we hear her in voiceover: “When there is a storm, and you stand in front of a tree...if you look at its branches, you swear it will fall.” The camera tracks a reverse shot of Glass, regarding his wife dying on the ground. She lies face up, her chest blooming red. Then: a bird flutters out from the wound, just as her eyes briefly flutter open and watch it fly away. “But if you watch the trunk, you will see its stability.” Next, a medium shot of Glass, in the woods at the present moment, looking up and gasping as he sees his wife floating above him, whispering these words. Behind her are the swaying trees and the moon. Interestingly, the next shot is a reverse shot, which we understand to be the POV of his floating wife, gazing down, only it is not at Glass lying wounded in the dark, but is instead at

him with Hawk, sleeping peacefully in their home and curled toward one another. In a later scene, a convalescing Glass is asleep when a similar dream sequence unfolds: his wife walks towards him in a field of grasses in warm sunlight. The next shot is an extreme long shot that shows her hovering above him in midair (see fig. 4). Her body is parallel to his as he lies on the ground, her back almost in a straight line with the crest of the distant mountain range behind them. Both bodies are diminished by the hulking Cirrus sky and wheat-colored grasses surrounding them. The haunting and surreal image of Glass's wife—prostrate body, brown skin, dark hair, feet tipped downward—is evocative of the young girl in Gauguin's painting (see fig. 3). Only here, she is the spirit of the dead watching Glass.



Figs. 3 and 4

Before its applications in the literary field, hauntology was a means for Derrida to make sense of Marxism's legacy in the midst of momentous shifts in the political and cultural landscape. The ghost, or revenant, Derrida explained, issued an injunction to the listener: do not flee from responsibility; honor its legacy. Later, when the concept was applied to the arts, it proved to be a rich theoretical tool, encouraging an openness to that which exceeded knowledge: it left—or created—room for new ways of re-examining music, film, painting, and literature, in which the figure of the ghost “gesture(d) towards a still unformulated future”

(Davis 379). Applying the concept to Iñárritu's films has indeed allowed for deeper understanding of the director's engagement with familial responsibility and remembrance. Having established his characters as liminal figures, I argued that their transitional nature suggests a haunting which serves as a reminder to family to honor their legacy. The final moments of each film offer evidence of the aforementioned themes of hauntological liminality and memorial responsibility. Each features one of the main characters looking offscreen into the unknown, at that which "exceeds knowledge" (Davis). *Biutiful* ends where it began: in a snowy forest, understood to be the afterlife, or a way station along the way to it. Uxbal and his father sheepishly regard one another, sharing a cigarette and a laugh, two familiar strangers. As his father walks out of the frame, they both look in the same direction, into the distance. Uxbal asks "What's over there?" before following his father in the snow, and the screen fading to black. In *Birdman*, Riggan, in his hospital room and wearing a gown, his face darkened black and blue, opens the window and looks out at the birds and sky, a serene expression of wonder on his face. The flight suite of Rachmaninov's Second Symphony begins to play as he clammers out onto the ledge. The camera slowly pans back to the hospital room door, and, as Sam enters the room, we hear a few of Sánchez's high-hat taps. She calls out for Riggan, and when she doesn't find him, walks to the window, frantically scanning the ground below, before slowly looking up into the sky, and smiling. As the screen fades to black, her laughter can be heard over Sánchez's ever-present jazz percussion. In the final moments of *The Revenant*, Hugh Glass has just watched Fitzgerald get scalped by the Ree, his body unceremoniously sent downstream. Glass climbs up the embankment, sinking into the deep snow. He trips and falls to his knees, then looks up into the distance, his face contorted in agony and utter exhaustion. His wife's voice

can be heard, murmuring softly. She stands there serenely before him, and Glass's expression changes. The tension doesn't fully slip from his body and face, but the look in his eyes is replaced with something like relief, and hope. His wife, a knowing smile on her face and hair blowing in the wind, slowly turns and walks away, out of the wide angle shot. Glass's face darkens with the realization that his journey is over, and he is now, truly, alone. His eyes turn and face straight into the camera, at us, before the screen fades to black, and he exhales.

The specter, whether figurative or literal, allows for a deeper understanding of that which is not, or cannot, ever be fully known. It expands meaning and creates a space for memory and legacy, its mere (non)presence the proof that something has been. Derrida's "almost unnamable thing" implores us to remember (6). In its absence, all that remains is the family left behind, and their responsibility for preserving the memory of the love they shared. In this way, the injunction made by the specter is honored. The poem by Raymond Carver that began *Birdman* can thus be read as a discourse between the specter and spectator, ghost and he who is left living. When the specter is asked if he achieved what he wanted in life, he can now answer with certainty, yes: that he felt "beloved on the earth" (Carver).

Works Cited

- Anker, Elizabeth S. "Embodiment and Immigrant Rights in Alejandro González Iñárritu's *Biutiful*". *Imagining Human Rights*. E-book, De Gruyter, 2015, pp. 187-200. EBSCOhost, doi.org/10.1515/9783110376616-013.
- Barnette, Jane. "How to Do Things with Birds: The Janus Effect in Theatrical Adaptation." *Journal of Adaptation in Film & Performance*, vol. 9, no. 2, July 2016, pp. 131–145. EBSCOhost, doi: 10.1386/jafp.9.2.131_1.
- Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, translated by Richard Howard, The Noonday Press, 1981.
- Breger, Claudia. "Tenderly Cruel Realisms: Objectfull (sic) Assembly and the Horizon of a Shared World." *Making Worlds: Affect and Collectivity in Contemporary European Cinema*. E-book, Columbia University Press, 2020., pp. 155-198. ProQuest Ebook Central, ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.montclair.edu/lib/montclair/detail.action?docID=5939681.
- Blower, Nicholas. "Missing in the Mountains: *The Revenant* as Twenty-First-Century Frontier Hero." *The Twenty-First-Century Western : New Riders of the Cinematic Stage*, edited by Douglas Brode and Shea T. Brode, Lexington Books, 2020, pp. 45-56.
- Bordwell, David, and Kristin Thompson. *Film Art : An Introduction*. 5th ed., McGraw Hill, 1997.
- Bordwell, David. "Birdman: Following Riggan's Orders." *Observations on Film Art*.
www.davidbordwell.net/blog/2015/02/23/birdman-following-riggans-orders/.

- Connolly, Kathleen Honora. "Spirits and Those Living in the Shadows: Migrants and a New National Family in 'Biutiful.'" *Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos*, vol. 39, no. 3, Apr. 2015, pp. 545–563. *JSTOR*, www-jstor-org.ezproxy.montclair.edu/stable/24717396.
- Davis, Colin. "Hauntology, Spectres and Phantoms." *French Studies*, vol. LIX, no. 3, 2005, pp. 373-79. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1093/fs/kni143.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*. Edited by Stephen Cullenberg and Bernd Magnus, translated by Peggy Kamuf, Routledge, 1994.
- DiFrancesco, Maria. "Facing the Specter of Immigration in *Biutiful*." *Symposium*, vol. 69, no. 1, Jan. 2015, pp. 25–37. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1080/00397709.2015.1004273.
- Fraser, Benjamin. "A *Biutiful* city: Alejandro González Iñárritu's filmic critique of the 'Barcelona Model.'" *The Barcelona Reader : Cultural Readings of a City*, edited by Enric Bou and Jaume Subirana, Liverpool University Press, 2017, pp. 417-442.
- Gauguin, Paul. *Manao tupapau (The Spirit of the Dead Watching)*. 1892, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York.
- Girgus, Sam B. "The American Way: Time, Death and Resurrection in Iñárritu's Western Masterpiece." *Time, Existential Presence and the Cinematic Image: Ethics and Emergence to Being in Film*, edited by Sam B. Girgus, Edinburgh University Press, 2018, pp. 127-152.
- Hortelano, Lorenzo J. Torres. "*Biutiful* (2010)." *World Film Locations: Barcelona*, edited by Lorenzo J. Torres Hortelano and Helio San Miguel, Intellect, 2013, pp. 118-9.

Iñárritu, Alejandro González. "Amores Perros." *My First Movie, Take Two : Ten Celebrated*

Directors Talk About Their First Film : Richard Linklater, Richard Kelly, Alejandro González Iñárritu, Takeshi Kitano, Shekhar Kapur, Emir Kusturica, Agnès Jaoui, Lukas Moodysson, Terry Gilliam, Sam Mendes, edited by Stephen Lowenstein, Pantheon Books, 2008, pp. 73-117.

---, director. *Birdman, or, (The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance)*. Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2015.

---, director. *Biutiful*. Samuel Goldwyn Films, 2010.

---. "On *Biutiful*." *Festival de Cannes*, 14 May 2010. N.p.

---, director. *The Revenant*. Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2016.

Knight, Shara D. "Psychological images and multimodality in *Boyhood* and *Birdman*."

The Routledge International Handbook of Jungian Film Studies, edited by Luke Hockley, Routledge, 2018, pp. 102-112.

Kristeva, Julia. *The Portable Kristeva*. Edited by Kelly Oliver, Columbia University Press, 1997.

Labanyi, Jo. "History and Hauntology; or, What Does One Do with the Ghosts of the Past?"

Reflections on Spanish Film and Fiction in the Post-Franco Period." Disremembering the Dictatorship : The Politics of Memory in the Spanish Transition to Democracy, edited by Joan Ramon Resina, Rodopi, 2000, pp. 83-126.

Mallin, Eric Scott. "Disturbing Dreams and Transcendence in *Birdman* and *The*

Tempest." *Reading Shakespeare in the Movies : Non-Adaptations and Their Meaning*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, pp. 139-183.

Reflections on Film. "Birdman Opening Credits Film Analysis Pts 1-4." *YouTube*, uploaded by Reflections on Film, 8 September 2015, www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Au75hVlbyE.

Shackelford, George T. M, et al. *Gauguin Tahiti*. MFA Publications, 2004.

Sinnerbrink, Robert. "Postsecular Ethics: The Case of Inarritu's *Biutiful*." *Religion in Contemporary European Cinema: The Postsecular Constellation*, edited by Brădăţan Costică and Camil Ungureanu, Routledge, 2014, pp. 166-185.

Szalai, Jennifer. "In the Eye of the Wild, a Haunting Memoir About Life After a Bear Attack." *The New York Times*, 25 November 2021, p.C2.
www.nytimes.com/2021/11/24/books/review-in-eye-of-wild-nastassja-martin.html?smid=url-share.

Tierney, Dolores. *New Transnationalisms in Contemporary Latin American Cinemas*. Edinburgh University Press, 2018.