TIM BURTON

A Post-Jungian
Perspective

THE MONSTER AND THE CROWD

HELENA BASSIL-MOROZOW

This publication has been produced with paper manufactured to strict
environmental standards and with pulp derived from sustainable forests.

Contents

Introduction

The child with a thousand faces

'A poet has the imagination and psychology of a child, for his impressions of the world are immediate, however profound his ideas of the world may be,' says Andrey Tarkovsky in his self-exploratory book, *Sculpting in Time*. If the benchmark for true artistic creativity is purity of imagination, a certain naivety of outlook, freshness of vision and a stubborn faith in one's own work, then Tim Burton passes the test with top grades. His 'creative child', however, is much younger than that of Tarkovsky, in whom the wide-eyed search for meaning is veiled with mature perspicacity and gravitation towards graceful existentialist symbolism. By contrast, Burton's inner *puer* has not grown up into a fully fledged *auteur*. He has never mastered some of the indispensable principles of cinematic auteurism: the depth and complexity of concepts, the refinement and originality of cinematic movement or the stringent control over the narrative. The majority of his films have vague, myth-like structures, and are so conceptually 'uncluttered' (yet visually rich) that they can be enjoyed by children and adults alike. Besides, his films often *are* about children; to be more precise – about one child, a misunderstood being whose inability (or refusal) to grow up puts him into a conflict with the 'sensible', but senseless, society. What makes the puer different, and unique, is the ability to create new worlds – something that 'normal' people do not possess.

This 'outcast' image can appear in various forms in Burton's movies: the persecuted monster, the mad genius, the maniac, the unfinished young man living in his own Gothic dreamworld, and the disturbed superhero who fights his evil alter ego. These guises overlap and amalgamate ('the child' is also 'the monster', etc.), weaving a complex picture of the typical Burtonian male character – a strange little boy who grows up to be a weird, but talented, misfit. The misfit invariably has a dark imagination, is never accepted by the common people, and is sometimes even hunted down by them (Batman, Edward Scissorhands, Willy Wonka). Surprisingly, despite

his 'introverted pariah' reputation, Burton enjoys great commercial success with the very 'crowd' of which his characters are so wary.

This book is about Tim Burton's use of the different guises of the image of the 'dark child' in his films, including the monster, the genius, the superhero, the maniac and the trickster. Thus, Chapter 1 ('The Child') traces the mythological, literary and psychological roots of the image that dominates Burton's films. Jungian (mainly Jung and Erich Neumann) and post-Jungian theories are my principal tools in this chapter, which deals with the child archetype in mythology and psychology of the individual (my justification of the choice of Jung over any other psychologies will appear later in the Introduction).

Chapter 2 is devoted to the 'monster' guise of the child, and covers *Edward Scissorhands*, *Frankenweenie*, *Batman Returns* and *Sweeney Todd*. It explores the psychosocial aspects of the monster figure (introversion, nonconformity, disability, hatred and rejection by society, abandonment by father/God, borderline personality qualities); its religious, philosophical and mythological implications (the son–father/man–God relationship and its breakdown and representation of this relationship in world mythology and religions); and the cinematic and fictional freaks that had impressed Burton in his youth (Boris Karloff as the Frankenstein monster, King Kong, Godzilla, etc.).

Chapter 3 is about Tim Burton's 'superheroes'. The superhero part of the Burtonian male character, quite predictably, wants to free the world from evil. His twofold inner/outer fight with what he perceives as evil in his culture and his own psyche is a crucial part of his quest for psychological unity. Since *Batman Returns* (1992) the individuation of the male character in Burton's films became enhanced by encounters with charismatic (but menacing) anima figures – Corpse Bride, Catwoman and Jenny/the witch in *Big Fish*. The hero's adventures will be analysed using the spiritual quest, *doppelgänger*, anima and father/God motifs. I will also discuss Burton's infantile superheroes – the Stainboy and Paul Reubens's original creation, Pee Wee from *Pee Wee's Big Adventure* (1985).

Chapter 4 mainly concerns the 'genius' guise of Burton's male characters (Vincent, Victor from *Frankenweenie*, Ed Wood and Willie Wonka). Burton's freaks grow up to become raw talents. As a rule, their creativity expresses itself in rather ambitious Frankensteinesque activities such as, for instance, monster-making. Vincent Malloy dreams of creating 'a terrible zombie' out of his dog Abercrombie; little Victor from *Frankenweenie* realises this dream – he actually revives his dog Sparky, who had been hit by a car, and turns him into a little 'doggy' version of the Frankenstein monster; Ed Wood, a mad Hollywood director, makes painfully bad horror movies; and Willy Wonka, the virtuoso chocolatier, possesses a collection of weird wax dolls and produces monstrosities out of various edible substances. 'The dark child' of Burton is invariably gifted, lonely, and perceived

as insane by the hyperbolically 'normal' people surrounding him. Following the footpath of the traditional Frankenstein narrative, Burton puts a lot of emphasis on the unique abilities of the creator, his overwhelming ambition, his difference from the crowd, and his strong association with the hideous freak to whom he gives life.

The demonic side of Burton's freaks is examined in Chapter 5 ('The Maniac'). It picks up where the previous chapter left off, and focuses on the anti-hero, the *doppelgänger* (or the shadow, to use Jungian terminology). In Burton's films it usually manifests itself in the villainous ('Mr Hyde') side of the Burtonian hero – the dangerous psychopath. These characters illustrate the evil, unstable, perverted, totally asocial and antisocial side of 'the genius'. The chapter will incorporate Burton's first commercially successful features, *Beetlejuice*, *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, *Batman* and *Batman Returns*.

Burton's two famous tricksters, Michael Keaton's Betelgeuse and Jack Nicholson's Joker, could have been discussed either under the 'monster' or 'the maniac' title, but I have chosen to put them in the latter category because of the aggressive nature of these characters. Betelgeuse is a trickster-like creature who oozes danger; he is rough, mad, evil and uncontrollable. Nicholson's Joker is even darker than Keaton's Betelgeuse, and uses his sinister creativity to torture and murder people.

Chapter 6 is devoted to the much-criticised *Mars Attacks!* and *Planet of the Apes*. These films are exceptions from Burton's 'the monster and the crowd' routine. They are not about the usual outcast's struggle for acceptance by society, and they are not built around the main character's internal fight with the personal *doppelgänger*. Instead, in these films Burton attempts to go further in his investigations of the conflict between individualism and collectivity, and focuses on society itself, on its dark, authoritarian and inhuman aspects. In *Mars Attacks!* and *Planet of the Apes*, the collective shadow takes the form of an outside invader (Martians or humanoid apes) and attempts to eliminate the human race. In this chapter I will try to explain why Burton's attempts to make films about the personal shadow usually earn critical acclaim and have great commercial success, while his renditions of the collective shadow are seen as 'over the top' and superficial.

Of course, I could have organised the book diachronically rather than synchronically, i.e. examined Burton's films in chronological order. This would have given me the opportunity to study his 'technical' progress as a film director, as well as examine the development of themes and motifs in his films. This is how it has been done by most of my predecessors[1]: Mark

---

1 Except Alison McMahan, author of *The Films of Tim Burton* (2005), who discusses Burton's works in terms of genre and stylistic features.

Salisbury (*Burton on Burton*, 1995; 2000; 2006); Le Blanc and Odell (*Tim Burton, pocket essential series*, 2005); Jim Smith and Clive Matthews (*Tim Burton*, 2007); and Edwin Page (*Gothic Fantasy: the Films of Tim Burton*, 2007). However, my opinion is that in Burton's case, the classic career-overview approach is not very effective – simply because his style, methods and themes do not change significantly throughout his directorial career. My choice of the synchronic layout is based on the assumption that the thematic range of Burton's films is more interesting to examine than his evolution as a director. Jungian psychology, with its propensity towards syntagmatic analysis of myths and a certain lack of respect for paradigmatic systematisation, is always handy for the investigation of thematic ranges.

Besides, I still use diachrony – but of a different kind. Burton's films traditionally deal with cultural and psychological issues pertaining to modern Western societies, from the end of the eighteenth century to the present day. While the synchronic approach breaks the unity of Burton's *oeuvre*, and the continuity of his protagonist, into many fragments (the different faces of the Burtonian child), I can nevertheless pull the fragments together by putting them onto the diachronic scale of modernity, thus establishing a new kind of continuity. This new diachrony reveals the face of the modern man as Burton usually depicts him – broken into pieces, then sewn together, and struggling to find a stable centre within himself – the centre which would help him not to fall apart again.

The question of style

Tim Burton has a singular vision, now confused with highbrow directing, now with mainstream commercialism – and yet he steadily remains in a league of his own. He is certainly not your typical 'artistic' filmmaker; he is not a 'camera and montage' person, breaking down, storyboarding each shot down to the finest detail, and then torturing his team and actors in an existential attempt to recreate his unique but ephemeral vision. Unlike for Hitchcock, who famously used to storyboard every shot in his films, or Spielberg, whose narratives are so very neat and smooth, narrative perfection would be completely out of place in Burton's works. In a Tim Burton film you will not find a long take choreographed with surgical precision, nor encounter an iconographic horse or a marble lion suddenly squeezed in between two other shots – so as to invoke complex references or highlight a higher idea. Neither will you stumble upon an elegant conceptual dissociation between the different cinematic codes and sub-codes (for instance, a first-person camera moving about in an empty flat while the invisible intradiegetic voice on the phone is having a seemingly banal conversation with his mother) in order to emphasise the deceptiveness and transience of reality: the irreparable gap between the 'inner' and the 'outer'.

No, Burton does not aim at this level of theoretical and conceptual complexity, and does not combine the cinematic means of expression in unexpected, groundbreaking ways, to achieve it.

And this is, perhaps, for the best. In fact, experimental tracking shots, lions, horses, clever camera angles and avant-garde points of view would not be suitable for his creative purposes. Growing up inspired by the style of Dr Seuss ('the rhythm of his stuff spoke to me very clearly', Salisbury, 2006: 19), avidly watching Ray Harryhausen's work and devouring horror B-movies from around the world, Tim Burton developed a unique personal style whose essence can be described as 'grand effect by simple means' (of course, one can also call it popular). He remains firmly democratic in his use and combination of cinematic devices. In many of his films he tells a fairly simple story, which, thanks to its straightforward sequentiality and uncluttered symbolism, is immediately accessible for the spectator regardless of his or her age or background. A Burton story is traditionally illustrated with beautiful pictures which are far more eloquent than any words can be. Films like *Edward Scissorhands* or *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* have at their core the childlike naivety, pain and anger aimed at the insensitive crowd of adults who have long ceased to see the world in fresh colours. Despite being clear, his message is emotionally deep. To render the suffering and confusion of his immature protagonists, Burton cannot use the elaborate sequential and combinatorial devices that are traditionally employed to show the complexity, multiplicity and unpredictability of the adult world – intricate montage, 'philosophical' long takes with a series of complex compositions, freeze frames, rhythmic punctuation, logical discrepancies between picture and sound, clashes between the extradiegetic and intradiegetic planes, etc. Any 'grown-up' instruments would only obscure the message, and the purity of youthful vision would be lost.

Instead, Burton chooses to create an impact using different methods. At stake are not sequential editing or the position and movement of the camera but the quality and detailedness of the picture and its emotional correlation with music. In this sense, he is far less 'cinematic' than many directors. Burton is more of a '*mise-en-scène* director' who has always been praised for his extraordinary visual sense. His grand imagery seems to be slapped onto narrative canvases like blobs of dark matter, like some unexplainable and invincible forces, which effectively belittle both protagonists and antagonists. Burton's marvellous, powerful visuals are not organised into perfect arrangements. How the shots work as a sequence (either 'classic' or 'avant-garde') has never been of much importance in his films. In cinesemiotic terms, he is not as interested in the higher structural (syntagmatic) level as, for instance, such an extreme 'syntagmatic' director as Alfred Hitchcock. Most of Burton's directorial effort is put into single frames (morphemes); shots at most (words) – but not 'cleverly constructed' sequences (sentences, paragraphs, chapters). Experimental montage and

other forms of 'authoritative' editing (Tarkovsky's 'camera montage', for example) are indicative of a certain desire to control the narrative as a whole, of the venture to achieve the solidity of the text. Burton, however, does not support such authoritarianism. Here is, for instance, his perception of storyboarding: 'I used to [storyboard] but I don't do as much anymore. In fact, I am getting anti-storyboard. I pretty much stopped on *Beetlejuice*. You storyboard things that need effects. I still do it to some degree. But certainly after the first *Batman*, I really stopped. And now, I can't even come up with – I'm getting twisted about the whole thing. There is something about being spontaneous and working shots out. [. . .] There's an energy and there's a working through things with people' (Fraga, 2005: 82).

As for editing, it is a very melancholy process for Burton. One of his interviewers, David Edelstein, notes: 'When I suggest to Burton that editing does not express him the way other parts of the process do, he muses that after a shoot ends, it's like breaking up with someone – he edits in depression, which somehow gets incorporated into the film' (Fraga, 2005: 33). In another interview, conducted by David Breskin, Burton admits to not paying much attention to shot sequences: 'When I look at rushes [unedited footage] I sometimes get chills because it reminds me of shooting. But editing? What can I tell you? I don't slap them together, but I'm not going to win any editing awards. It's okay. It's fine' (Fraga, 2005: 83). He is not, by his own admission, going to 'create some kind of trendy or hot editing' (Fraga, 2005: 33).

His deliberate emphasis on *mise-en-scène*, and noticeable disregard for the specific cinematic codes, won the heart of Anton Furst, who was hired as the production designer for *Batman* (1989). Furst said in an interview with Alan Jones that he had never felt so naturally in tune with a director – 'conceptually, spiritually, visually, or artistically' (Fraga, 2005: 22). Such a unique connection happened because the two shared the same philosophy of moviemaking. Both Furst and Burton are primarily concerned with creating visual impact, with delivering a powerful image. The impact lies not in camerawork but in the basics, in the first impression: 'When we first met, we both independently mentioned how sick we were of the ILM[2] school of film-making [. . .] We both agreed the best special effect we could ever remember seeing was the house in *Psycho* because it registers such a strong image. Impact, that's what films are about – not effects. I felt much better after that conversation, knowing he was totally uninterested in camera tricks and the clever, clever approach' (Fraga, 2005: 22). But Tim Burton is a 'clever, clever' director in the sense that he knows how to capture mass audiences without 'cheapening' his films on the one hand, and

2 George Lucas's brainchild, Industrial Light and Magic – a motion picture visual effects company.

how to create highly original works without resorting to mind-blowing complexity on the other.

A different kind of *auteur*

Despite his lack of ambition to control the narrative – both its textual and cinematic constituents – Burton is universally hailed as one of the most important contemporary Hollywood *auteurs*. Which is, in a way, paradoxical, because he cannot be further from an omniscient intellectual operating in riddles (like David Lynch) or an ace at complex, tonal montage (*à la* Jim Jarmusch).

Before trying to decide whether Tim Burton deserves the nebulous *auteur* title, let us remind ourselves what this title implies. *La politique des auteurs*, since its emergence in France in the late 1940s, and throughout its long life as a half-formulated concept, never managed to become a fully fledged theory. True, compared to André Bazin and François Truffaut's applications of the filmic authorship idea, Andrew Sarris's translation of it boasted more shape, but still lacked a quotable definition. As Sarris himself admitted, 'the auteur theory is not so much a theory as an attitude, a table of values that converts film history into directorial autobiography' (Sarris, 1968: 30–34). Even so, despite the lack of definition, the term is as popular as ever and its common usage is constantly growing. Any 'decent' *auteur* is required to possess any (or preferably both) of the following features:

1. *Control over all or most of the processes involved in making a film*

This is a slightly utopian requirement because of the so-called 'noise' (scriptwriter, editor, producer, cameraman, composer, the actors). According to the British film theorist Peter Wollen, the directorial factor is only one of the many different contributions in the moviemaking process, 'though perhaps the one which carries the most weight' (Wollen, 1969–1972: 104). The scriptwriter, for instance, can be very 'noisy', for his vision of the film's style, structure and meaning can be very different from that of the director. A very possessive *auteur*, Andrey Tarkovsky argued that the film author's wholeness of vision should be placed higher than any creative contributions coming from the support team:

> When a writer and a director have different aesthetic starting-points, compromise is impossible. [. . .] When such conflict occurs there is only one way out: to transform the literary scenario into a new fabric, which at a certain stage in the making of the film will come to be called the shooting script. And in the course of work on this script, the author of the film (not of the script but of the film) is entitled to turn the literary

scenario this way or that as he wants. All that matters is that his vision should be whole, and that every word of the script should be dear to him and have passed through his own creative experience. For among the piles of written pages, and the actors, and the places chosen for location, and even the most brilliant dialogue, and the artist's sketches, there stands only one person: the director, and he alone, as the last filter in the creative process of film-making.

<div style="text-align: right">(Tarkovsky, 1989: 18)</div>

Undeniably, the biggest 'noise' of all comes from the people in charge of the budget (which Tarkovsky, as a young film-school graduate, quickly realised when his films began to suffer at the hands of Soviet censorship). Andrew Sarris recalls an old Hollywood anecdote which involves the studio head Samuel Goldwyn and a reporter. The latter 'had the temerity to begin a sentence with the statement ". . . when William Wyler made *Wuthering Heights*". The reporter never passed beyond the premise. "*I* made *Wuthering Heights*," Goldwyn snapped, "Wyler only directed it"' (Sarris, 1968: 8). Leaving the Hollywood studio system, or indeed any system that controls the financial base of the film, seriously narrows the gap between 'unlimited' and 'limited' control over the project.

The intrinsic complexity of the filmmaking process, in that it involves various people at different levels, makes it difficult to attain the goal of 'absolute control'. Authorship can only be approximate; it can only be shared – to a different degree in each individual case, of course – because 'writers, actors, producers and technicians challenge [the director] at every turn' (Sarris, 1968: 12).

2. A distinct 'voice' (recurrent themes, motifs, characters, techniques, stylistic features)

There is no doubt that Tim Burton has a unique cinematographic style. 'A distinct voice' sounds ambitious, but this is much easier to achieve than the 'sole authorship' prerequisite. The British film scholar Geoffrey Novel-Smith argued that recognisable motifs are one essential corollary of the *auteur* theory: 'The pattern formed by these motifs . . . is what gives an author's work its particular structure, both defining it internally and distinguishing one body of work from another (Caughie, 1981: 137).

Just like any work of art, a film should be original, recognisable and have an 'identifiable' maker's mark 'in the corner'. Originality, the covetable distinct style, can be further subdivided into formal (montage, *mise-en-scène*, camera angles, punctuation, sequential organisation of the narrative, etc.) and thematic. Like in a literary text, the two, the form and the content, intertwine and support each other. Quite often, film critics seem to equate 'originality' with formal complexity. Tricks like 'hot editing' (Burton's

term), unusual POV (think of the 'soup's point of view' from Guy Ritchie's *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*), and convoluted narratives (the multi-layered, twisted, nightmarish plot in Lynch's *Mulholland Drive* is a good example) are traditionally seen as part of the *auteur* culture and intellectual moviemaking. Technical virtuosity, stubbornness and a certain inescapable elitism are traditionally associated with the concept of directorial 'autership'. Also, there is always a danger that the desire to 'express oneself entirely in a film' is interpreted as a sign of egotism and vanity, the desire to 'play God' and be the centre of attention.

True, it would not be easy to squeeze Tim Burton into any of the *auteur* stereotypes. As a director, he is an oxymoron, or, as Le Blanc and Odell put it, 'a Hollywood contradiction' (2005: 11). Whatever aspect of his creative life you examine, there is always a paradox lurking in the background. Consider, for instance, the issue of unlimited control over one's work. On the surface of it, Burton is firmly rooted in the studio system. His career began at Disney, where he found himself after the California Institute of the Arts, a training school created by Walt Disney in the 1960s. Eight of his films, including *Batman*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and *Sweeney Todd*, were produced by Warner Brothers; *Edward Scissorhands* was financed by Twentieth-Century Fox, and *Big Fish* is a Columbia Pictures production. At the same time, he has always had a tempestuous relationship with the studio system, aiming to preserve his unique vision while keeping to the studio's budget. He regularly sounds disdainful when he speaks of his experience of dealing with the studio system, the phrase 'F**k your system' being one of the most expressive of his opinions (Fraga, 2005: 57).

And from the very start the fateful 'system' intermittently hindered and pushed forward Burton's directorial career. He considered himself lucky to be picked by the Disney Review Board out of the crowd of ambitious contenders at Cal Arts, but soon realised that 'the dream ticket' would only lead him to a dead-end: 'Disney and I were a bad mix [. . .] they want you to be an artist, but at the same time they want you to be a zombie factory worker and have no personality. It takes a very special person to make those two sides of your brain coexist' (Salisbury, 2006: 9–10). He found the atmosphere so stifling and 'anti-auteur' that he eventually left the studio in the middle of the 1980s after *Frankenweenie*, his black and white short, was deemed by Disney too 'dark' for children's audiences (it was subsequently shelved until 1992).

Tim Burton's instinctive ability to appeal to the mass audience can easily be confused with an acute sense for marketable cinematic products. It is obvious that the studio system, despite its notorious habit of preferring successful entrepreneurs to creative recluses, has successfully exploited Burton's Gothic fantasies – which happen to sell well. Having watched so many horror films as a child, and consequently having absorbed all the basic principles of a marketable mass movie – simplified narrative, big

drama, emotional symbolism, hyperbolised visuals, high stylisation, rich artificiality of sets, costumes and make-up – Burton undoubtedly gained a sharp sense of 'product' that would appeal to a mass audience (something that is quite unusual in an *auteur* aspirant). And anyway, Burton is known as a director who is prepared to fight for his creative vision. He chose Johnny Depp over Tom Cruise as Edward Scissorhands at a time when Depp was no more than a teen 'novelty idol' and Cruise was already a confirmed superstar. Depp was eventually given the role – apparently after much fighting and debate on the part of the director. The actor could not believe his ears when his agent rang him weeks after the initial meeting with Burton: 'I put the phone down and mumbled those words to myself. And then mumbled them to anyone I came in contact with. I couldn't f**king believe it. He was willing to risk everything on me in the role. Headbutting the studio's wishes, hopes and dreams for a big star with established box-office draw, he chose me' (Salisbury, 2006: xi). Burton's side of the story looked like this:

> They are always saying, here is a list of five people who are box-office, and three of them are Tom Cruise. I've learned to be open at the initial stage and talk to people. He certainly wasn't my ideal, but I talked to him. He was interesting, but I think it worked out for the best. A lot of questions came up – I don't really recall the specifics – but at the end of the meeting I did feel like, and even probably said to him, 'It's nice to have a lot of questions about the character, but you either do it or you don't do it'
>
> (Salisbury, 2000: 91)

Burton feels justified in arguing with studio executives over 'details' like the choice of actors and film endings – but not like some touchy, capricious *auteur* with a systematic vision *à la* Adam Kesher in *Mulholland Drive*. Burton, in his elated stubbornness, resembles a child prophet who believes that he has seen an apparition of the Virgin Mary, and is now adamant that the visitation was absolutely genuine. 'If *Beetlejuice* turns out to be successful,' he said in one of his early interviews, 'I will be so happy, and so *perversely* happy. I'm for anything that subverts what the studio thinks you have to do' (Fraga, 2005: 15).

This amazing obstinacy, the force that bends even the pillars of the studio system, made the film critic Jonathan Romney label him as 'Hollywood's pet maladjusted adolescent' (Woods, 2002: 170). The 'adolescent', however, knows how to deal with those sensible, reasonable adults:

> . . . they don't know what you go through with studio people and executives, and they take their cue a lot from critics, and the feeling is

that 'Tim can't tell a story out of a paper bag'. [. . .] And every time, when they're developing a script and you're talking to the studio and you have these stupid meetings with them, I can say that if there is a problem with the movie it is *nothing* that you discussed. [. . .] And *Beetlejuice* was kind of the one movie that gave me, again, that feeling of humanity, that *F**k Everybody!* That made me feel very good, that the audience didn't need a certain kind of thing. Movies can be different things! Wouldn't it be great if the world allowed David Cronenberg to do his thing and people could tell the difference! And criticism would be on the whole other level! And the world be on the whole other level!

(Fraga, 2005: 57)

'The difference', one might assume, lies in the amount of 'noise' that gradually creeps into the film in the process of its evolution from the initial concept to the final product. All the while, and rather contrastingly, Burton has respect for the people who hand out the cash, and willingly acknowledges the financial responsibility for his creations: 'I've never taken the attitude of the artiste, who says I don't care about anything, I'm just making my movie. I try to be true to myself and do only what I can do, because if I veer from that everybody's in trouble. And when there is a large amount of money involved, I attempt, without pretending to know what audiences are all about, to try and do something that people would like to see, without going too crazy' (Woods, 2002: 51). Tim Burton is not a purist; he had always had an eye on the commercial side of the movie business. In some of his interviews he expressed rather anti-auteurish opinions: 'I care about money, which is why I get so intense when these people are on my case saying I don't make commercial movies, because I've always felt very responsible to the people who put up the money. It's not like you're doing a painting. There is a large amount of money involved, even if you're doing a low-budget movie, so I don't want to waste it (Salisbury, 2006: 51). It is his attempt to achieve the 'golden middle', the ideal position in the triangle consisting of the director, the studio and the audience, that makes him simultaneously accessible and, surprisingly, sophisticated.

Burton's visual style is extremely recognisable despite the fact that he does not harbour ambitions to produce avant-garde works and 'explore new artistic territories'. Most of his creative efforts seem to be aimed at the elements that are not exclusive to cinema, or, to use Christian Metz's term, at 'non-specific cinematic codes' (for instance, soundtrack and codes of visual iconicity shared with painting) (Metz, 1974: 224–235). Burton is at his most confident with the components that traditionally determine 'the main impression', or the general atmosphere of a film: visual-iconic elements, lighting, music and story (but not plot). At the same time, he does not worship specifically cinematic properties such as sequentiality, *movement of*

the image (camera) and *movement in the image* (actors).[3] The fact that the 'picture' *moves* is an additional benefit rather than the main property of Burton's creative product – the movement allows him to tell a story, without foregrounding itself as a stylistic element. Much of his effort goes into the initial impression from the shot, hence the heightened attention to the static elements of the *mise-en-scène* (the ones which cinema shares with photography): setting, decorations, texture, colours, lighting, framing, make-up and costumes. They make Burton's works highly atmospheric. His relative neglect of camera movement and editing gives his films a charming imprecision – which is perfect for Burton's artistic purposes as this kind of background emphasises the magnificent, luminous symbolism of his films.

Burton's status in Hollywood is so ambiguous that some critics have altogether grouped his works with contemporary action movies, confusing his lack of narrative and stylistic precision with an interest in the action aspect of the film. Alison McMahan, in a book entitled *The Films of Tim Burton*, coins the term *pataphysical film*, and irrevocably attributes Burton's style to this genre. In her view, all *pataphysical* films have in common the following features:

- An alternative narrative logic
- Use of special effects in a blatant way
- Thin plots and thinly drawn characters, 'because the narrative relies more on intertextual, nondiegetic references'.

(McMahan, 2005: 3)

Examples of such movies include, for instance, *Van Helsing* (2004) and *Hulk* (2003). It appears that the movies labelled *pataphysical* by Alison McMahan are predominantly commercial. They privilege action over narrative and quite blatantly serve as a recycling factory for anything previously done in cinema, both stylistically and textually, mixing high and low, old and new; randomly combining genres, plots and recycled famous sequences from other films. For instance, the seven-minute sequence at the beginning of *Van Helsing*, incorporating segments from over 70 years of *Draculas* and *Frankensteins*, is not just an ironic statement, a reference that 'got out of control'. It is – decidedly – an integral part of the movie. McMahan places the roots of this genre in the days of early cinema and animation, Jules Levy's *Les Art Incohérents*, and in the visual and ideological legacy of Surrealism. She argues that the eccentric works of the first animator, the French science teacher Emile Reynaud,[4] with their fluidity of transformations, influenced contemporary pataphysical films.

---

3 The last two are Metz's terms (Metz, 1974: 232).
4 The director of *Fantasmagorie* (1908), *The Hasher's Delirium* (1910), etc.

The inherited traits include, in McMahan's view, dependence on 'excessive' special effects (which bring with them 'a change in narration and a flattening of the emotional aspects of the characters'), non-realistic narrative, and tongue-in-cheek attitude (McMahan, 2005: 15). She also insists that these films are not meaningless; rather, they 'have come to mean differently, to mean in new ways' (2005: 3). Unfortunately, the author does not explain what these news ways of meaning are, or what exactly constitutes 'the alternative narrative logic' which the 'pataphysical films' appear to follow.

Films like *Hulk, Van Helsing*, *Brothers Grimm* and *The Matrix* are blatantly lowbrow, populist and allusive to the point of non-stop recycling. Being fast-paced and powerfully visual, they are openly aimed at the spectator with a short attention span. Their creators deliberately macerate, mix and match other films and cinematic traditions in order to make the product more digestible and superficially attractive. People who make them know that they are producing a nakedly commercial product.

McMahan's belief that Burton's *oeuvre* belongs to the bulk of the 'pataphysical style' is understandable. His films contain some formal attributes of the aforementioned group, such as schematic plots and characters, interfilmic references and allusions, as well as 'in your face' special effects (of which the freakish, DIY effects from *Beetlejuice* are a good example). Burton, a self-confessed fan of classic horror movies, is especially reliant on allusions: 'Because I never read, my fairy tales were probably those monster movies. [. . .] I mean, fairy tales are extremely violent and extremely symbolic and disturbing, probably even more so than *Frankenstein* and stuff like that, which are kind of mythic and perceived as fairy-tale like' (Salisbury, 2000: 3). True, *Frankenstein*, in James Whale's realisation, was an important source of inspiration for Burton. *Frankenweenie* (1984) is bursting with direct references to both *Frankenstein* (1931) and *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935), almost to the point of direct translation of Whale's vision into the children's pet story, in which Boris Karloff is replaced with a little monster dog, who dies but gets 'resurrected' by a boy genius. Some filmic allusions that Burton inserts into his films are smaller and less obvious. For instance, the slowly melting dolls' heads in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (2005) is a tribute to André de Toth's *The House of Wax* (1953) with Vincent Price.

The misunderstood introverted punk Edward Scissorhands is an original creation – unlike many of his other powerful motifs and characters. In fact, it appears that only the characters who directly reflect Burton's own psychology – like Vincent and Edward – are entirely original. The rest are borrowed from a variety of literary and cinematic sources and can be traced to their roots in popular culture and literature. The popular borrowings include, for instance, the superhero Batman, the brainy green Martians from *Mars Attacks!*, the demon barber Sweeney Todd, who made his debut in 1846 in the penny dreadful series entitled *The String of Pearls: A*

Romance, and Ed Wood's circus of freaks and ghouls, including Bela Lugosi and Vampyra. Burton's (undeniably mediated) literary influences, are, too, many and diverse: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and its numerous cinematic reworkings; Washington Irving's *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*; Daniel Wallace's *Big Fish: A Novel of Mythic Proportions*; Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*; Pierre Boulle's *Planet of the Apes*; and Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*.

Knowing that Tim Burton likes to reuse aspects of old films, can we really tell the difference between 'pataphysical' references and 'important' references? Or, in other words, can one employ heaps of popular allusions in a meaningful manner?

Action, symbol, introspection

My argument is that associating Burton's works with commercial, fast-paced, action-packed films steeped with music-clip-like montage and random narrative citations, would be a mistake. The 'pop' nature of Burton's films is more of a lucky by-product of his creativity than an intended outcome. First of all, he is not an action director – both objectively and self-confessedly – and hence cannot be compared to Stephen Sommers, Roland Emmerich, James Cameron or the Wachowski brothers. His action sequences in *Batman* and *Planet of the Apes* are limp, clumsy and lacking in agility. 'I've seen better action in my day' is Burton's view of his own action-making skills (Fraga, 2005: 78). Ever the true nonconformist, he declares: 'If you want it to be a James Cameron movie then get James Cameron to do it. Me directing action is a joke; I don't like guns. I hear a gunshot and I close my eyes' (Salisbury, 2006: 114).

Still, it would be unfair to expect a perfect handling of fast sequences from a predominantly introspective director. The *action* Burton is trying to express is more of a psychological than a 'real' phenomenon. Even on the visual level, the 'quest' motif in his films, along with its principal battles and challenges, lacks the 'physicality', brutality and (pseudo)realism of traditional action movies. It is the 'inner', not the 'outer' movement that Burton is trying to convey. Unlike the 'pataphysical' films Alison McMahan recalls, Burton's works are deemed to be slower, inward-looking and far more personal. All the pop-cinematic allusions he gathers in his films – be it the ragged Frankenstein monster, Ed Wood's aluminium tin flying saucers or even the melting heads of wax dolls – are linked, via different modes of projection, to the childhood feelings of dejection, failure to communicate, and alienation from one's surroundings. The monstrous, the Gothic and the surreal are not, for Burton, simply effective, tried-and-tested vehicles for producing an entertaining narrative. They are far more than communication aids and adequate means of expression. Burton may be groping for

words in interviews, but his visual creations, his Gothic symbols, possess remarkable depth, clarity and precision.

In interviews he also admits to having trouble creating a coherent cinematic narrative. He explains why he persistently 'sacrifices' the narrative for the sake of the visuals. Lack of delineation, definition and linguistic detailedness is Burton's way of ensuring that his films remain democratic and accessible:

> I guess it must be the way my brain works, because the first *Batman* was probably my most concentrated effort to tell a linear story, and I realise that it's like a joke. [. . .] In any of my movies the narrative is the worst thing you've ever seen, and that's constant. [. . .] Do Fellini movies have a strong narrative drive? I love movies where I make up my own idea about them. [. . .] Everybody is different, so things are going to affect people differently. So why not have your own opinions, have different levels of things you can find if you want them, however deeply you want to go. That's why I like Roman Polanski's movies, like *The Tenant*. I've felt like that, I've lived it, I know what that's like. Or *Repulsion*, I know that feeling, I understand it. [. . .] You just connect. It may not be something that anybody else connects with, but it's like I get that, I understand that feeling. I will always fight that literal impulse to lay everything directly in front of you. I just hate it.
>
> Some people are really good at narrative and some people are really good at action. I'm not that sort of person. So, if I'm going to do something, just let me do my thing and hope for the best. If you don't want me to do it, then just don't have me do it. But if I do it, don't make me conform.
>
> (Salisbury, 2006: 114)

The gaps are to be filled with what Burton calls 'the feeling', and what Tarkovsky describes as 'something amorphous, vague, with no skeleton or schema. Like a cloud' (Tarkovsky, 1989: 23). Throughout his book Tarkovsky states that he prefers freedom of expression to any theories, formulas, schemas or threadbare tricks. Like Burton, he does not normally describe his works in technical terms, attempting instead to paint 'a feeling'. Narrative causality, in Tarkovsky's view, should be replaced with 'poetic articulation': 'There are some aspects of human life that can only be faithfully represented through poetry. But this is where directors very often try to use clumsy, conventional gimmickry instead of poetic logic. I'm thinking of illusionism and extraordinary effects involved in dreams, memories and fantasies. All too often film dreams are made into a collection of old-fashioned filmic tricks, and cease to be a phenomenon of life' (2000: 30).

For Tim Burton, too, the poetry of the image comes first. This 'symbolic' approach seems to be dictated by the specifics of his creativity. By his own

admission, his creative process is more intuitive than intellectual: 'I don't trust my intellect as much, because it's kind of schizy,' Burton admits, 'I feel more grounded going with a feeling' (Woods, 2002: 41). He starts with a vague image, and goes on to create a numinous symbol which often has personal significance for him, such as a dishevelled boy with scissors instead of hands, a rugged madman who calls himself a 'bio-exorcist', a menacing urban panorama, a spooky countryside landscape. The image of Edward Scissorhands, for instance, 'came subconsciously and was linked to a character who wants to touch but can't; who was both creative and destructive . . . It was very much linked to a feeling' (Salisbury, 2006: 87).

However, Burton's habit of reworking existing narratives does not indicate a lack of creativity or deficiency of imagination. It is true that he prefers to work with popular myths, but gives them a new visual interpretation. His versions of pre-existent symbols – the Joker, Batman, Willy Wonka, Topps Cards Martians, talking apes, Sweeney Todd – if they do not always outshine the original, are nevertheless instantly recognisable and visually striking. Moreover, the distinctiveness and numinosity of his symbols compensate for the inadequacy of technical and narrative elements. With Edward Scissorhands for a central character, one cannot lament the absence of a clever rhythmic pattern, inventively striking juxtapositions or intriguingly non-linear narrative. However eloquent and beautiful these tricks can be, Tim Burton simply does not need them to get his message across. When he wants to tell a story – his story – he does not refine it until it becomes a shiny, robotic work of art. He leaves it in a vaguely raw, half-unconscious (his hallmark), twilight state, devoid of the smoothness of the classic narrative film on the one hand, and the sharp precision of thought which is so typical of intellectual filmmaking on the other. There is enough power in Edward to charge the film with energy and poignancy. The creature with scissors is multi-layered and complex enough as a symbol to invite multiple, and conflicting, interpretations.

To sum up the ideas discussed on the previous pages – Burton looks as unnatural in the 'highbrow' corner as he does among the gang of 'meaningless action' directors. All the while, his style is unique and easily recognisable, with repeating visual and narrative patterns. He tends to neglect the textual aspect of film; and in doing this, he places 'the image' higher than 'the word'. Consequently, the cinematic, 'moving' narrative suffers alongside the textual aspect (storyline, dialogues, extradiegetic voices). In addition, he predominantly operates with simple, myth-like compositions. His films foreground 'bigger' symbolism at the expense of syntactic intricacy and diegetic ploys, and gravitate towards intense and vivid, but less detailed, models and blocks. This inevitably steers Burton's creative vision towards the realm of the fantastic, where such means of expression are appropriate, while almost totally neglecting realistic genres. Burton certainly feels 'at home' with a number of traditionally popular genres such as

science fiction, fantasy, horror, myth and mystery, and freely uses dark and Gothic imagery.

His persistent use of simplified mythological frames does not mean, however, that he misses out on psychological complexity. The psychological depth of Burton's films is as intense as that of a Švankmajer or Lynch – but his is the archetypal insight of a good fairy tale. Moreover, the lucidity of his narratives allows the audience to access this psychological content quicker, and appreciate it more fully. Far from being plain, downmarket and populist, Burton's narratives are uncluttered, powerful and topical.

Neither does he seem to care whether his material is original, and to what degree. His interpretations, however, are undoubtedly original and – what is more important – personal. Whatever images he utilises – be it the Frankenstein monster in the form of a little dog, Dracula in the guise of drug-dependent Bela Lugosi in *Ed Wood*, or the Penguin man who, in this version, behaves like a mistreated child – the director always moulds them into a story about a misunderstood, lonely outcast; or at least links them to such a story.

People who interview Tim Burton often notice his clumsiness, his introversion and his inability to express himself clearly and coherently. His creativity clearly visual and not linguistic, he often looks at a loss when trying to explain to journalists why and how he did a certain thing in his film. And journalists, usually being watchful and perceptive, notice his communication weaknesses immediately. One of his interviewers, David Edelstein, wrote: 'To quote him is not to get him right; you miss the air of stoned melancholy, the spastically gesticulating hands and the sentences that stop and restart and that you have to complete for him' (Fraga, 2005: 32). If Tim Burton is to be labelled an *auteur*, then he is the '*auteur* of the symbol'.

Tim Burton in context

It is interesting to compare Burton's handling of abstract imagery with the work of other directors who have also depicted the world of the unconscious in symbolic language. Symbolic cinema is not necessarily non-realistic cinema – one can make a film based on a spiritual, miraculous or supernatural idea, but use everyday images and objective representation techniques to express it. Or, as the French film theorist André Bazin wrote, 'realism . . . is to be defined not in terms of ends but of means' (Bazin, 1971/II: 87).

Let us take a look at Andrey Tarkovsky. A proponent of dream-like, iconic imagery, and advocate of narrative impressionism (his films are 'poetically structured' rather than linear), Tarkovsky nevertheless considered 'the real world' the only possible visual and emotional base for a film. In his view, realistic details, represented in a symbolic way, are the

most suitable tools for truthful reflection of the inner world. For this purpose his level of detail is very high: 'To be faithful to life, intrinsically truthful, a work has for me to be at once an exact factual account and a true communication of feelings' (Tarkovsky, 1989: 23). Tarkovsky's symbols are not expressionistic, or grotesque, or make-believe; his underwater life is amazingly realistic, and even the death of the horse in *Andrey Rublev* – quite horrifyingly – happens in real time and is captured by the camera. Such abundance of naturalism is unusual for abstract imagery, because, at this level of archetypal depth, symbols usually become schematic and imprecise. There exists a dark, mesmerising gap between the precision of Tarkovsky's symbols, and the fathomless philosophical abstractness which they represent. Even the most blurred and metaphysical of his plotlines are built from 'real-life' bricks: a horse, a burning candle, an empty room. All this leaves an impression of paranoia and danger – the spectator cannot for a second doubt that the picture on screen is 'genuine' – but the real world portrayed is haunted, murky and uncontrollable. Tarkovsky does not draw the line between the real and the psychic life; there is no 'safe distance' between the film and the audience. His illusions, and his symbols, are extremely factual.

Burton, by contrast, steers clear of any concrete imagery. The viewer gets his distance, which allows him to participate safely in the projection/ introjection exchange. The blood in his films is 'painted' in the most unnatural hues of red which can never be mistaken for the real thing. The spectator can safely absorb the film's contents and apply them to their own life – in other words, they will 'become the main character', and fill the character with their personal qualities. At the same time, the audience can leave the enchanted world at any moment. In order to stay 'safe' and 'controllable', the on-screen universe has to be narratively schematic and visually artificial while at the same time remaining psychologically accurate. This is exactly what Burton manages to achieve in his films. He shares with Tarkovsky the desire to 'portray' a feeling, an emotion, an unconscious, dream-like state – hence the heightened attention to *mise-en-scène*. But unlike Tarkovsky, his images are far more distorted and grotesque; they are, very clearly, hyperboles – both visually and narratively. His sets are highly stylised – *Sweeney Todd*, for instance, was shot on set and not on location, because the director wanted to achieve a fairy tale London, not a real London (DVD2/'Sweeney's London'). The blades of Edward Scissorhands may look sharp and physically dangerous, but his razor blades are a figurative device, standing for inability to communicate, rather than an image-making recommendation for your average introverted–rebellious teenager.

Genre-wise, Burton's films are close to the German expressionist aesthetic, with their distortion of reality, high degree of stylisation, extensive use of chiaroscuro, emphasis on metaphor and symbol, and the pictorial composition of their stock imagery, which was achieved by 'violence to the

plastics of the image by way of sets and lighting' (Bazin, 1971/I: 26). Burton's characters and *mise-en-scène* are also pictorial and plastic-expressionist, similar to those created by Friedrich Murnau (*Nosferatu*, 1922), Robert Wiene (*The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, 1921) and Fritz Lang (*Metropolis*, 1927). German cinematic expressionism can be analysed in terms of critical reflection of the political and social reality in Europe in the 1920s. *Caligari*, for example, was originally devised as a parable of 'unchecked authoritarianism following the cataclysm of war' (Skal, 1993: 41). In the 'negative allegorical' way typical of the Gothic mode in general, the films investigated the psychology of the crowd and the dangerous possibilities of controlling the human mind – hence the themes of authoritarianism, obsession, madness, hypnosis, trance and frenzy. The 'distorted' 'visible reality' was built of grotesque images and displayed erratic composition; at the same time, the psychological reality was reproduced as terrifyingly believable. In other words, 'the inner' distorted 'the outer', and no naturalistic means could have been employed in place of angular sets, heavy shadows and contrast lighting to render the themes of the collective shadow, conservative nationalism, political power and authoritative control. Expressionists' diminished interest in the plot (which is often erratic and directionless) can be explained by the more urgent necessity to tell the 'psychological story', to express the emotional rather than the narrative aspect of the idea.

Similarly, in Tim Burton's *oeuvre*, the psycho-visual aspect comes into conflict with the narrative structure, and especially with his films' textual plane. André Bazin argues that 'the expressionist heresy came to an end after the arrival of sound' because 'the sound image, far less flexible than the visual image, would carry montage in the direction of realism, increasingly eliminating both plastic expressionism and the symbolic relation between images' (Bazin, 1971/II: 26; 1971/I: 33). In Burton's films, out of all possible sound accompaniments, music (both extradiegetic and intradiegetic) plays a far more important part, and aids in the expression of the major idea, than would any dialogue, albeit masterfully written. Without Danny Elfman's music, which in itself is a powerful, melodramatic commentary to any moving image, neither *Edward Scissorhands* nor *Batman Returns* would have had the trademark Burtonian emotional impact on the audience. Interestingly enough, Burton began experimenting with musicals (*James and the Giant Peach*, 1996*, The Nightmare Before Christmas*, 1993) early in his career, and is now increasingly moving towards the musical genre, of which *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (2005) and *Sweeney Todd* (2007) are good examples. Joining the image with the musical accompaniment is a trusted method of decreasing the pressure on the linguistic and narrative planes of the film, while also an efficient way of increasing its emotional–expressive potential.

Plastic expressionism and symbolic relations between images are the defining features of Tim Burton's films. His symbols are not covered with a

veil of realism – on the contrary, their structure and function are always accessible, non-elitist and interpretable. The non-realistic modes (the fantastic, the uncanny and the marvellous, to use Tzvetan Todorov's terminology), however, can be very complex too – in their own way. Juxtaposed with the reality plane (think of the cinematic and fictional *magical realism*)[5], instead of 'mythologising' and simplifying the narrative, they make it more intricate. The non-realistic plane of a magical-realist narrative sequence points at the convergences and divergences between the psychological and the real, and at the discrepancies between the inner and the outer worlds. Magical realism contains hidden niches which can be occupied by political statements, its 'magical' part serving as a safe place for political allegories. Magic can be presented in the narrative 'as a cultural corrective, requiring readers to scrutinize accepted realistic conventions of causality, materiality, motivation' (Faris and Zamora, 1995: 3).

Splitting the narrative into two planes is, by all means, a very attractive and effective stylistic device; it 'externalises' the character's psychic life, displays the dialectical intricacies of human relationships and even the transitoriness and subjectivity of commonly accepted, and seemingly 'real', discourses. While most of Burton's films, to some extent, concern the clash between the real and the psychological, he used magical realism to its maximum potential only once – in *Big Fish* (2003), which boasts a rather convoluted storyline.

By his own admission, Burton is totally at sea with narrative sequences, especially of such an elaborate kind. It is also unusual for him to employ novels as canvases for his vision. A good, and ornate, storyline is more of a Steven Spielberg thing, so it is not surprising that Spielberg was also interested in making *The Big Fish* (Le Blanc and Odell, 2005: 121). It is far more curious that Burton chose it as working material for his next film, for, although thematically the story lies within Burton's usual pool of archetypal schemata (death of the father, hero myth, a bewitching anima), stylistically it differs from the bulk of his work. The biggest observable difference is the presence of the perceivable 'reality plane' in *Big Fish*. Le Blanc and Odell note that the film, because of its 'grounding in the real world, and not the idealised pastel pseudo-1950s of *Edward Scissorhands* or the imposing futuristic megapolis of *Batman*', feels 'strangely dissociated' (2005: 124). Such narrative complexity is rather untypical for Burton and can be credited to the fact that it had pre-existed as a fully fledged magical realist novel.

Although a story about a man's final reconciliation with his father may be a good way of expressing existential angst, Burton seems to be more at home with purely grotesque structures: fairy tales (*Edward Scissorhands*,

---

5 Cinematic examples: *Being John Malkovich* (1999), *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006); literary examples: Mikhail Bulgakov's *Master and Margarita* (1928–1940), *The Magus* (1966) by John Fowles.

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, *Alice in Wonderland*); comics (*Batman*); 'penny dreadfuls' cum musicals (*Sweeney Todd*); highly symbolic anti-utopias (*Planet of the Apes*); and classic Gothic hits refracted through the prism of B-cinema (the Frankenstein monster, Poe's *Raven*). One might argue that grotesque and mythological genres are schematic (which made them so popular with 'basic' formalists like Vladimir Propp, archetypal formalists like Joseph Campbell or interpretative archetypalists like Northrop Frye). For Burton, however, allegorical genres are the main, and the most effective, way of sublimating his personal material. He explains his choice (with total disregard for academic terminology):

> Because I never read, my fairy tales were probably those monster movies. To me, they're fairly similar. I mean, fairy tales are extremely violent and extremely symbolic and disturbing, probably even more so than *Frankenstein* and stuff like that, which are kind of mythic and perceived as fairy-tale-like. [. . .] Growing up, I guess, it was a reaction against a very puritanical, bureaucratic, fifties nuclear family environment – me resisting seeing things laid out, seeing things exactly as they were. That's why I've always liked the idea of fairy tales or folk tales, because they're symbolic of something else. There's a foundation to them, but there's more besides, they're open to interpretation. I always liked that, seeing things and just having your own idea about them.
>
> (Salisbury, 2006: 3)

It is interesting that Burton's choice of styles and methods is not dictated by their aesthetic qualities, but is based on an assumption which you do not often hear from an *auteur*: films can be ideologically and structurally loose, and should generally invite interpretative pluralism. This position is similar to that of another advocate of open interpretation, vague symbolism and loose structures, Andrey Tarkovsky, who held the opinion that the audience was entitled to '. . . the opportunity to live through what is happening on the screen as if it were his own life, to take over, as deeply personal as his own, the experience imprinted in time upon the screen, relating his own life to what is being shown' (Tarkovsky, 1989: 183). Unlike Tarkovsky, however, who chose a complex way of expressing the symbolic with realistic means, Burton is formally simple, schematic, plush and essentially 'pop', which allows him to attract and retain a much bigger fan base than an average circle of *auteur* connoisseurs.

Ways of analysing the symbol

It is for this reason, and taking into consideration the 'plastic' and allegorical character of Burton's films, that I have chosen Jungian analytical psychology as my principal interpretative tool. I picked it from a highly

competitive pool of valid and astute methodologies because, in my view, it perfectly suits the layout and meaning of Burton's works, his creative habits, as well as his sublimation stimuli.

Tim Burton is an essentially archetypal director in the sense that he works with basic mythological motifs. The principal themes of his films, especially the father–son conflict, call for a psychoanalytic approach. As a practising psychotherapist and 'interpreter of dreams', Jung was more interested in the syntagmatic realisation of mythological structures than their history, formal properties or comparative possibilities. My choice of Jung over Freud and the post-Freudians is a matter of their different approaches to the treatment of symbols – whether in dreams or in the arts. Bearing in mind Burton's anti-linguistic (or alinguistic) tendencies, Freudian, Lacanian and post-Freudian theories are less applicable because they place the linguistic above the visual. As Steven Walker observes, 'By emphasising the image over the word, Jungian psychology differentiates itself radically from Freudian, Lacanian and other psychologies that stress the task of interpreting the *language* of the unconscious' (Walker, 2002: 3).

Don Fredericksen draws attention to another aspect of the same problem: Freud's 'semiotic' (possibility of exact interpretation) and Jung's 'symbolic' attitude (amplification, or deferred interpretation) to the creative and dream-imagery. Jung does not see the unconscious as being linguistically structured, hence his rejection of semiotics in favour of amplification. Jung writes in *Psychological Types*:

> The concept of symbol should in my view be strictly distinguished from that of sign. Symbolic and semiotic meanings are entirely different things . . . A symbol always presupposes that the chosen expression is the best possible description or formulation of a relatively unknown fact, which is nonetheless known to exist or is postulated as existing . . . Every view which interprets the symbolic expression as an analogue or an abbreviated designation for a known thing is semiotic. [. . .] The symbol is alive only so long as it is pregnant with meaning. But once its meaning has been born out of it, once that expression is found that formulated the thing sought, expected, or divined even better than the hitherto accepted symbol, then the symbol is dead, i.e., it possesses only an historical significance . . . An expression that stands for a known thing remains a mere sign and not a symbol. It is, therefore, quite impossible to create a living symbol, i.e., one that is pregnant with meaning, from known associations.
>
> (Jung, 1971: CW6: paras. 814–818)

Thus, a symbol is a relative and 'immediate' thing, rather than a permanent, ready-made set of meanings. In a symbol, the relationship between the

signifier and the signified is, indeed, highly arbitrary. Drawing upon Jung's democratic position of 'anti-exactness', Don Fredericksen argues:

> We must understand that Jung's distinction between sign and symbol ultimately elaborates two distinct modes of apprehending and explaining the psyche and its products – not just two distinct psychologies but two distinct ontologies and philosophies of value.
>
> This point is succinctly illustrated by Jung and Freud's differing explanations of, and attitudes toward, incest fantasy and symbolism. Freud interpreted the incest fantasy concretely. [. . .] Freud labels the distorted or disguised expressions of the incest wish 'symbols', incorrectly so according to Jung. For the latter, Freud's 'symbols' are in fact signs, standing for the putatively known, albeit repressed, desire of the patient to have physical intimacy with a parent. Their meaning can be completely explained by Freudian analytic procedures that reduce them to their underlying cause.
>
> (Hauke and Alister, 2005: 19)

For Jung, the symbol is always bigger than the sum of the dreamer's (or the author's) biographical details, and significantly deeper than any literal or pre-existing meaning.

Even though I find the biographical material priceless, and sometimes mention it in relation to Burton's imagery, I have no intention of reducing his films to his childhood complexes. The symbolic core of his cinematic imagery – the abandoned child–monster – cannot be discussed entirely in biographical terms. Any uninterrupted analysis of Burton's films in terms of his introversion, failure to communicate or his poor relationship with his parents would be ethically incorrect and methodologically incomplete. 'The monster' is not simply an imprint of Burton's own feelings towards the outside world which he perceives as 'hostile in its normality'. Far from that, the image of the monster acquires independence and becomes an archetype – a fluid, symbolic representation of a whole range of psychological phenomena – from the child–saviour who can perform miracles, and the creative punk born in a Gothic castle, to the antidogmatic rebel with a political stance. A nonconformist director, who has to defend his ideas from the studio heads, is only one aspect of the multi-faceted symbol. Meanwhile, the audience is full of outcasts who feel unique and misunderstood, and each viewer adds his or her personal dimension to the image, thus adding to the picture's interpretative volume. Being litmus papers for the state of culture, the best films resonate in many a soul; and that is why Burton's Gothic tales of a loner's conflict with society have a very wide fan-audience. Which probably means that 'the crowd' is not so ordinary, cruel and insensitive, after all.

In his book *Sculpting in Time*, Andrey Tarkovsky discusses the use of ready-made, intellectual and decipherable imagery in filmmaking. He considers such practices bad taste. Signs that are 'fixed' by the director for the audience, images ready for consumption, are the ones that stifle the viewer's imagination rather than widen his or her range of vision. Not surprisingly, perhaps, as a long-shot director, he links such 'sign-making' to clever montage:

> 'Montage cinema' presents the audience with puzzles and riddles, makes them decipher symbols, take pleasure in allegories, appealing all the time to their intellectual experience. Each of these riddles, however, has its own exact, word for word solution; so I feel that Eisenstein prevents the audience from letting their feelings be influenced by their own reaction to what they see. When in *October* he juxtaposes a balalaika with Kerensky, his method has become his aim, in the way that Valéry meant. The construction of the image becomes an end in itself, and the author proceeds to make a total onslaught on the audience, imposing upon them his own attitude to what is happening.
>
> (Tarkovsky, 1989: 118)

Such methods, Tarkovsky argues, 'are utterly inimical', and contradict 'the very basis of the unique process whereby a film affects an audience. Directors obsessed with associative montage 'make thought into a despot: it leaves no "air"', nothing of that unspoken elusiveness which is perhaps the most captivating quality of all art' (2000: 183).

Tim Burton is no Eisenstein. An anti-intellectual filmmaker, he does not make an effort to create 'signs'. He remains in the realm of the symbolic, operating with the images that are personally dear to him, which also happen to be so 'loose' that their interpretive range is endless. Edward's blade-hands, apart from Burton's own inability to communicate (which is the most obvious interpretation), also represent the double-edge (and the *edginess*) of creativity, the creator's deficiency, his inner darkness, and the inevitable tension between the creative intention and the final result.

A psychoanalytic approach – Freudian, Lacanian, Kleinian, etc. – tends to view human nature in a fixedly negative light. While Freud's theories are veiled with biological determinism, Lacan's ideas of the unconscious structured like a language display an equally fatalistic approach to the psychic life of man. Once trapped in the trans-individual symbolic order, or a variety of such orders, an individual cannot change his destiny. The Lacanian man is surrounded by endless rigid cultural signifiers, and mourns the impossibility of controlling the process of signification because the signified will always escape, and the precious moment of communication will be lost. In other words, human civilisation is yet another existentialist failure because the

'meaning' can never be 'exact'. Rather tragically, the signified cannot be pinned down. Linguistic sign is a utopian concept *per se*.

In contrast to various pro-Freudian manifestations of pre- and post-existentialist sadness, Jung never limited himself to the analysis of linguistic structures; instead, he was more interested in the visual manifestation of the symbol – in the image. As Oliver Davies puts it, 'Whereas the Lacanian unconscious is composed of potentially word-forming linguistic structures, the Jungian (collective) unconscious is made up of structures with a potential for image formation' (Baumlin *et al.*, 2004: 66–67). Images, not words, are what hold the primary importance for Jung.

Moreover, 'images', for Jung, can be further subdivided into 'personalised' (concrete realisations) and 'collective' (abstract ideas) or more concrete archetypal images and abstract archetypes (CW9/I: paras. 1–9). It is important to differentiate between the two. An archetype is an irrepresentable idea, whereas archetypal images are concrete realisations of archetypes in dreams, fantasies, myths, etc. In Jung's own words, 'the perceptible archetypal image is not identical with the inherited form [i.e. archetype], which allows an indefinite number of empirical expressions' (Jung, *Letters*, quoted in Walker, 2002: 12). For instance, 'dying-and-rising god' is an archetype, but Osiris, Dionysus and Jesus are archetypal images. Similarly, female initiation of sexual contact is an archetype, whereas stories of Beauty and the Beast, Little Red Riding Hood, and Bluebeard's castle are archetypal situations.

People may be separated from each other at the level of the personal unconscious, which *is* predetermined by cultural and familial factors. Put simply, we are different because we have been shaped by different circumstances. As a result, our linguistic signifieds (to use Lacan's terminology) or image-signifieds (to follow Jung's reasoning) do not, and cannot, match. However, human beings are united 'further down' (or is it further up?), at the collective unconscious level, which is free of the constraints of formal signification because it deals exclusively with basic, symbolic ideas.

All the while, even the concretised archetypal images unite people, and tap into their experiences, better than the heroically utopian linguistic signs, in which the signifier is forever attempting to entrap the signified, and forever fails to do so (Derrida's *différence*). In the Jungian universe, the fact that symbols cannot be precisely deciphered, or equally understood by everyone, is not tragic – it is a necessary, and important, aspect of the human condition. Symbols unite people by the very fact of their indeterminability because they contain unlimited space for interpretation and amplification. Abstract ideas, or archetypes, exist equally for everyone, and it is up to the individual to dress them up in appropriate clothes. Civilisation is not a failed project – it is an unfinished project (rather like Edward Scissorhands); it has space for dynamics and development. Jung's is a 'half-full', rather than 'half-empty', view of human nature. When 'the

father of signification' is dead, it is time to go back to abstraction, to the symbol, and to re-establish dialogue with the unconscious on her terms, in her language.

At the same time, as a tool for critical interpretation, Jungian psychology certainly lacks precision. A cinema or literary critic will sooner or later notice gaps in Jungian theories which would have to be covered up using alternative methods – for instance, elements of semiotic analysis. That Tim Burton operates predominantly with basic symbols accessible to the audience via 'emotional connection' does not exclude other, stricter methodologies. Even if the unconscious is not structured like a language, this does not mean that elements of linguistic analysis do not possess the potential to illuminate its contents. It's like trying to find the nearest possible key to the mysterious door behind which lies the unknown.

True, to some extent, using semiotics and structuralism in contemporary cinematic criticism would mean looking in the direction of the failed project of modernity; it would be an exercise in rational organisation of the world. Drawing on various Enlightenment philosophies, the structuralist framework presupposed (to quote Fredric Jameson) that there is some '"pre-established harmony" between the structures of the mind (and ultimately of the brain) and the order of the outside world' (Jameson, 1975: 110). The world is a potentially 'decodable' place because the entire sign-system somehow corresponds to all of reality (1975: 110). Burton himself is not a big fan of instrumental rationality and its legacy. In several of his films, including *Beetlejuice*, *Sleepy Hollow* and *Planet of the Apes*, he disarms rationality's utopian habit of wrapping the universe into a web of rigid structures (language, scientific knowledge, etc.). Instead, he accepts the chaotic state of modern existence – because chaos is the ideal working ground for the artist. The artist re-assembles the world from pieces. Burton's own creations are the result of this world-making activity. The 'pre-established harmony', or Paradise, has been lost, but humans can regain it by being creative.

However, structuralism and semiotics, employed *sparingly*, also help to 'organise a meaning' out of chaos. Not the absolute, scientific meaning of structuralism, but the relative, imprecise, approximate, amplified meaning. In this book, structuralism and semiotics are not the principal analytical tools, but are used as secondary amplificatory instruments. They illuminate only one corner of the complex landscape that is Tim Burton's *oeuvre*.

A post-Jungian perspective is more appropriate for the analysis of Burton's Gothic mythologies than a Freudian or even a post-Freudian approach because, instead of hierarchising 'truths', such a perspective would foreground perspectivism and pluralism (Hauke and Alister, 2001: 2). Working 'upwards' from the basic 'personal' interpretation, one can involve bigger, and more general, layers of the symbol; such as (in the case of Edward's blades) the Maker's 'Janus' nature, the impossibility of

absolute good and the perennial existentialist problem of 'losing' God the father. In any case, a wide-scale, 'deferred' symbol leaves space (or 'air', to use Tarkovsky's expression) for the viewer's personal projections. Luke Hockley writes that

> While remaining alert to the dangers of overstating the case, it may be that films give a symbolic expression to elements of the psyche that have been repressed. Unwittingly, we recognize on the screen images of our unconscious. The literal form of projection in the cinema turns out to mirror the process of psychological projection. Jung remarks that ''projections change the world into a replica of one's unknown face'' (CW 9.2: 17). So, too, we can recognize elements of unconscious lives, emotional, social, political, and so forth, on the silver screen.
>
> (Baumlin *et al.*, 2004: 78)

Similarly, Christopher Hauke and Ian Alister argue that films can 'act as a therapeutic point of reference where unconscious aspects of the self can be seen in projection' (Hauke and Alister, 2001: 11). Seen in this light, Burton's films provide their audiences with a wide projective and therapeutic potential. The person watching can place himself into the vast mythological scheme visualised on the screen precisely because of the democracy and flexibility of this scheme. Burton's 'unconfined', flexible approach is what makes him so popular. Myth, with its formal simplicity, generality and internationality, is an essentially democratic phenomenon.

Burton and the archetypes

Burton's on-screen imagery forms a complex net of archetypes, which, in their visualised form, become recognisable and 'relatable' archetypal images and situations. One of them is especially important for understanding the psychology of the Burtonian male hero – the archetype of the self.

Archetypes, as Jung saw them, are 'primordial types. Or universal images that have existed since the remotest times' (Jung, 1954: CW9/I: para. 5). Unlike complexes that inhabit the personal level of the unconscious, archetypes reside in its collective part. The archetypes, Jolande Jacobi explains,

> make up the actual content of the collective unconscious; their number is relatively limited for it corresponds to 'the number of typical and fundamental experiences' incurred by man since primordial times. Their meaning for us lies precisely in the 'primordial experience' which is based on them and which they represent and communicate. [. . .] We find them recurring in all mythologies, fairy tales, religious traditions

and mysteries. [. . .] Prometheus the stealer of fire, Heracles the dragon slayer, the countless creation myths, the fall from paradise, the mysteries of creation, the virgin birth, the treacherous betrayal of the hero, the dismembering of Osiris, and many other myths and fairy tales represent psychic processes in symbolic images. Similarly, the figures of the snake, the fish, the sphinx, the helpful animals, the Tree of the World, the Great Mother, the enchanted prince, the *puer aeternus*, the Mage, the Wise Man, Paradise, etc., stand for certain motifs and contents of the collective unconscious.

(Jacobi, 1973: 47)

In man's psychic life the archetypes are part of what Jung called 'the individuation process', or simply 'individuation'. Jolande Jacobi, a first-generation follower of Jung, defines this process as gradual self-fulfilment, self-realisation 'both in the individual and . . . in the collective sense' (Jacobi, 1973: 106). In other words, individuation is personal development which leads towards psychic wholeness – 'when both parts of the total psyche, consciousness and the unconscious, are linked together in a living relation'. The complete union of the two psychic systems is an unattainable goal, but the good news is that relative differentiation is possible (1973: 105).

In his book *Human Being Human* (2005) Christopher Hauke provides a contemporary outlook on the individuation process. He defines individuation as 'the urge found in all living things to persist in becoming themselves; in human terms this means the development of the individual personality and becoming the person you were meant to be or the person you have always had the potential of being. [. . .] It lies at the core of what I mean by *human being human*' (Hauke, 2005: 65). The important point is that the individuation process implies, to some extent, a conflict with society, because, in becoming an individual, one may start questioning collective norms and traditions. The differentiation of the personality, Christopher Hauke writes, 'is not only the differentiation of unconscious from conscious contents but the further differentiation of the personal unconscious from the collective' (2005: 65). We will come back to this point in later chapters when discussing Burton's characters' relationship with society, and their blatant refusal to comply with the collective norms.

Burton tends to create heroes who do not want to abide by any rules but their own. They feel that rules do not exist *a priori* but are always laid out by a person, or people, who currently have the power to create spoken or written legislation in a particular community or group. Burton's protagonists refuse to accept the 'official' version of the world; they constantly 'defamiliarise' the official picture, make it different, strange, 'uglily creative'. Looking at the world through magic binoculars, they can notice things other people cannot see. Burton once said about his own perception of the outside world: 'When you are a kid, you think everything is strange, and you think it

is *because* you're a kid, everything is strange. Then when you get older, you realize everything really *is* strange' (Woods, 2002: 66). From the point of view of the community, the 'different' perception of the environment is a sign of madness; from the point of view of the individual, it is a chance to exercise one's independent thinking. And it sometimes happens with Burton's protagonists that their individuation becomes *individualism*, 'a sort of self-centered concern which ignores the wishes and needs of others' (Hauke, 2005: 65). Individualism in Burton's films equals (often self-inflicted) loneliness.

Following Jolande Jacobi's summary of Jung's ideas, the signposts and milestones of individuation are marked by specific archetypes: the shadow (personal and collective), animus and anima, the wise old man, the great mother, and various versions of the self (the child, the hero, etc.). The personal shadow, in Jacobi's definition, is 'a part of the individual, a split-off portion of his being which nevertheless remains attached to him "like his shadow"' (Jacobi, 1973: 109–110). In Freudian psychology the same phenomenon is labelled *doppelgänger*, while the literary term is traditionally *the double*. When undifferentiated, this function becomes '"our dark side"', the inborn collective predisposition which we reject for ethical, aesthetic, or other reasons, and repress because it is in opposition to our conscious principles' (1973: 110). Put simply, the shadow is the 'dark brother', a place for projections in the human psyche, where all the dangerous, inhuman, atavistic, repressed desires accumulate. This figure is not easy to recognise and make conscious, because its activation in the psyche is bound with projections – i.e. we can only see our own negative traits when they are mirrored back to us by other people, in which case we tend to think that the traits belong to *them* and not to *us*. To use an unpleasant but functional metaphor, the shadow is civilisation's psychic garbage can which can explode if left unobserved.

The collective shadow arrives precisely when individuals have been unaware of their inner problems while being influenced *en masse* by some powerful external force – for instance, a political ideology. Because mankind is not 'just an accumulation of individuals' but possesses 'a high degree of psychological collectivity' (Jung, 1910, CW18: para. 927), all human control 'comes to an end when the individual is caught up in a mass movement' (Jung, 1936, CW10: para. 395). There are several prominent 'shadows' in Burton's films, including the Joker and Sweeney Todd. However, it is too extensive a topic to cover in the Introduction, so we will postpone full analysis until Chapter 5 ('The Maniac'), in which this archetype will be discussed in relation to the trickster.

Another archetype which stands out prominently in Burton's *oeuvre* is the self. The self is a complex psychological and metaphysical concept which was devised by Jung to illustrate man's innate propensity for psychological maturation and spiritual growth. According to Jung, the self is bigger than

the ego, which is the centre only of consciousness.[6] It is at the core of the individuation process because it stands for the whole of the psyche, both consciousness and the unconscious. Jung conceived the self as a 'supraordinate personality' which regulates the psyche and is in charge of the individuation process (Jung, 1951, CW9/I: para. 306). It strives to heal the split within – inner problems – as well as the person's conflicts with the outside world. Individuation, in fact, is a gradual integration of the self's warring components, the binary opposites. The self, Jolande Jacobi writes, 'is a centre of tension between two worlds and their forces which we *know* only dimly but *feel* all the more strongly' (Jacoby, 1973: 131). In dreams and fairy tales it can manifest itself in a number of images – usually indicating its heroic struggle for psychic wholeness: religious figures such as Christ and Buddha, folklore heroes like Heracles, King Arthur and Siegfried, as well as contemporary mythological characters – for instance, Superman, Batman and Harry Potter.

Interestingly enough, Burton's 'children' never become 'adult heroes' – i.e. they never grow up, or outgrow their infantile complexes. They prefer to continue existing in proximity to the darkness of the unconscious, rather than adopt an adult, mature, conscious attitude to the world – hence the Gothic, twilight colouring of most of Burton's films. His male heroes are also quite unusual (they lack many a required 'heroic' and masculine quality), while the female characters he creates are not as scary and powerful as traditional anima figures.

For instance, a typical hero myth is characterised by the strong presence of the 'anima motif'. On his quest the hero is bound to encounter a kind female creature who offers him her knowledge and experience. Alternatively, she can happen to be a dangerous witch who cunningly devises to devour him. Confrontation with an anima figure (which will be discussed in detail in the chapter about the superhero) is an important stage of the hero's journey because it symbolises the battle for the deliverance from the mother (both real and symbolic). On a larger scale, it stands for the ever complex relationship between civilisation and Mother Nature, and for human consciousness striving to control its instincts.

Interestingly enough, the Burtonian anima is more often pliable (usually a 'Gothic angel'[7]) than dangerous, and even when she is aggressive and

---

6 By contrast, the unconscious does not have a centre and 'as a rule, the unconscious phenomena manifest themselves in fairly chaotic and unsystematic form'. If there were such a centre, Jung argues, 'we could expect almost regular signs of its existence. Cases of dual personality would then be frequent occurrences rather than rare curiosities' (Jung, 1939, CW9/I: para. 492).

7 Winona Ryder's characters – Lydia (*Beetlejuice*) and Kim (*Edward Scissorhands*); Kim Basinger's portrayal of Vicki Vale in *Batman*; Katrina Van Tassel in *Sleepy Hollow*, Sally in *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, and Mrs Lovett from *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*.

harmful (the Catwoman, the Witch from *Big Fish*, the female Martian from *Mars Attacks*), she does not occupy the centre stage of the conflict. One exception to this rule would be *The Corpse Bride*. Its plot is entirely based on the dual anima/angel–whore motif. Most of Burton's films, however, revolve around the issues related to social maturity and conformity. In other words, his hero quests do not usually delve into the anima problem. So far, the female heroine has only been prominent in *The Corpse Bride*, and more or less noticeable in *Big Fish* (the Witch/Jenny/Sandra), while in the rest of his films it is relegated to the background.

A much more substantial problem for Burton's weird, enchanted children is 'the crowd'. The prospect of integrating into community is perceived by them as truly horrifying. Even the most dangerous anima is a more distant threat for Edward Scissorhands, Batman and Ed Wood than the call to 'face the public'. The vital difference between the Burtonian character and 'them' is that he is in motion, he is searching, he wants 'to know' – quite in contrast to the stagnation and complacency of his environment. Unable to live near this stagnation, he distances himself from it – like Edward Scissorhands who chooses the solitary life of 'the man in the high castle' over the suburban lifestyle, or Edward Bloom (*Big Fish*) who, having outgrown his village, leaves his unambitious neighbours behind and 'goes to seek his fortune'.

In his attempt to recreate his heroes' hunger for 'knowledge', Burton often employs the motif of 'early science' – the body of knowledge that is neither a 'proper' science, nor is it art. Ideologically, it is akin to alchemy. His scientifically minded protagonists, armed with an assortment of extravagant tools, in bogus laboratories poke and probe, assemble and disassemble their monstrous victims in the hope, like their literary predecessor Victor Frankenstein, of robbing Mother Nature, and stealing 'the secret of life'. Little Victor Frankenstein (*Frankenweenie*), Dr Finkelstein (*The Nightmare Before Christmas*), Jack Skellington, the inventor of Edward Scissorhands, and Willie Wonka all manufacture hideous creatures using crude, pseudo-scientific methods. This is very much in tune with Andrey Tarkovsky's statement that art, like science 'is a means of assimilating the world, an instrument for knowing it in the course of man's journey towards what is called "absolute truth"' (Tarkovsky, 1989: 37).

Tim Burton seems to think that cinematic art, like all monsters, has to be crude. Art is something you do with your hands (well, he came from animation), and because the creator is human, and hands are not the perfect tool, the end result is bound to be imperfect. The images and materials have to look rough, and the seams, like the literal seams and scars on the bodies of Edward Scissorhands, Sally, Emily and the Joker, have to be visible. That is why, in Burton's case, the perfection of cinematic techniques is not as important as the initial impulse to create, to express a feeling, to give the audience a space where they can connect with the archetypes on their

own terms, and at their own pace. As Burton's creative wingman, Rick Heinrichs, puts it, 'the budgets have gotten bigger, there's more ambition, but still, in all of Tim's films, the animated and live action, his sensibility seeps into every corner – a Burtonesque feeling prevails. His aesthetic eschews the polish and patness of what comes with cutting-edge technology because he's after an emotional connection that is much more immediate and involving' (Matthews and Smith, 2007: 280).

Crudity seems to be the necessary prerequisite for freedom of expression and perception, projection and introjection.

After all, cinema is the kind of magic that creates life out of 'lifeless matter'.