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Transnational Monsters: Navigating Identity and Intertextuality in the Films of Guillermo del Toro

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Master of Arts

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TRANSNATIONAL MONSTERS: NAVIGATING IDENTITY AND
INTERTEXTUALITY IN THE FILMS OF GUILLERMO DEL TORO

MONOGRAPH

by

Sean Volk

Graduate Program in Film Studies

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada

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Abstract

This thesis examines representations of monstrosity in the films of Guillermo del Toro. Throughout his oeuvre, he has consistently explored the complex relationship between humans and monsters. Using the concepts of transnational cinema and intertextuality to frame the analysis, the monster will be read in relation to its engagement with references to other texts and the narrative and industrial implications of nations and borders. The eight films directed by del Toro will be analyzed to trace the evolving depiction of the monster while also considering the shifting national contexts of production. From the intimate narratives of his early films to the blockbuster spectacles of his most recent releases, this study suggests that monstrosity functions as a tool to critique the cultural and political contexts of the narrative and, also, to comment on the industrial realities surrounding production.

Keywords

Guillermo del Toro, monster, monstrosity, transnational cinema, intertextuality, industry, blockbusters, international co-production, nation, pastiche, quotation, reference, auteur, Mexico, the United States, Spain

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Introduction

How do we understand and confront monsters? From legend and mythology to contemporary horror cinema, the monster occupies a prominent place in the creative expressions and cultural traditions of people across the world. As scholars such as Robin Wood, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Barbara Creed suggest, there is a significant connection – social, historical, cultural, etc. – between the monster and the individual or group that has created it or told its story. Within the films of Guillermo del Toro, monstrosity is a persistent thematic preoccupation. From his first independent feature in Mexico, *Cronos* (1993), to the big-budget blockbuster *Pacific Rim* (2013), his most recent release to date, del Toro has demonstrated a fascination for non-human characters and subjects. Though its function in the narrative shifts from film to film, the monster provides a unifying context through which to study the director's impressive filmography. This thesis will function as an auteur study on Guillermo del Toro by focusing on the monsters of his films and examining the discourses which shape and influence the identities of these creatures.

This project is informed by a lifelong interest in monsters and genre cinema. To put it plainly, I am a fan of del Toro and his films. I originally encountered his English language films first as a teenager; I found myself taken with his representations of monsters. Whether it was the shape shifting giant insects of *Mimic* (1997) or the Reaper vampires of *Blade II* (2002), del Toro was creating distinctive creatures unlike any others I had ever seen. In the earliest stages of developing this project, I considered examining the image of the monster in contemporary genre cinema in general, but I found that regardless of how I structured my thoughts or how I selected films, I kept returning to the work of del Toro. Rather than addressing monstrosity in cinema generally, a project I now understand to be far too expansive for the size of a master's thesis, I found it more productive to engage monstrosity through the lens of a single auteur.

In my early readings on monstrosity, I found much discussion about monsters, especially in film studies, as figures or characters which stage or reflect the attitudes of specific national contexts or cultures. This is a very well researched and compelling line

of analysis. However, these questions seemed to be complicated by the films of del Toro because of the shifting industrial and national contexts throughout his career. What national context would the monster be referring to or staging? To alleviate the incompatibility of analyzing the monster in relation to one nation, theories of transnational cinema became most applicable for further study. Rather than restricting the inquiry to one national context, ideas on transnational cinema account for the fluidity of del Toro's career.

Much like del Toro's career can be situated within various national and cultural contexts, a similar hybridity can be associated with his use of other artistic works through intertextuality. Del Toro's approach to filmmaking, and monstrosity, is not confined to the conventions of one cultural or artistic tradition. He explains, "I think that in order to create movies, you should not solely be inspired by movies. It is important to enrich your storytelling language with every form of storytelling media that resonates with *you*. It can be a fairy tale, a classic book, or a video game, or a painting in a museum, it makes no difference, as long as it stimulates your storytelling drive" (del Toro Reddit.com). With references to texts as varied as Italian horror cinema and American literature, del Toro works with diverse source material; these intertextual references are most commonly presented in the monster.

To frame this study on monstrosity, transnational cinema, intertextuality, and identity, my approach is informed by the work of Noël Burch in *Life to Those Shadows* (1990). In his analysis of the origins of early silent cinema, Burch positions both the creative and the technical innovations which led to the first short films of the silent era within discourses on monstrosity. He suggests that there are significant commonalities between the creation of the moving image and the creation of the Frankenstein monster. Burch explains that both can be understood as a form of generating life. He asserts that filmmaking innovations "...lie in the direct line of the great Frankensteinian dream of the nineteenth century: the recreation of life, the symbolic triumph over death" (Burch 12). By treating the origins of film as an act of creation, Burch echoes the rhetoric of Mary Shelley's novel (1831) and James Whale's film (1931).

Within his analysis of silent cinema, Burch examines the short films from a historical and cultural perspective – situating each text within a network of political and social contexts. It is within this cultural approach that I anchor my own study on del Toro’s monsters. To analyze these creatures, it is important to establish the central discourses that shape their creation and inform their role in the narrative. Identity is multifaceted and this project will understand the monster as a combination of social, cultural and textual discourses. Moving forward in this analysis of monstrosity, theories of transnational cinema and intertextuality will provide the theoretical frame of reference from which del Toro’s films will be analyzed.

Though del Toro has been directing films since 1993, scholarship has increased significantly in recent years. Articles and reviews on the director’s work tend to focus on his Spanish language films – *Cronos*, *El espinazo del diablo/The Devil’s Backbone* (2001), and *El laberinto del fauno/Pan’s Labyrinth* (2006) – with the majority focusing on *Pan’s Labyrinth* and his use of intertextuality and the treatment of history and fantasy. Since 2013, three major works have been published on del Toro and his films: *The Three Amigos: The Transnational Filmmaking of Guillermo del Toro*, *Alejandro González Iñárritu*, and *Alfonso Cuarón* (Shaw 2013), *Guillermo Del Toro: Film as Alchemic Art* (McDonald and Clark 2014), and *The Transnational Fantasies of Guillermo del Toro* (Davies, Shaw and Tierney 2014). Though the texts are authored and edited by a wide array of scholars, a number of consistent areas of analysis emerge: transnational cinema and intertextuality. Shaw’s analysis in *The Three Amigos* situates del Toro as a transnational auteur, studying the industrial contexts of his films and his distinctive themes and images. She explains, “Del Toro, like Gonzalez Iñárritu and Alfonso Caurón, represents a certain type of global auteur who can weave in and out of national contexts and challenge clear-cut distinctions made in the international market between Hollywood commercial film, independent cinema, and art house foreign-language film” (Shaw “Three” 46-47). In *Guillermo Del Toro: Film as Alchemic Art*, McDonald and Clark analyze del Toro’s films in relation to intertextuality; they argue that the director’s use of intertextuality is one of the distinguishing characteristics of his filmmaking style. Editors Davies, Shaw, and Tierney examine del Toro’s career and films in *Transnational Fantasies* with the focus again on the implications of transnational cinema.

Much has been written recently on del Toro, however, this thesis is unique in that it approaches monstrosity as the focus of analysis. I am concerned with the following questions: how does the monster function across his filmography and how does the monster point to important shifts in his thematic concerns and production contexts? Though I will be focusing on questions concerning intertextuality and transnational cinema – matters addressed by other scholars – I look at the monster/s of each film as a figure that merges questions concerning both of these spheres. Also, unique to my approach is a survey of the director's films; whereas other texts have divided his filmography between English language and Spanish language productions, the intention of this project is to study the evolving figure of the monster across his oeuvre, across time and national contexts. It is intentional, then, to study the chronological progression of del Toro's representations of monstrosity by beginning my analysis with *Cronos* and concluding with his most recently released feature length films.

To organize my study of del Toro's monsters, my thesis will be divided into four chapters. The first chapter is a review of the literature on transnational cinema, intertextuality and monstrosity; in order to work with these concepts, it is helpful to survey pertinent research in each of the respective areas. This chapter will work to define each term and situate the debates in these fields that are relevant to my analysis. By addressing each of these areas, I will be able to further articulate the connections between these diverse spheres in the context of del Toro's monsters.

In Chapter Two, the monsters of *Cronos*, *Mimic* and *The Devil's Backbone* will be examined in relation to the intimate social contexts of each narrative. In the films, the monster is either the result of human actions or it is directly related to the films' human protagonists in an interpersonal capacity. Through analysis of the significant intertextual references and the shifting transnational contexts of the films' productions and/or narratives, this chapter examines the monster as symptomatic of a conflict between the individual and the cultural.

Chapter Three explores the discourses on nation present in *Blade II*, *Hellboy* (2004) and *Pan's Labyrinth*: the monsters in these films are intricately linked to their

diegetic national contexts. In each film, del Toro presents systems of authority struggling to confront, control or appropriate what is different or unknown. Whether it is the Vampire Nation, the United States or post-Civil War Spain, monstrosity functions as a critique of the discourses that compose the nation and national identity.

In Chapter Four, analysis of the monster will take on an industrial context as *Hellboy II: The Golden Army* (2008) and *Pacific Rim* are the productions of major Hollywood studios. Because of their blockbuster status, the films have a tremendous amount of pressure to perform financially and recoup their enormous budgets. Del Toro incorporates these industrial and financial anxieties within the narrative of the monster: in each film, the monster is turned into a media spectacle or a commodity to be sold. Within the overall structure of the thesis, this chapter argues that these films increasingly comment on del Toro's position in the film industry. As del Toro's career also comes into consideration, the conclusion of this thesis will suggest that the monsters of his early films have a different function than the self-reflexive spectacle of his most recent films. By further reflecting on the arguments of each chapter, the conclusion will examine the evolution of the monster while briefly considering del Toro's increasingly diverse modes of storytelling.

Chapter 1

1 The Discourses and Cultural Contexts of Monsters: Situating Scholarship on Transnational Cinema, Intertextuality and Monstrosity in relation to del Toro

A constant presence in the films of Guillermo del Toro is the figure of the monster. Throughout his filmography, the cultural and political implications of monstrosity have functioned as significant thematic preoccupations. The monsters of his films are shaped by the various national and industrial contexts in which del Toro works and by the diverse artistic traditions that inspire him. In order to analyze representations of monsters in his films, the relationship between industry, text and monstrosity must be considered. Much as del Toro is able to navigate different national and industrial contexts in the production of his films, he is able to incorporate diverse themes, images and narrative elements from pre-existing texts into his films; often, the union between the transnational and the intertextual is realized in the monster. This chapter will examine scholarship on ideas on the transnational applied to cinema, intertextuality and monstrosity; each area of study will be introduced by establishing pertinent debates and definitions as they relate to del Toro and his films. Situating the academic contexts surrounding these ideas will construct a framework for the analysis of specific films in the upcoming chapters.

1.1 Transnational Cinema

With films made in Mexico, the United States and Spain, del Toro has crossed borders throughout his career.¹ In each film, he engages different modes of production and sources of funding and financing: the director has worked on independent films with limited budgets, international co-productions and projects financed by major Hollywood studios. This mobility across nations, cultures and production contexts is significant when positioning del Toro as a transnational figure. As Paul Julian Smith writes in the

¹ Del Toro has traveled beyond these nations as well, utilizing shooting locations in Canada (*Pacific Rim* imdb.com) and the Czech Republic (*Hellboy* imdb.com) for example.

“Forward” to *The Transnational Fantasies of Guillermo del Toro*, “...del Toro (in his multiple roles of director, producer, screenwriter, graphic artist, and web designer) has of course made a unique contribution to the visual culture of three nations: Mexico, Spain, and the United States” (“Forward” x). The shifting national contexts of his productions are also manifest in the narratives of del Toro’s films as characters routinely speak multiple languages or move across borders. This interest in movement, borders and cultural exchange influences the production and content of del Toro’s films. It seems pertinent to begin by addressing theoretical considerations on the relationship between film, nation and the transnational, since those ideas will subsequently guide the analysis of the industrial contexts informing his films and the cultural context/s of his monsters.

1.1.1 The Nation on Film

Analysis of the term transnational, regardless of specific academic disciplines, must begin with scholarship on nations and how they are represented. In film studies, scholars such as Ella Shohat, Robert Stam, Valentina Vitali and Paul Willemen study how the nation is depicted in film. Shohat and Stam explain that film presents national ideologies in visual form to potentially large audiences, both domestic and international: the authors write, “The cinema, as the world’s storyteller par excellence, was from the outset ideally suited to relay the projected narratives of nations and empires” (Shohat and Stam 9). By depicting the everyday lives of a nation’s citizens or engaging the concerns, fears, or hopes of a nation in its thematic content, film is intricately connected to ideas on nation. As Vitali and Willemen suggest, “...films can be seen not to ‘reflect’, but to ‘stage’ the historical conditions that constitute ‘the national’” (Vitali & Willemen 8). Nations are presented on film through the choices made by filmmakers in relation to narrative, production, and ideology. Film provides a visual canvas for replicating the ideologies of the nation and perpetuating the discourses of nations and communities.

Fundamental to questions about nation and representation is the idea of the nation as a system of organizing and unifying people; in this regard, the nation can be understood as a community. Andrew Higson explains, “National identity is, in this sense, about the experience of belonging to such a community, being steeped in its traditions, its rituals, and its characteristic modes of discourse” (Higson 16). In *Imagined Communities*,

Benedict Anderson examines the social and ideological discourses that shape national consciousness and national identity, identifying community as an important aspect. Though the term community usually signifies a small group of people who share similar interests, space, or needs, Anderson deliberately uses the term to explain the psychological connection shared by the citizens of a particular nation. He writes, "...it is imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep horizontal comradeship" (Anderson 7). Even without personal connection, occupants of the same nation are encouraged to have a shared sense of identity, focusing on their similarities rather than their differences. The importance of borders in the creation of these communities is also noted by Anderson: they function as boundaries that designate and separate one nation from another (Anderson 7). Anderson's ideas on community and nation will be revisited in more detail in Chapter 3 when the "Vampire Nation" of *Blade II* is examined in relation to its absence of geographical borders.

1.1.2 Defining the Transnational

Over time, the movement of people and ideas across national borders has challenged strict definitions of national identity. Higson explains that national identity and national cinemas do not always account for these movements. He writes "...borders are always leaky and there is a considerable degree of movement across them (even in the most authoritarian states). It is in this migration, this border crossing, that the transnational emerges" (Higson 19). The theme of movement is recurrent in scholarship on the transnational in a number of disciplines, including film studies. Libia Villazana examines the use of the term in a variety of academic and social contexts throughout the Twentieth century; she finds that while the term refers most readily to movement, over time, the scope of the transnational – who or what is moving – has expanded. She writes, "[i]nitially the term was concomitant with the transnational movement of bodies; however, communication and technological development such as the Internet and the World Wide Web have propelled multivalent forms of interconnectedness across national borders, giving rise to transnational virtual mobility" (Villazana 25). As she explains, the

use of the term has evolved to also account for the movement of technology and, most relevant to this study, the movement of ideas from one location to another.

1.1.3 Situating the Transnational in Film Studies

When considering the transnational in relation to film studies, the movement of filmmakers and ideas across national contexts become significant. In “An Atlas of World Cinema”, Dudley Andrew suggests that the exchange of ideas and artists across cultures is significant, writing, “[b]orders are thresholds as much as walls. National cinema studies should take account of what borders make possible, as well as how films enter and exit” (Andrew 27-28). As a conceptual tool, transnational cinema can be used to contextualize cultural exchange and relationships – financial or artistic – that are formed across cultures. In line with Smith’s ideas, the understanding of the transnational as a mode or discourse of interconnectivity (“Transnational” 68) allows scholars to use the term to explore the international or multicultural presence which influences filmmaking.

The movement of filmmakers and finances across national borders also influences the industrial context of a production and the possible distribution and exhibition of films. Villazana notes that the majority of research on transnational cinema has focused on the international co-production of films (Villazana 30-31). As someone who has extensively studied international co-productions in Latin America, Tamara Falicov explains that many filmmakers from this region receive funding from international producers to finish or develop their projects and to potentially extend the distribution possibilities of their films (Falicov 73). With funds crossing national borders, transnational cinema provides a method to understand the role of finance and international co-productions.

1.1.4 Refining Definitions

Because transnational cinema is relevant to both textual and industrial analysis, the term is very broad and can be applied in many different capacities depending on the context of research. In “On the Plurality of Cinematic Transnationalism”, Mette Hjort acknowledges the significance of transnational cinema as an area of study, but suggests that the term needs further refinement. She contends that the ambiguity of the term must be clarified and proposes more specific categories to add precision to its use. Hjort’s

concerns are well founded, as the transnational nature of a film can refer to a variety of factors both on and off screen. She suggests it would be helpful to note if, within its narrative, a film presents its transnational attributes in a prominent and intentional manner. Also, according to Hjort, it would be equally important to establish if a film is the product of an international co-production or other modes of transnational production, a distinction she describes as “marked and unmarked transnationality” (Hjort 13).

In “Deconstructing and Reconstructing ‘Transnational Cinema’”, Deborah Shaw engages in a project similar to Hjort’s by proposing a system of classification to better organize what exactly is meant by transnational cinema and by acknowledging how these conditions impact filmmaking.² For this project on del Toro’s films, Shaw’s analysis of transnational directors provides a helpful reference. She defines transnational directors as “...directors who work and seek funding in a range of national contexts while they have their films distributed in the global market” (Shaw “Deconstructing” 60-61). This category of the transnational contextualizes del Toro’s movement across borders in his career and the changing industrial models of his productions.

1.2 Intertextuality

Del Toro approaches texts - film, literature, music, works of art – in much the same way as he approaches borders; he interacts with them, deliberately engaging and utilizing different cultural or artistic contexts in his own filmmaking. In this regard, his films exhibit a great deal of intertextuality, extensively referencing or quoting pre-existing works and texts from different countries in his films. Accordingly, the intertextual nature of his style becomes another discourse of the transnational in his body of work. With his use of intertextuality, del Toro positions his films, stories, and monsters

² Shaw’s areas of analysis include “transnational modes of production, distribution, and exhibition; transnational modes of narration; cinema of globalization; films with multiple locations; exilic and diasporic filmmaking; film and cultural exchange; transnational influences; transnational critical approaches; transnational viewing practices; transregional/transcommunity films; transnational stars; transnational directors; the ethics of transnationalism; transnational collaborative networks; national films” (Shaw “Deconstructing” 52). A number of these categories will be more specifically addressed in the analysis of del Toro’s films and monsters in Chapters two, three and four.

in dialogue with the traditions and conventions of other works. This section will present scholarship on intertextuality to explore the implications of connecting multiple texts. In her study on literary intertextuality, Mary Orr explains, “[t]he saying again of the same or similar words has at least two concomitant senses, past and present, literal and figurative, factual and ironic, serious and joking, poetic and prosaic, semantic and semiotic” (Orr 17). By engaging in these processes visually, del Toro’s films draw upon the cultural or artistic lineage of other works while utilizing them in a completely new context.

1.2.1 Spoken Language, Literature and the Origins of Intertextuality

In *Discourse in the Novel* (1934-35), Mikhail Bakhtin examines the role of social and cultural discourses in everyday communication and in the speech and dialogue of characters in works of fiction. He investigates how cultural contexts – a person’s class, race, gender, relation to systems of authority and power, familiarly with art and culture, relationships, etc. – influence and determine what words are spoken and how they are spoken. Bakhtin suggests that speakers, authors and characters are impacted by the words of others, frequently referencing the communication of others in their own messages. He writes, “At every step one meets a ‘quotation’ or a ‘reference’ to something a particular person said, a reference to ‘people say’ or ‘everyone says,’ to the words of the person one is talking with, or to one’s own previous words, to a newspaper, an official decree, a document, a book and so forth” (Bakhtin 338). Communication and speech are informed by the social and cultural discourses that shape an individual’s experience: Bakhtin’s analysis of the influence of other speakers and cultural discourses on a person’s speech provides an early foundation for theories of intertextuality.

The communicative and ideological process of encountering and using the speech of others is a significant aspect of Bakhtin’s work on language. Through reference, quotation, and critique, the speaker or the character in the novel encounters the voices and discourses of others and presents them from her own perspective. Bakhtin writes, “We can go so far as to say that in real life, people talk most of all about what others talk about – they transmit, recall, weigh and pass judgment on other people’s word, opinions, assertions, information; people are upset by others’ words, or agree with them, contest

them, refer to them and so forth” (Bakhtin 338). When the words of others are referenced or incorporated into acts of communication, it infuses the message with a mediated quality; the speaker relays her own meaning while utilizing the words or phrases of another.

Inspired by Bakhtin’s writings on communication and spoken language, Julia Kristeva follows a similar line of inquiry in relation to written texts. Kristeva identifies the phenomenon of incorporating the styles and words of other texts and discourses into one’s own writing as intertextuality. She explains, “...any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of intertextuality replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least double” (Kristeva 66). For Kristeva, intertextuality is the process of combining various literary, social, political or cultural discourses into a newly created text. The fusion of different texts, or discourses, in one work also incorporates the contexts and implications of the quoted or referenced texts into the new work. She writes, “...it is a permutation of texts, an intertextuality: in the space of a given text, several utterances, taken from other texts intersect and neutralize one another” (Kristeva 36). This use of texts creates connections between the new work and the source texts.

1.2.2 Contemporary Scholarship on Intertextuality

In Kristeva’s original writings on intertextuality, the term referred primarily to linguistics, semiotics and the politics of including other works or voices in a new text. Use of the term, however, has shifted to a broader definition. Leon S. Roudiez explains that more recent use of the term accounts for the general influence of texts on the author or storyteller. He writes, “[t]he concept however has been generally misunderstood. It has nothing to do with matters of influence by one writer upon another, or with the sources of a literary work; it does, on the other hand, involve the components of a *textual system* such as a novel, for instance” (Roudiez 15). Roudiez contends that studies of intertextuality should focus on the interaction between specific texts rather than the impact of a text on an author. This strategy grounds studies of intertextuality in the tangible interplay between texts and the significance of creating intentional connections from one work to another.

Identifying and analyzing the relationship between texts is crucial to understand the impact of pre-existing texts on a new work. In *Intertextuality* (2011), Graham Allen explains that the concept extends beyond literature and speech. He asserts that intertextual connections can be made in other modes of storytelling, including film and visual art. He writes, “To interpret a painting or a building we inevitably rely on an ability to interpret that painting’s or building’s relationship to previous ‘languages’ or ‘systems’ of painting or architectural design. Films, symphonies, buildings, paintings, just like literary texts, constantly talk to each other as well as talking to the other arts” (Allen 169-170). Studies of visual intertextuality utilize the same logic as those concerned with written texts, exploring the interaction and relationship between various works. Allen explains, “Meaning becomes something which exists between a text and all the other texts to which it refers and relates, moving out from the independent text into a network of textual relations. The text becomes the intertext” (Allen 1). Intertextual works, whether film or literature, are intricately connected to the referenced texts. In order to examine this connection, one must consider how references are made to other texts and why they have been made. Each chapter of this thesis will engage theories of intertextuality to analyze the monsters of del Toro’s films. Specific forms of intertextuality – including quotation and pastiche – will be further defined and examined as they become relevant in upcoming chapters.

1.2.3 The Intertextual as Transnational

By referencing diverse texts, authors, artists and directors make connections to the cultural and historical contexts that surround the original work. The process of linking one text to another creates a firm connection between a new project and the cultural and artistic lineage of another. Ezra and Rowden explain that the use of references to other cultural and national contexts by a filmmaker is another expression of the transnational in film. The authors explain, “The category of the transnational allow us to recognize the hybridity of much new Hollywood cinema (witness, for example the importance of Asian martial arts films to the work of Quentin Tarantino and the influence of European auteur cinema on the work of directors such as Martin Scorsese, Francis Coppola, and with parodic self-consciousness, Woody Allen)” (Ezra and Rowden 2). This hybridity of

influences and references can also be found in the work of del Toro. Across his filmography, the director makes deliberate references to various national cinemas including American horror movies from the 1930s and 1940s and the giant monster movies of Japan's Toho studios to name only a few. The monsters depicted in these films – including Godzilla and the Wolf Man – will be analyzed as important intertextual references in *Hellboy II: The Golden Army* and *Pacific Rim* in Chapter Four. Though the films referenced by del Toro have diverse origins, the intertextual connection made between the works most commonly manifests itself in his representations of monsters. Del Toro's monsters are then shaped by references to various cultures and artistic traditions from around the world.

1.3 Monstrosity

In del Toro's films, monsters are prominently featured as characters or as core narrative elements. Glenn Ward analyzes del Toro's interest in monstrosity and popular culture, focusing on the impact that these creatures have had on his career and style: he explains, "[t]hey permit fantasy to enter the category of the real and matters of historical record to enter the category of fiction; and through elaborate webs of reflexivity and multiple modes of address, they ask us to reflect on the validity of this interpenetration of discourses, as well as on the possible meanings of fantastic beings" (Ward 18). As Ward suggests, the monster has artistic and cultural significance. This section will engage studies on monstrosity to present the changing definitions and functions of the term, and the creatures, over time. The concept will be further explored in relation to film studies as non-human creatures are most typically associated with work in genre theory. By establishing the historical and cultural scope of the concept, subsequent chapters will be able to position del Toro's monsters as discourses on culture.

1.3.1 Defining Monstrosity

Across disciplines, cultures, historical contexts and artistic traditions, representations and definitions of monstrosity have varied greatly. In the *Dictionary of Literary Themes and Motifs* (1988), Armand Singer explains that the English word 'monster' is derived from the Latin word *demonstrare*, meaning to show or demonstrate

(Singer 870). Stemming from its philological roots, the word monster encompasses elements of exhibition and revelation. Over time, the word has become directly associated with more sinister connotations. Barbara Creed explains that the term, as it is used to refer to creatures or figures in horror films, is unmistakably ominous. The association of the monster with genre has bestowed upon it a sense of fear. She writes, “Thus the meaning of ‘monster’ (to warn or show) relates directly to the uncanny (to bring into the light what should have remained hidden)” (Creed ix). In her examination of the word and its related meanings and interpretations, Creed highlights an interplay between what is and is not shown. The aspects of vision and presence that constitute the root definition of the word are pervasive in definitions of the term.

The term monster does not specify one creature or type of being; there is not a single definitive kind or form. Singer suggests that the word is best used as a descriptor or categorical tool. He writes:

In a more manageable fashion, monsters can be categorized in literature as aberrations of the natural (human, animal, plant, or mineral) order or the artificial (machine) order. Certain notable monsters become aberrations by crossing these designated boundaries or combining attributes of different realms. As a result, the monster in literature almost always evokes aesthetic and ethical questions, because the different must invariably be judged as beautiful or ugly, good or evil (Singer 870).

As Singer explains, monster functions as a descriptive term that is instilled with cultural and artistic significance. It is a way of labeling a thing or being as non-human or inhumane. This act of classification, of identifying a person or an animal as a monster, is ideologically and philosophically complex and dependent upon cultural context.

1.3.2 Monsters of Myth, Religion and History

In early myths, monsters played significant roles in narratives. Paul Murgatroyd traces their origins to the mythologies of ancient Greek and Roman cultures. He explains, “[m]onsters also reveal a lot about the cultures that produce them. The fact that there were so many Classical monsters makes it clear that they filled a need for the Greeks and Romans... They show us what the ancients feared and also found fascinating, what worried them, and what (in contrast to monstrosity) was felt to be good and normal”

(Murgatroyd 2). Singer further explains that in many classical myths – including Greek, Chinese and Norse mythology, stories of confrontations with dangerous creatures provide the mythical narrative and context for the rise of heroes and deities (Singer 871).

In religious contexts, Stephen Asma explains that monstrosity became a way of understanding evil, especially in Christianity: he further notes that in the Bible, monsters were frequently representative of acts of evil or immorality (Asma 64-65). By the Middle Ages, these religious and moral associations became widespread discourses within European cultures. Asma writes, “To be a monster is to be an omen. Sometimes the monster is a display of God’s wrath, a portent of the future, a symbol of moral virtue or vice, or an accident of nature” (Asma 13). The religious and moral implications of monsters extended to other texts at the time. Singer explains that people and animals outside of European or Christian contexts were frequently labeled, and described, as monsters in bestiaries – texts that functioned as pseudo encyclopedias (Singer 872). With the advent of bestiaries, monstrosity moved from mythology and legend to identifiable phenomena in the everyday world.

To understand “monsters”, authors of bestiaries relied upon religious scripture and rhetoric as justifications and evidence of their analysis and classifications. For example, in *On Monsters and Marvels* (1573), Ambroise Paré directly connects monstrosity and the will of God in his bestiary. He writes, “[t]here are several things that cause monsters. The first is the glory of God. The second, his wrath” (Paré 3). He also frequently describing people and their bodies as ‘monstrous’, writes, “[m]onsters are things that appear outside the course of Nature (and are usually signs of some forthcoming misfortune), such as a child who is born with one arm, another who will have two heads, and additional members over and above the ordinary” (Paré 3). Paré was not alone in his use of monstrous rhetoric. In the contemporary introduction to the text, Janis Pallister explains the popularity of bestiaries at the time, writing: “...by the end of the Sixteenth Century treatises on monsters had become a veritable genre” (Pallister xxii). As European cultures traveled to territories outside of the European continent, newly encountered people, cultures, animals, and places were also labeled as monstrous:

their different attributes or characteristics were viewed with fear and designated not human (Williams 109-110).

1.3.3 Monstrosity and Cultural Studies

In the Middle Ages, the term monster functioned as a label to classify what was deemed different or unnatural by European cultures. Bestiaries made monstrosity a discourse of culture; those with the power and ability to write and communicate messages labeled cultural and physical difference. There is, then, a historical precedent in analyzing the monster in light of its cultural contexts. Questions of race, class and culture persist in modern depictions as well. Contemporary scholarship in the field of cultural studies has sought to analyze the political and cultural implications of the monster. With a diverse range of texts functioning as source material for analysis – such as mythology, literature, film and the visual arts – scholars examine the ideological context of the fictional creatures.

Instead of classification and description, Asa Simon Mittman studies the cultural contexts of monsters in art and legend, suggesting that the social and historical contexts influence depictions of monstrosity. He writes, “Monsters do a great deal of cultural work, but they do not do it *nicely*. They not only challenge and question; they trouble, they worry, they haunt. They break and tear and rend cultures, all the while constructing them and propping them up” (Mittman 1). As Mittman contends, studies on monsters encompass a human dynamic: an individual or a culture’s response to what is unknown, different or not human exposes certain attitudes and beliefs. Because concerns, narratives and representations change throughout time and across various cultures, he identifies the importance of people in the construction of myth, legends and works of art or fiction (Mittman 7).

Working with a similar set of questions, Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock also positions monsters as a significant aspect of human culture: he suggests that the creatures mirror cultural ideologies. He writes, “...to redefine monstrosity is simultaneously to rethink humanity. When our monsters change, it reflects the fact that we – our understanding of what it means to be human, our relations with one another and to the world around us,

our conception of our place in the greater scheme of things – have changed as well” (Weinstock 275). Weinstock asserts that monstrosity illuminates the social and political concerns of various cultures, prompting analysis of why beliefs are held, where they come from and why they matter. In this regard, it also provides a context for what is accepted and rejected by groups of people.

Because of the perceived threat to social structures or class systems, the monster is often labeled as an Other. In *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (1996), Jeffrey Jerome Cohen interprets monstrosity as a critique of society.³ In his research, he examines how discourses of Otherness or “difference” are related to specific cultural contexts, writing, “The monster is difference made flesh, come to dwell among us. In its function as dialectical Other or third-term supplement, the monster is an incorporation of the Outside, the Beyond – of all those loci that are rhetorically placed as distant and distinct but originate Within” (Cohen “Culture” 7). The tension between what is human and non-human is an extension of the social and cultural rhetoric of what is accepted and familiar as opposed to what is external or different. The political implications become crucial when considering the function of monstrosity in storytelling – regardless of mode or format. For example, Judith Halberstam applies Benedict Anderson’s idea of the nation as an imagined community to her scholarship on monsters and Gothic horror. She contends that the creature, in many cases, is a character or figure that is incompatible with the community, identifying this incompatibility as primarily racial. She writes:

If the nation, therefore, is a textual production which creates national community in terms of an inside and an outside and then makes those categories indispensable, Gothic becomes one place to look for a fiction of the foreign, a narrative of who and what is not-English and not-native. The

³In his book, Cohen introduces a set of thesis statements pertaining to monsters and culture. These arguments guide his analysis of monsters using the tools of cultural studies. His theories on monsters are:
 Thesis 1: The Monster’s Body is a Cultural Body
 Thesis 2: The Monster Always Escapes
 Thesis 3: The Monster is the Harbinger of Category Crisis
 Thesis 4: The Monster Dwells at the Gates of Difference
 Thesis 5: The Monster Polices the Borders of the Possible
 Thesis 6: Fear of the Monster is Really a Kind of Desire
 Thesis 7: The Monster Stands at the Threshold... of Becoming

racism that becomes a mark of nineteenth-century Gothic arises out of the attempt within horror fiction to give form to what terrifies the national community. Gothic monsters are defined both as other than the imagined community and as the being that cannot be imagined as community (Halberstam 15).

For Halberstam, the monster represents what has been rejected by a culture. This act of rejection provides a lens through which to interpret and evaluate various cultural attitudes – such as a racism. The interaction between the monster and community will be a significant point of analysis in this thesis: in Chapter Two the creature is staged as figure within small, interpersonal networks and, also, in Chapter Three discourses on nation are intertwined with representations of monstrosity.

1.3.4 Studying the Cinematic Monster: Genre, Culture and Psychoanalysis

In film studies, monstrosity has been analyzed primarily in relation to the horror genre. Studies in genre theory have identified monsters as an important convention, but authors such as Kaminsky (1985) and Kawin (2012) analyze them in what appear to be cinematic bestiaries – cataloguing the various kinds that appear in film. However, in *Monsters and Mad Scientists: A Cultural History of the Horror Movie* (1989), Andrew Tudor relates his research on genre to culture. Using the monster as a category in his analysis of films from the 1920s to the 1980s, he explains that there is a relationship between the conventions of horror and the shifting cultural concerns and interests in the United States. In a separate article, Tudor further explores this ideas, suggesting: “[f]or the question should not be ‘why horror?’ at all. It should be, rather, why do *these* people like *this* horror in *this* place at *this* particular time?” (Tudor “Why” 54). Again, studies of monstrosity, even through the lens of genre, turn toward analysis of humanity and culture.

Film scholars Robin Wood and Barbara Creed have analyzed monstrosity and genre using psychoanalytic theory to frame their work. In “The American Nightmare: Horror in the 70’s”, Wood relates the strong national discourses in films in the 1970s to both human and non-human monsters: he positions them as a form of cultural and social repression. When confronted by what it has repressed, a society is forced into action

(Wood 65). Wood writes, “One might say that the true subject of the horror genre is the struggle for recognition of all that our civilization represses or oppresses, its re-emergence dramatized as in our nightmares, as an object of horror, a matter of terror, and the happy ending (when it exists) typically signifying the restoration of repression” (Wood 68). Wood uses the phrase “return of the repressed” to contextualize the resulting conflict between humanity and monstrosity (Wood 69). The cultural significance of monstrosity and fear will be revisited in subsequent chapters as the monster is studied beyond the contexts of the individual or a specific genre. In *Phallic Panic* (2005), Creed examines monstrosity in horror and science fiction films using the Freudian uncanny. She writes, “In order to better understand the dark side of our culture and the reasons why the symbolic order creates monsters, consciously or otherwise, we need to ask questions about the monster’s origins, nature, and functions” (Creed viii). Ultimately, Creed uses psychoanalytic theory to position monsters as an important aspect of culture. In Chapter Two, the idea of the uncanny and its relation to monstrosity will be further explored in del Toro’s first film, *Cronos*: the chapter analyzes del Toro’s presentation of the vampire using Freud’s concept.

1.4 Conclusion

This overview of scholarship on transnational cinema, intertextuality and monstrosity has introduced the primary concepts which will serve as the theoretical framework for my study on the monsters in del Toro’s films. Analysis of the monsters will show that their identities are interwoven with the transnational and intertextual discourses that shape their representation. By merging these distinct spheres, this thesis will analyze the significant ideological concerns associated with the monsters in each film. To begin this inquiry, the next chapter will confront the interpersonal and social dynamics surrounding the monsters – figures directly connected to the lives and actions of the human characters – of *Cronos*, *Mimic*, and *The Devil’s Backbone*. Though the chapter will focus on the intimate and familiar relationships of the protagonists, analysis will ultimately position monstrosity within the larger social and cultural contexts of the intertextual sources and transitional discourses that have informed their role in the narrative.

Chapter 2

2 Familiar Monsters: Intimate Narratives and Intertextuality in *Cronos*, *Mimic* and *The Devil's Backbone*

The first chapter of this project introduced research on transnational cinema/s, intertextuality, and monstrosity to construct a frame for analyzing the films of Guillermo del Toro. Through analysis of these concepts, the relevant definitions and debates were situated in relation to the director's monsters. This chapter will utilize these ideas in an examination of *Cronos*, *Mimic* and *The Devil's Backbone*. With small casts, purposefully confined or closed settings and interpersonal conflict, the director introduces monsters into relatively intimate narratives. Informed by the actions and decisions of the central characters of each film, the creatures become intricately interwoven into human contexts. While the creation of these monsters is framed by intimate narratives, these films' productions are marked by the crossing of national borders: Mexico (*Cronos*), the United States (*Mimic*), and Spain (*The Devil's Backbone*). In this sense, the transnational components of these productions are important aspects to consider: across the differing national contexts of each film, del Toro also incorporates diverse references to distinct artistic and cultural traditions.

This chapter will analyze the intimate contexts of the monsters in *Cronos*, *Mimic*, and *The Devil's Backbone* in light of the prominent transnational aspects, and intertextual references, in the films. Rather than presenting the creatures as a rejected Other, the social contexts of the films position the monster as a familiar figure, one that is an extension of humanity: the family in *Cronos*, a professional network in *Mimic*, and a surrogate family in the orphanage of *The Devil's Backbone*. The intimate narrative context does not restrict the scope of del Toro's storytelling; each film addresses broader ideological and cultural concerns. As the monsters are the direct result of human action, the films confront discourses on monstrosity, establishing a connection between the intimate, personal life of the individual and the political and cultural contexts informing the narrative. Through the use of recognizable social dynamics, a confrontation is staged between past and present in terms of narrative and intertextual reference: past actions and

choices are confronted in the present in the diegesis and pre-existing texts are engaged in the creation of the film, specifically the monster. In these conflicts and references, del Toro's transnational perspective becomes apparent either textually in the monster or in the industrial context of the production.

2.1 *Cronos*: The Familial Vampire

With his first feature, *Cronos*, del Toro works with the lore and traditions of vampire narratives, maintaining some of the most common elements such as a thirst for blood and a strong, negative reaction to sun-light. However, the conventions of the vampire genre in his film are also purposefully subverted: a character only becomes a vampire through contact with the Cronos device, a golden insect shaped machine housing a parasitic insect which feeds on and infects its host. Del Toro further alters the image of the monster by positioning a kind, elderly man, specifically a grandfather, in the role. In his subversion of vampire fiction, the image of the monster as a member of the family is significant; the intimate discourses of the film displace the narrative conventions of the cruel or evil monster. This section will explore del Toro's reimagining of the vampire through analysis of the intertextual references to the film *Horror of Dracula* that have informed his approach to the genre and its conventions. To engage these personal contexts, Freud's theory of the uncanny will be used to situate the monstrous evolution of Jesús Gris. The influence of the uncanny can also be seen in del Toro's presentation of place: much as the uncanny stages an experience that is both familiar and unknown, the setting of Mexico is identifiable but made visually distinct: this approach introduces transnational themes into the narrative of *Cronos*.

2.1.1 On the Uncanny and Fear

In *Cronos*, the character of Jesús is able to transcend the boundaries of life and death because of his use of the mysterious Cronos Device; his life continues even after death as he transforms into a vampire. His return from the grave embodies a clash between the realities of the past, his death, and the present moment, his continued life as a vampire. Sigmund Freud examines a similar confrontation between past and present, albeit in a more personal and psychological capacity. With his theory of the uncanny, he

examines specific instances of fear in which an individual is forced to confront details or aspects of her past; often these feelings are caused by an experience that evokes memories, feelings, events or ideas that have been repressed. Freud explains, "...the 'uncanny' is that class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar" (Freud 369-370). In his definition, Freud identifies the uncanny as an intense feeling of fear that has been inspired by an experience in the present that is directly linked to a past feeling. Thus, the fear is caused by something known to the individual and discourses of familiarity and knowledge are intrinsic to the feeling.

An experience of the uncanny is also defined as a fear which is out of the individual's control. In this regard, something familiar from the past is presented again to an individual, but without warning or choice. Freud explains, "...an involuntary return to the same situation, but which differs radically from it in other respects, also result in the same feeling of helplessness and of something uncanny" (Freud 390). The experience of helplessness described by Freud is not momentary, however, it is overwhelming. Nicholas Royle explains in his study of the uncanny in art and psychology, that the experience can destabilize identity. He suggests, "Suddenly one's sense of oneself (of one's so-called 'personality' or 'sexuality', for example) seems strangely questionable" (Royle 1). The resulting fears and anxieties associated with the uncanny are strong enough to fundamentally alter perceptions of identity and selfhood. The framework of Freud's theory of the uncanny can be utilized in areas outside of psychology as well. Royle argues that the uncanny can be a helpful theoretical tool when analyzing art and culture. He writes, "The uncanny, then, is not merely an 'aesthetic' or 'psychological' matter (whatever that might mean): its critical elaboration is necessarily bound up with analyzing, questioning and even transforming what is called 'everyday life'" (Royle 23). As Royle suggests, Freud's concept, though originally used to understand the individual, is a pertinent tool to think about groups of people as well, exposing the disparities or fears facing entire populations: the questions of selfhood and anxieties about identity, experience and memory apply to broader social and cultural contexts. In *Cronos*, the vampire and setting will be analyzed using the uncanny. Through analysis of the tension between familiarity and unanticipated changes or distortions, this section will examine

how something once known can suddenly become unusual or monstrous, such as the vampire.

2.1.2 The Vampire as Grandfather

In the director's commentary of *Cronos*, del Toro explains that his film and his treatment of vampires are inspired by the Hammer Horror *Dracula* films starring Christopher Lee; he says that the British horror films have influenced his representations of vampires, specifically in regards to the nature of the vampire resurrecting and returning from the grave (del Toro *Cronos* Commentary). The film, though clearly working with the established traditions of Bram Stoker's classic novel *Dracula* (1897), makes important changes in the process of adaptation – such as killing or removing popular characters and introducing a tension between science and the supernatural. Tim Kane explains that *Horror of Dracula* is a significant entry in the history of vampire cinema as it amends, changes or updates many of the genre's conventions or narratives. In his book, he identifies changes made by Fisher to Stoker's novel and characters as a defining turn in the genre (Kane 47).

In *Guillermo del Toro: Film as Alchemic Art* (2014), McDonald and Clark note the similarity in costumes between Jesús and other cinematic vampires – including the classic monster of *Horror of Dracula*. The authors explain, “Gris's post-death resurrection sees him dressed still in the traditional evening wear donned by the likes of Bela Lugosi and Christopher Lee” (McDonald and Clark 118). Though the authors suggest the costuming of the character functions as a form of parody, citing the exaggerated appearance of Jesús compared to previous depictions of vampire, it is more productive to consider the image as evocative of the style and tradition of popular film vampires, but in an uncanny manner. In this regard, intertextuality is made uncanny as the familiar, conventional portrayal of the vampire is presented in a new, unfamiliar narrative context. Barbara Creed contends that the uncanny can help to situate these inconsistencies. She writes, “The uncanny reveals the ways in which we can recognize the strangeness in ourselves and in the world around us, particularly the everyday world (Creed 25-26). By utilizing the uncanny as a theoretical concept, the incongruity identified by McDonald and Clark as parody can be better positioned as a subversive

blending of texts. Del Toro presents an almost canonical image in the horror genre in a very unusual fashion, asserting his own authorial voice within the traditions of vampire film: though Jesús may resemble previous cinematic representations of vampires, the character also breaks with traditions.

Cronos functions much like Fisher's film in that it is also a subversive treatment of the vampire narrative: a primary example of this in del Toro's film can be found in his representation of the vampiric return of Jesús. The action, rising from the grave and returning home, functions much like an experience of the uncanny: in this sequence the uncanny becomes imprinted within the interactions of the characters and del Toro's treatment of genre conventions. The return, presented as an experience that is both familiar and unknown or troubling, is located within Jesús's former home and, also, the changing dynamics of the relationship between the vampire and Aurora, his granddaughter.

To contextualize the uncanny, the connection between text, character and spectator is significant in that it fuses the Freudian fear simultaneously in the narrative and in the experience of the viewer. Within research on film, theories of spectator identification – the mental and ideological involvement and/or engagement of the viewer with cinema – have been grounded in the spheres of semiotics and psychoanalysis. In “The Imaginary Signifier”, Christian Metz examines the process through which film spectators identify with on-screen images using psychoanalysis. Metz situates the primary act of spectator identification either with the camera or with what he identifies as the “apparatus” – a term that refers to the projector, the equipment or the source of the screened image. He explains, “[d]uring the projection this camera is absent, but it has a representative consisting of another apparatus, called precisely the ‘projector.’ An apparatus the spectator has behind him, *at the back of his head*, that is, precisely where fantasy locates the focus of all vision” (Metz 253). He also acknowledges the importance of characters within the narrative as a more secondary mode of identification (Metz 259). The connection between character and audience, and ultimately narrative, is also explored in “The Spectator-in-the-Text: The Rhetoric of *Stagecoach*”. In it, Nick Brown explains that through the characters, setting and conventions of film form in classic

Hollywood cinema, the viewer is situated within the film's narrative. Browne writes, "[i]dentification asks us as spectators to be two places at once, where the camera is and 'with' the depicted person – thus its double structure of viewer/viewed. As a powerful emotional process it thus throws into question any account of the position of the spectator as centered at a single point or at the center of any simply optical system" (Brown 134). He further explains that framing, elements of mise-en-scene and editing aid in connecting the audience with characters and in conveying broader social and political implications.

In *Cronos*, the interaction between Jesús and Aurora upon his return from the dead illustrates the significance of spectator identification in experiences of the cinematic uncanny. Though Jesús returns to his home, a space familiar to both the characters and the audience as warm and inviting, he experiences the space in a different capacity: the setting has been rendered strange in his death as he becomes a monstrous guest in a location that was once his home. While the space itself has not changed, the newly vampiric characteristics of his identity place intense constraints on the way in which he navigates the world, even in settings as intimate and personal as the home. Because the narrative of the film is grounded within the experiences and the transformation of Jesús, the return is as jarring for audiences as it is for the new vampire. Through identification with the character, the spectator comes to identify with the monster. As the emotional processes addressed by Browne inform the identification of the audience with Jesús, the space changes for the viewer as well: the home is transformed into a monstrous hiding place, much like an extension of a graveyard rather than the formerly welcoming space.

Monstrosity influences the film's setting and presents it as uncanny; the resurrection experienced by Jesús changes how he encounters a once familiar space and how he exists within it. By placing the vampire within the home, del Toro subverts the atmosphere of a previously established space and situates the monster within the intimate context of the family. In "*Cronos*: Introducing Guillermo del Toro", Deborah Shaw examines the sequence and sees the interaction between the vampire and Aurora as an important moment in the film. She writes, "Jesús returns home from the dead to be welcomed warmly by his granddaughter with a towel to dry him from the rain. Soft lighting and melodic classical tango-inflected music make this a tender love scene in

another subversion of classical horror” (Shaw “Three” 40). In pointing out the subversion of the vampire’s return, Shaw also acknowledges the role of family within the narrative. Del Toro’s use of narrative conventions outside of horror challenges the expectations of spectators and the traditions of genre by bringing the bond of relatives into the foreground; the central position of the family subverts the representation of the vampire. Instead of inflicting violence and forcing another to help him, Jesús finds a sincere human companion in his granddaughter: Aurora willingly, and lovingly, cares for her grandfather and keeps his secret.

The character of Jesús returns from the dead as a vampire, keeping with the monster’s convention, but the event is also presented as the reunion of a family. Jesús is not simply a blood thirsty monster, he is a loving grandfather as well. The significance of family ultimately influences the depiction and narrative of the vampire. In “*Cronos and the Man of Science: Madness, Monstrosity, Mexico*”, authors Rodríguez-Hernández and Schaefer examine the tension between science and religion in the film. They also address the presence of gothic imagery and themes of time and family. The authors note that it is the role of family that ends the destructive cycle of the Cronos device. They explain:

In the ruins of the factory her cut and bleeding hand is just the nourishment he needs to survive. Yet, in the only word she utters in the entire film, Aurora stops him cold by saying “abuelo,” even as she extends her hand, willingly, to his lips. The monster comes face-to-face with innocence as it has so many times before in other horror films. Blood is thicker than time, however. Jesús cannot feed off his own flesh; his future cannot be hers (Rodríguez-Hernández and Schaefer 98).

The familial relationship of Aurora and Jesús profoundly alters the trajectory of the narrative. The bond between grandfather and granddaughter is not secondary to the vampire’s obsessive need for blood. His restraint, shown to save his granddaughter, leads to the death of the vampire, the destruction of the Cronos device and the end of his extended life.

The familiarity of the central relationship, grandfather and granddaughter, grounds the uncanny representations of the vampire and monstrosity. Further framing the context of the familial relationship of Jesús and Aurora is the film’s setting: the struggle

of the elderly vampire and his granddaughter takes place in Mexico. However, the film was not set in the year contemporary to its release, impacting how the setting and the nation are represented. Shaw acknowledges the film's unique depiction of Mexico, explaining that the film was set in 1997 to explore the politics and anxieties surrounding NAFTA (Shaw "Three" 24). She explains, "...the film problematises simplistic divisions between Mexico and the USA, and refutes unitary national identities, preferring to root the diegesis within sites of transnational complexities. The Mexico seen in *Cronos* is futuristically cosmopolitan (set in the future of 1997), offering an interesting mix of past, present, and future, paralleled in the Cronos device" (Shaw "Three" 24). She explains that the film depicts a "deterritorialised" version of Mexico, attributing this to the presence of intertextuality and "Arabic, Russian, English, and Chinese" on signs and pieces of set decoration (Shaw "Three" 24). As Shaw notes, the film actively engages multiple temporal and cultural contexts. In this interplay between place and time, del Toro's depiction of Mexico echoes the uncanny characteristics of Jesús: the monster and the nation embody the tension between what is familiar, and recognizable, and what is unknown or distinct. Much like the vampire, a figure thought to be deceased, who is somehow also present but radically changed, the depiction of Mexico is both familiar, as the film was shot on location there, but made new and strange by these anachronistic additions.

2.2 *Mimic* and the Fear of Replacement

Creation, evolution and advances in science provide the context for the monster of del Toro's next film, *Mimic*. In it, genetically modified cockroaches designed to stop a lethal plague evolve to the size of human beings and develop the ability to mimic the physical attributes of humans. As *Mimic* is an adaptation of Donald Wollheim's short story of the same name (1942), this section will position del Toro's adaptation within the narrative conventions and lineage of the science fiction genre. Most notably, del Toro's film removes the anonymous nature of the short story – Wollheim's text features an unnamed protagonist living in an unidentified urban area – and situates the narrative in a more familiar social context, within the professional lives of married scientists in New York City. Furthermore, the actions of humanity are linked to the destruction and

inhumane violence of the creatures as they are in fact the indirect creation of scientific experimentation in the film.

The film also foregrounds the fear of another species assuming a more powerful evolutionary position than humans. By introducing the thematic concern of threats to civilization, the film echoes the central preoccupations of Don Siegel's science fiction classic *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956), a film del Toro cites as a source of inspiration for his treatment of mimicry in *Mimic* (del Toro *Mimic* Commentary). Through analysis of the changes made to the monster during the process of adaptation and the presence of intertextual references to other notable works of science fiction, the monsters of *Mimic*, known as the Judas Breed, will be read in relation to the ideological concerns around questions concerning personal identity and replacement. Additionally, these anxieties extend to the production context of the film. This section will conclude with an analysis of the industrial realities surrounding del Toro's first English-language film and the transnational implications of his experience working in the American studio system.

2.2.1 Evolution and Literary Adaptation

Mimic, the short story, examines the boundaries of human knowledge in terms of science and invention, but also in an interpersonal capacity, questioning the extent to which one knows another person. In the original short story, an unnamed protagonist discovers that his long time neighbor is actually a human-sized insect that has evolved to mimic the appearance of a person. Wollheim's work examines a monstrous threat to humanity that can spread nearly undetected. He writes, "We knew of army ants and their imitators, yet it never occurred to us that we too were army ants of a sort. We knew of stick insects and it never occurred to us that there might be others that disguise themselves to fool, not other animals, but the supreme animal himself – man" (Wollheim 37). The narrative of Wollheim's *Mimic* is critical of a society absent of personal connection and familiarity; the protagonist lives near a monstrous insect for years without realizing it. The implications, however, transcend the individual and pose important questions about the nature of community and the authenticity of human relationships.

Though the insect's disguise is not a complete replication of the human body, it is able to exist openly because of the isolation and indifference of those in closest proximity.

Del Toro's adaptation preserves the core idea and tone of the short story, but his film disregards many of the ambiguous elements of the setting and characterization. In the film, the anonymity that characterizes the short story is set aside; the unnamed protagonist and unnamed city are replaced in the film by married scientists working to stop a possible global infestation in New York City. By replacing the ambiguous setting and nameless characters, del Toro grounds the narrative in a familiar reality while also directly associating monstrosity with humanity and its past actions. The intimate interpersonal characteristics of the narrative still allow for a critique of social disconnectedness as the creatures' mimicking capabilities enable them to move anonymously in large crowds or in shadows. The monstrosity of the Judas Breed reveals a fractured portrait of human nature. The monsters serve as a reflection upon dynamics of social power: who is seen and who directs this perception?

As the evolved insects are the result of human experimentation – created in an effort to kill disease carrying cockroaches – the Judas Breed is both a life-saving innovation and a monster of evolution. Podalsky addresses the significance of humanity as the creator of the monsters in her analysis of *Mimic* (Podalsky 107). Though she asserts that there is deliberate distinction between humans and the Judas Breed, a point of analysis that differs from this reading of the film, she also notes the theme of human destruction. Podalsky also contends that the monsters, in a number of del Toro's films, function in large groupings, writing: “[r]egardless of the origin of their specific masses (as scientific or supernatural/natural aberration), del Toro's English-language texts emphasize these masses' capacity to annihilate the human population” (Podalsky 102). The evolution of the Judas Breed allows del Toro to examine humanity's role in science and nature, while also interrogating the ways in which social and biological systems can be undermined and destabilized.

2.2.2 Identity and Replacement in Science Fiction

Threats to the strength and stability of humanity on Earth are not new to science fiction. Fear of infestation, invasion and destruction from within can be traced to the origins of modern science fiction cinema. In *Science Fiction Film* (2001), Keith M. Johnston examines the evolution of the science fiction genre, focusing his attention on American science fiction films from the 1950's. He labels Siegel's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* as one of the most influential films of the era. In it, aliens grow identical replacements for citizens of a small town in pods. By replacing family members, town officials, and law enforcement, the aliens stage a subtle invasion, without raising the suspicions or fears of many locals.

Johnston notes that the film is open to a number of readings based on its historical and political context: first as a cold war metaphor for the feared rise of Communism and second as a metaphor for the growth of suburban life and an increasing loss of individuality and independence. Johnston writes, "Both approaches see a deeper political or cultural attitude underlying the film and both assume that all audiences will be able to understand and decode such messages" (Johnston 75). Regardless of specific cultural interpretation, Siegel's film explores individual identity and threats to it. Replacement becomes a mode of invasion in the film, both ideological and alien; a society, its values and structures, are slowly dismantled while those unaffected are oblivious to any threat.

McDonald and Clark also identify *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* as an intertextual reference in *Mimic*, but their reading of the film's influence is largely environmental, setting aside the implications of power and invasion. The authors address the politics of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* but largely dismiss their association with *Mimic*, instead they primarily attribute the influence of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* to its status as a 1950's science fiction film which addresses environmental concerns and a sense of "eco-crisis" (McDonald and Clark 125). In their argument, they contend that this set of themes has led del Toro to make a film examining "human vulnerability in packed and decaying urban environments" and "ecological trauma" (McDonald and Clark 124-125). Rather than environmental awareness, del Toro's film is concerned with the

relationship of science and nature, specifically how the limits of human understanding influence science and future generations.

In del Toro's original, un-filmed ending of *Mimic*, the rhetoric of replacement reaches its most pronounced articulation as Dr. Susan Tyler – played in the film by actress Mira Sorvino – watches one of the Judas Breed insects transform into a complete human figure. In the planned conclusion of the film, Dr. Tyler is confronted by another monster in the subway and realizes that the creatures have developed the ability to completely mimic human form. In the interview “Reclaiming *Mimic*”, del Toro explains:

...it started walking towards Mira on all six legs and then started standing up and the legs folded and the faceplate folded. And you realize, it was lit by the passing light of a train and you saw a perfect naked human silhouette. And he came out of the shadows and you saw a perfect human face, not like the other mimics, he had a perfect human face. And he approached Mira and pointed at her with a perfectly formed digit and said, ‘Leave.’ I thought that was so scary and the studio thought that was so not scary. That is a battle I am sorry we lost. The idea that what is really scary is not an explosion, is not a bug, what I find scary is that they were now intelligent and they were now capable of saying, you can leave (del Toro *Mimic* “Reclaiming”).

Similar to the pod people taking on the likeness of their human double in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, the planned sequence highlights a fear of invasion and replacement which has already happened, made tangible by the appearance of a non-human human figure. The implications of the completed evolution suggest that there would be little to distinguish the Judas Breed from humanity. The threat of replacement and infiltration is no longer personal, it is societal.

2.2.3 Replacement in an Industrial Context

Anxiety surrounding replacement also permeated the production of the film, del Toro's first for an American studio; the industrial context of *Mimic* becomes relevant in light of the director's move from Mexico to the United States. Following *Cronos*, del Toro actively pursued opportunities to produce and finance his next film. The director's search for his next project took him outside of Mexico after he faced difficulties working with the national funding organizations on *Cronos* (Wood 38). In an interview with Jason

Wood, del Toro explains that he wanted to continue working in Mexico, but it was not possible for him. He explains, “When people ask me why I went to the States I tell them that I would have been perfectly happy to make movies in Mexico for the rest of my life but there was never an open door, you were always every time, having to kick it open” (del Toro qtd in Wood 112). For his next project, del Toro partnered with Bob Weinstein and Harvey Weinstein at Dimension, the genre division of Miramax, to adapt Wollheim’s short story *Mimic* as part of a horror anthology film; the other segments of the film did not reach production, however, and *Mimic* became a full length feature (Wood 43).

Working within the Hollywood studio system brought del Toro the necessary budget to create monsters and make the film but it also came with significant studio intervention. His relationship with Dimension and the film’s producers was not an equal partnership as he encountered constant supervision and interference from studio executives. Peter Biskind examines the professional dynamics of Miramax, and accordingly Dimension. He finds that the studio and the Weinstein’s were known for creating notoriously difficult work environments by undermining decisions or demanding significant changes. Biskind explains, “To this day, Miramax has the cache of encouraging individual voices, and yet when you are in the room, it is that aspect that is most under suspicion. Any young filmmaker that goes into that factory is subject to the same grinding processes” (Biskind 254-55). The film’s producers utilized this controlling approach in their work with del Toro on *Mimic*.

During the making of the film, del Toro was confronted with the very real possibility that he would be removed from the project that he had written and developed. Peter Biskind notes that there were attempts to replace him as director (Biskind 256-57). Del Toro has addressed the experience of working with Dimension in interviews. The director explains, “*Mimic* remains the hardest shooting experience of my life... Back then, it was the most expensive movie Dimension had made and also by far the most expensive movie I’d ever done. I experienced many hardships with it. I sustain the belief that you learn through pain, and I certainly learned... a lot” (del Toro qtd in Wood 43). In the process of creating *Mimic* and the *Judas Breed*, del Toro’s production was challenged by domineering executives as he was a voice new to the Hollywood studio system. His

movement across borders made production possible, but it also came with trying professional circumstances. Thus, threats of replacement were no longer confined to a science fiction narrative: they became a distinct industrial possibility.

2.3 Personal Loss and Ghostly Presence in *The Devil's Backbone*

Del Toro shifts from science fiction to supernatural horror in *The Devil's Backbone*. The film juxtaposes horror and history as the ghost of a young boy, named Santi, haunts a rural orphanage during the Spanish Civil War. Though the film is set in a specific historical and national context, del Toro makes significant visual and thematic references to Mario Bava's *Operazione paura/Kill Baby, Kill* (1966), drawing from yet another set of cinematic traditions in horror to stage the intimate narrative contexts surrounding the ghost of an orphan. This section will analyze del Toro's use of pastiche in order to contextualize the references to the ghost and themes of *Kill Baby, Kill*. In his use of horror aesthetics, he establishes a generic atmosphere of fear and unease without ignoring the specific cultural and historical realities of the time. This section will conclude with an analysis of del Toro's multifaceted use of setting as an expression of history, but also as a convention of genre.

2.3.1 Del Toro's Pastiche of *Giallo Fantastico*

When del Toro discusses the style of *The Devil's Backbone* and the work of cinematographer Guillermo Navarro, he explains that he wanted the film to share the aesthetic of Hammer Horror films and also Italian horror director Mario Bava (Wood 112). Though del Toro's story is situated within the context of a real historical period, he chose to embrace the stylized visuals of genre cinema. Del Toro explains to Jason Wood: "... I don't try to represent reality exactly as it is. I always try to take it a couple of notches above. The Spanish Civil War in *The Devil's Backbone* looks like a Sergio Leone western, except at night where it looks like a Mario Bava movie" (del Toro qtd in Wood 37). In both discussions, the director notes the impact of Bava on the film's visual aesthetic. Bava, known for his work in the horror, fantasy and mystery genres, embraced bold use of color and violence on screen. His visual style and reoccurring narrative

elements later came to characterize a generic movement in Italian cinema called *giallo*. In *La Dolce Morte* (2006), Mikel J. Koven examines the Italian horror genre. Koven explains that the genre is a combination of the horror and crime thriller genres, typified by its gory, gruesome murders and a disguised killer wearing a “black hat, gloves, and raincoat” (Koven 4). Another convention of the genre is the role of the amateur detective, working outside the confines of law enforcement to find the killer (Koven 4-6).

Del Toro’s use and imitation of Bava is best understood as pastiche. In *Pastiche* (2007), Richard Dyer explains that it is a form of intertextual imitation in which a new work of art deliberately recreates the style or content of another text. Dyer writes, “...pastiche is concerned with imitation in art” (Dyer 1). The imitated work is not directly copied, however, as it is able to be distinguished from the original source material; there are artistic or authorial variations which distinguish the new work from what it is imitating. Dyer explains, “[a]n imitated work is like or similar to another, but does not replicate it; reproduction, on the other hand, actually or as far as possible, does” (Dyer 23). Akin to other forms of intertextuality, pastiche creates a relationship between pieces of art: the similarities and differences between the texts become artistically significant (Dyer 89).

In *The Devil’s Backbone*, del Toro creates a pastiche of Bava’s ghost story *Kill Baby, Kill*. The film has many of the characteristics of traditional *giallo* cinema, including stylish use of gore, color and violence, but it is important to note that the film varies thematically. Koven explains that the film’s use of a supernatural entity as the killer rather than a human murderer situates the film as a variation of the genre called *giallo-fantastico* (Koven 9-10). In *Kill Baby, Kill*, a medical examiner, Paul, is called to a remote European village to perform an autopsy on a recently deceased woman. His investigation is met with resistance as the community is paralyzed with fear believing the deaths have been caused by the ghost of a young girl named Melissa. Though the ghost complicates the film’s classification as *giallo*, it provides the most direct intertextual connection.

In *The Devil's Backbone*, del Toro utilizes pastiche in his references to Melissa, both visually and thematically. Melissa, the ghost of *Kill Baby, Kill*, is the victim of an unfortunate accident; the child is run over by a cart during a town festival and is left underneath it to die as drunken revelers ignore her cries for help. Years after Melissa's death, her spirit is summoned by her mother to haunt, and kill, those responsible for her death, appearing outside the home or window of the intended victim (Figure 1: Melissa looks through a window in *Kill Baby, Kill*).⁴ Similarly in *The Devil's Backbone*, Santi also suffers an accidental, though more intentional, death. When Santi uncovers Jacinto's plot to steal gold bars from the orphanage, the child is chased and pushed into a column, resulting in his death. When Santi's ghost begins to appear to the children of the orphanage, he is seen in doorways, reflected in a window or looking through the glass door to the orphanage's courtyard (Figure 2: Santi looks through a door in *The Devil's Backbone*).

In both films, the appearances of the ghostly children are framed and obscured by windows in nearly identical shots. As internal frames, windows and doors in each film function similarly establishing the proximity of the spirit but also serving as a physical barrier between the ghost and the other characters of the film. However close the child may appear, the manifestation is actually a painful reminder of absence and loss. In "Reflected Horrors: Violence, War, and the Image in Guillermo del Toro's *El espinazo del diablo/The Devil's Backbone* (2001)", Miriam Haddu examines del Toro's use of gothic traditions and photography as a means to represent the past. She suggests that Santi's childhood innocence is important when understanding the conflicted nature of the ghost. Haddu writes, "In *El espinazo* the child-ghost is portrayed as a frightening, grotesque spectacle and as a reminder of a terrible crime committed against an innocent boy" (Haddu 144). The ghost physically represents a tragedy which has impacted the personal and social lives of the children in the orphanage. The invisible barrier of the window creates distance between the ghost and others, but it does not obscure the view of

⁴ Due to copyright issues, the images originally included in the manuscript have been removed. The original captions have been included to provide additional context for the film still or image.

the ghost. The separation created by the window reinforces the ghost's position within the narrative: the figure is seen and felt, but it is not the person that once was.

2.3.2 Haunted Settings in Horror

In the thematic framework of *Kill Baby, Kill* and *The Devil's Backbone*, the ghost functions as a reflection on justice and vengeance. The deaths of Melissa and Santi mark a loss of innocence which goes unpunished; in each case, a child dies and no one is held responsible. Haddu suggests that the violent death of a child comments on the film's historical setting in *The Devil's Backbone*. She writes, "The war raging outside of the school's walls, therefore, is mimetically performed inside of the building, with innocent lives being lost as a consequence of the actions of a ruthless and callous (human) monster, personified by Jacinto" (Haddu 150). The supernatural presence becomes a way of exposing the injustices of the societies in each film: in *Kill Baby, Kill* the indifference of a village to the death of a child and in *The Devil's Backbone* the cruelty and greed of Jacinto, and the Nationalist ideologies which inform his character.

Through the tragic narrative of Santi, del Toro is able to align the ghost of his film with the historical circumstance of Spain during the Spanish Civil War. As Haddu suggests, the setting of *The Devil's Backbone* is a significant element of the film's narrative, genre and ideology. With the orphanage, del Toro uses the intimate, rural setting as a convention of genre as much as a reflection of social and political context: the intimate narrative utilizes the space as an aspect of horror and as history. Fear is tied to a specific location; the atmosphere of the orphanage is one of loss and isolation in the context of war, but also terror and impending death through the conventions of horror. The film's characters are located in a formerly safe space as a threatening force, whether supernatural or political, looms.

Research on the conventions and aesthetics of the horror genre identify setting as a vital element of the narrative. Depending upon the style or tradition, a specific place or location is used to create atmosphere and serve as an extension of the frightening elements of the film. In *Horror* (2009), Brigid Cherry uses a historical and cultural approach in her analysis of the genre. She details the conventions of various horror film

traditions and lists setting as an important component for each, citing the urban environments of body horror, the suburbs of slasher films, and the “European settings” of gothic horror as examples (Cherry 22-23). Carol Clover’s study of generic conventions in the slasher film “Her Body, Himself: Gender in the Slasher Film” also designates setting as a foundational element in horror. She identifies the home as a “terrible place”, explaining, “[w]hat makes these houses terrible is not just their Victorian decrepitude but the terrible families – murderous, incestuous, cannibalistic – that occupy them... it is the conventional task of the genre to register in close detail those victims’ dawning understanding, as they survey the visible evidence, of the human crimes and perversions that have transpired there” (Clover 197). Using this theoretical approach to setting, a connection can be made between the monster – or killer in the case of slasher films – and the place or site of horror. In *The Devil’s Backbone*, Santi is connected to the orphanage in the context of genre as well as history; he haunts the location of his tragic death. His ghostly manifestation is the direct result of the horrific actions of Jacinto; the subsequent appearances function as a reminder of the violence housed in the building and the supernatural transcendence of death.

Though the orphanage operates as the site of the intimate drama of its faculty, staff, and children, it is deliberately set within the context of the Spanish Civil War. Through the film’s setting, personal tragedy takes on a national context. The actions that occur in the isolated estate take on the ghostly implications of genre, but also importantly the violent consequences of war. The orphanage is located on a political frontier, with the ideology of Nationalist Spain about to be imposed upon the orphanage. Using Robin Wood’s theories on repression, Dolores Tierney examines that historical and political context of Santi’s death. She suggests that Santi’s ghostly presence is a return of the repressed. She writes, “It is important to see Santi not just as a ghost but as the return of the repressed because in Wood’s evaluation of the horror film, psychic repression carries with it the notion of political oppression, and Santi is to be read as a political victim and his murder as a political murder” (Tierney 172). Though Santi’s death is caused by someone close to him, Tierney explains that it has significant cultural and historical implications; Santi’s ghost is connected to the Spanish Civil War. As much as his spirit haunts the characters in the film, he also haunts the place in which he died.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the monsters of *Cronos*, *Mimic* and *The Devil's Backbone* in relation to the intimate narrative contexts in which they are situated. Instead of positioning monstrosity as an entirely unknown threat, the creatures of del Toro's early films are created by or related to the familial, professional or interpersonal lives of the human characters; the monsters are familiar. The intimate context of each story informs discourses on monstrosity, bridging the actions of individuals with the anxieties and fears of larger social groups, nations and cultures. Though the monster is known to characters within the narrative, it disrupts social and cultural systems, exposing the values and priorities of various groups. Del Toro is able to confront these broader implications because his monsters are not isolated from textual, cultural or political discourses: they are significantly informed by intertextual references and the textual and industrial implications of his transnational experience. By engaging pre-existing texts, he enters into a dialogue with other works, deliberately displacing and subverting the traditions and conventions of the horror and science fiction genres. Del Toro's experience working in different cultural contexts also shapes the monsters of his films. Through the on-screen representation of the monster's setting and national context or in the industrial circumstances of production, the influence of his movement across borders is seen. It is through this complex interplay between the transnational and the intertextual that del Toro's representations of monstrosity are able to transcend the intimate, personal contexts of the narrative.

As a transnational filmmaker, del Toro has worked in different countries and used various financial models to make his films. He moves from one nation to another and uses his films to confront the implications of borders and identities. Marvin D'Lugo explains in his study of El Deseo, Pedro and Agustín Almodóvar's Spanish production company that partnered with del Toro to make *The Devil's Backbone*, that the company has found success developing connections with filmmakers from Latin America. He explains, "Coloured by Almodóvar's own experience of transnational authorship, his production company's decision to support the production and distribution of films by a small but significant group of Latin American directors underscores the logic whereby

auteur cinema has come to replace the logic of the nation” (D’Lugo 131). D’Lugo’s argument, contending that ideas of the transnational supersede those of the nation in El Deseo’s co-productions, is also applicable to del Toro’s filmography. The ideological implications of transnational cinema influence his representations of nations and become even more prominent in the director’s subsequent films. The next chapter of this thesis will explore the monster in relation to discourses on nation in *Blade II*, *Hellboy*, and *Pan’s Labyrinth*. Through analysis of each film, monstrosity will be positioned as a narrative tool to examine the politics and identities in different national contexts.

Chapter 3

3 National Monsters: National Identity and Systems of Authority in *Blade II*, *Hellboy* and *Pan's Labyrinth*

“To me, politics and religion, organized politics and organized religion, are much more fairy tales than fairy tales. They are fantasy. I don't believe in geography. I don't believe in borders. I don't believe in religion making us different, I believe in spiritual conceits making us equal, not different.”

- Guillermo del Toro, *Pan's Labyrinth* Director's Commentary

In the previous chapter, the identity and figure of the monster has been analyzed in relation to the intimate and social contexts of the central characters in *Cronos*, *Mimic*, and *The Devil's Backbone*. Instead of framing the monster as an Other or an outsider, del Toro presents it in direct relation to humanity, staging the creature within significant familial, professional or interpersonal relationships. Intimate, personal circumstances, however, intertwine with national contexts; the identity of the individual – human or otherwise – is influenced by national discourses. This section will continue to examine the identity of the monster through an analysis of discourses on nation in del Toro's next films: *Blade II*, *Hellboy*, and *Pan's Labyrinth*. By examining monstrosity in regards to larger discourses outside of the individual or a small interpersonal network, the values, priorities and fears of an extended community can be illuminated. The monsters of these films are firmly positioned within discourses on nation. In the process of representing various nations, transnational discourses also become prevalent.

In *Blade II*, *Hellboy* and *Pan's Labyrinth*, the politics of personal and national identity are central preoccupations of each narrative. The discourses on nation, however, are framed by del Toro's transnational experience and perspective. Rather than telling these stories from one set of cultural traditions or contexts, he engages texts outside of the film's immediate national or cultural context to design monsters or to contextualize their origin. Through his use of texts from other historical or cultural contexts, the monsters in each of del Toro's films function as an intertextual tool to examine the implications of rebellion and the ideological concerns of nations, including class, race and power. It is in references to, and adaptations of, various texts that del Toro is able to position monstrosity as a means to expose the mechanisms in place in the construction of national

identity and to question the motives of corrupt systems of authority – such as government agencies, national leaders or military officials; the monster is created, appropriated or empowered by these political and/or governmental structures. Analysis of *Blade II*, *Hellboy*, and *Pan's Labyrinth* will present the monster as a narrative element that combines the transnational and intertextual in an effort to confront the politics of identity on a national scale.

3.1 *Blade II* and the Vampire Nation

Though del Toro did not write the screenplay for *Blade II*, the film addresses a number of del Toro's signature thematic concerns including the dynamics of a family in crisis, rebellion against systems of authority, and, most relevant to this chapter, the construction of the nation. Interestingly, in *Blade II*, the nation under investigation is not a recognizable or localizable place in a geographical sense; the film's "Vampire Nation" is a borderless system of governance and cultural tradition shared by vampires regardless of location. Living outside of this system is rare for a vampire, but Blade, a half human vampire working as a vampire hunter, exists independent of the global "nation" of vampires. In the film, Blade is recruited by ruling members of the Vampire Nation to join in a coordinated effort to eliminate a shared enemy, a hyper-aggressive strain of vampire, called Reapers, which feed on both humans and vampires. It is revealed in the plot of the film that the Reapers are the result of genetic engineering perpetrated and sanctioned by the Vampire Nation. To analyze del Toro's treatment of the political and social construction of the nation in *Blade II*, this section will work with Benedict Anderson's idea of the imagined community in order to situate and trouble the idea of the nation as a borderless society. Though the Vampire Nation does not meet the exact criteria established by Anderson, namely the characterization of the nation being "limited", the idea of the imaged community will be used to examine the traditions, ideologies and identifying characteristics of the fictional nation. The lack of defined borders and designated geographical space distinguishes the nation in *Blade II* from Anderson's conceptualization, but the sense of shared identity fostered in national systems remains relevant for further analysis.

3.1.1 A Nation without Borders

The Vampire Nation of *Blade II* does not refer to a clear set of borders, rather the nation is composed of a shared sense of vampire identity; through these shared experiences, needs, traditions and histories, vampires have formed a transnational, trans-border community. In *Imagined Communities*, Anderson addresses the significance in establishing a firm sense of community in the construction of nations and national identity. Anderson explains: "...the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings" (Anderson 7). Anderson's analysis of the nation as an imagined community will provide the theoretical framework for approaching *Blade II*'s Vampire Nation; even though the nation depicted in the film is not defined by a geographical set of borders or boundaries (the "limited" aspect, in Anderson's definition), the ideological, and social, configuration of the community, as understood by him, is still applicable. The "citizens" of the Vampire Nation have built a community around their condition as vampires. The shared identity bestowed by this national grouping supersedes the borders of recognizable cultural or geographic constructs. Independent of their specific location, this facet of identity essentially promises membership in the Vampire Nation; community is created through monstrosity.

In *Celluloid Vampires: Life after Death in the Modern World*, Stacey Abbott examines representations of vampires in contemporary film. Abbott suggests that modern depictions of vampires have embraced discourses of globalization and, in some cases, displaced national contexts in narratives. As outsiders from human society it follows that the vampires live outside of the national and social structures which organize human society. In her analysis, she briefly addresses the representation of space and borders in *Blade II*, arguing that *Blade*, the first film in the series, created a clear sense of space and setting in Los Angeles, while *Blade II* adopted a more ambiguous use of setting. She explains, "The sense of space presented in the film, however, is increasingly vague and anonymous, reinforcing the idea that boundaries and distances no longer have meaning"

(Abbott 217-218). In *Blade II*, the setting is introduced as Prague, but the location becomes secondary to the politics and intrigue of the Vampire Nation.

Though the Vampire Nation does not have clear borders, it does have other significant aspects of traditional nations including a shared sense of identity and history for a group of people. The historical legacy of the Vampire Nation is established by the controlling vampire elders, who determine policy, serve as historical continuity, and ensure the future of vampires. In the film, Damaskinos, the eldest vampire in the nation, is the ruler of the Vampire Nation. In his book *The Changing Vampire of Film and Television*, Tim Kane explains that the social and political structure of vampire society in *Blade* is largely constructed around purity of vampire identity and access to wealth. Though his analysis refers to only to the first film in the series, the ideas become even more pronounced in del Toro's sequel. Kane writes, "The vampires of the film *Blade* are divided into two groups: the pure blood vampires and the turned vampires. Pure bloods are born as vampires and remain elite, ruling over the other vampires" (Kane 116). In *Blade II*, Damaskinos is a pure blood vampire. It is this social, and biological, status that allows him to govern over the Vampire Nation with little interference or oversight. Damaskinos positions himself as a keeper of history and tradition; it is because of this lineage and sense of history that his rule and his actions are unquestioned. Similar to Halberstam's arguments about exclusion in Gothic fiction addressed in Chapter One, the rhetoric of pure-blooded vampires introduces another characteristic of the Vampire Nation: defining itself in relation to what it is not.

Labeled an enemy of the Vampire Nation, Blade functions outside of the nationalist discourses of vampire culture. His human characteristics distinguish him from other vampires, placing him in a unique position as he is also unable to become an active part of human culture due to his thirst for blood. In "Of Monstrous Masses and Hybrid Heroes: Del Toro's English Language Films", Laura Podalsky analyzes the conflicting roles in which monsters are situated in del Toro's films produced in Hollywood, explaining that the director uses them as both protagonists and antagonists. Focusing on the implications of casting the monster as hero, Podalsky confronts the social and political implications of race, immigration, and class in del Toro's films (Podalsky 100).

For example, in *Blade II*, the existence of the Reaper vampires exposes the ideological concerns of those governing the Vampire Nation.

Within the leadership of the Vampire Nation, the struggle, led by elders and military leaders, to prevent the spread of the aggressive Reaper vampires reveals an obsession with purity and a fear of infection. Podalsky explains that these concerns point to a deep-seated racism in the vampire culture of the film. She writes, “This is most evident in *Blade II*, through the subplot about Damaskinos’s plan to ‘improve’ the vampire bloodline to create a superior breed. The plot makes the racist (and fascist) overtones of his project explicit in the actions of certain light-skinned members of the Blood Pact” (Podalsky 111). The discourses of nation and leadership, which construct Damaskinos’ public identity as leader of the Vampire Nation, allow him access to the tools needed to experiment on vampires. Though his goal was to create a stronger vampire and to use science to eliminate weak or undesirable attributes and characteristics in future generations of vampires, he inadvertently created the Reapers. This desire to determine the physical and biological design of an entire group speaks to racist ideologies: the aim to create an ideal form or a stronger strain of vampire suggests that difference is neither welcomed nor accepted.

The discourses of race and class, which become apparent in the struggles for power depicted in *Blade II*, echo Anderson’s study of race and nations. He suggests that race is closely connected to class. Anderson explains, “The dreams of racism actually have their origin in ideologies of *class*, rather than in those of nation: above all in claims to divinity among rulers and to ‘blue’ or ‘white’ blood and ‘breeding’ among aristocracies” (Anderson 149). Attempts to maintain vampire “purity” in terms of biology and ideology in the Vampire Nation are based in racist discourses. As Anderson suggests, racist discourses are connected to class; in the film, the Vampire Nation’s rejection of all else, what it deems Other or lesser, is a manifestation of the toxic ideologies of the ruling class. The genetic and physical experimentations are done to act out the vision of Damaskinos: to transform all vampires into the idealized image that he has constructed. Undoubtedly, his ideas – and his authority to enact them – are linked to his position of privilege and power within vampire culture. It is also this status that allows him to cover

up his actions by hiring Blade to kill the Reapers and destroy evidence of his wrongdoing. The film presents a commentary on the destructive nature of systemic racism, equating Damaskinos's project with, as Podalsky argues: "...racist notions of white superiority" (Podalsky 112). The monster, the Reaper vampire, which replaces Blade as the primary threat to the existence of the Vampire Nation, is the result of prejudice and ideology. Consequently, the problem threatening the Vampire Nation has been created by itself.

3.1.2 Intertextuality and the Reaper Vampire

The Reapers are depicted as visually and physically distinct from the other vampires in the film. Whereas Blade and the other vampires appear mostly human, other than their superhuman strength and ferocious teeth, the Reapers have a more sinister, nonhuman form. When the Reapers attack or feed, their jaws open and expand revealing a secondary stinger-like protrusion that latches on to its prey. The physical difference between the variations of the vampire species is significant and can be attributed to the presence of del Toro's intertextual references in the design of the creatures. McDonald and Clark note that Damaskinos appears to be modeled after Orlock in *Nosferatu* (Murnau, 1922), establishing a connection to the early vampires of silent film (McDonald and Clark 171). The less senior vampires are representative of traditional depictions of vampires in horror films; despite their exaggerated fangs, the creatures appear human.

By positioning the Reapers as the product of racist experimentation and extremism, del Toro uses fantasy and horror to approach discourses of class and race. Unlike the other vampires in the film, the intertextual source and inspiration for the appearance of the Reapers is based in specific European legends and folklore. Del Toro explains, "I did a bunch of notes when I was a kid about vampiric biology. I was very much into the research into vampirism in all the countries ... all the species of vampires through the ages, and through the different geographies. I found really interesting stuff about, for example, that the *strigoi* of Eastern Europe have a stinger under the tongue"

(Del Toro qtd. in Calia).⁵ J. Gordon Melton explains in his anthology of vampire lore that the *Strigoi* is a prominent figure in Romanian folklore and myth. *Strigoi mort* is a Romanian term that refers to vampires that live beyond death; the term means “dead vampire” (Melton 584). Melton writes, “The dead vampires are, of course, the reanimated bodies of the dead who return to life to disturb and suck the blood of their family, livestock, and – if unchecked – their neighbors” (Melton 584). The traditions and descriptions of the *Strigoi mort* are significant intertextual discourses in *Blade II*. By referencing a distinct vampire mythology in the design of the Reapers, intertextuality is used to examine the discourses of race and nation presented in the film. The treatment of the Reapers by the Vampire Nation echoes the rhetoric of racism: they are designated as Other by those in power and, consequently, they are also deemed a threat that must be destroyed because of their difference. Thus, the differing physical appearance of the Reapers is an intertextual choice that has serious social and political implications within the narrative.

3.2 Authorship, Interdimensional Borders and American Identity in *Hellboy*

The Vampire Nation of *Blade II* exists outside of established national contexts but the director’s next feature, *Hellboy*, is preoccupied with the implications of physical, national borders. In *Hellboy*, a monster from a hell dimension is brought to Earth by occult Nazi forces during World War II; the creature, Hellboy, is intercepted by the United States military and utilized as a sort of secret weapon, to be studied and put to work when needed. In the narrative of the film, borders between countries and other worldly dimensions are equally significant as the politics of crossing from one place to another are presented in Hellboy’s journey to Earth and his subsequent appropriation by a governmental agency. Though Hellboy is not of Earth, he is immediately integrated into a

⁵Del Toro revisits aspects of the Reapers design in his series of novels and its subsequent television adaptation, *The Strain*. Reyes explains, “...the design of the Strigoi and the design for the Reapers from *Blade II* shared a common origin” (Reyes CinemaBlend.com).

national context when he is “rescued” and “raised” by the American military; he is not allowed to exist independent of national structures. This section will examine the intertextual origins of Hellboy in the film: by referencing the fictional occult text *De Vermis Mysteriis*, del Toro enters into a complex system of intertextuality, merging his text with a specific legacy of horror fiction and authorship. The apocalyptic nature of these texts, and the implications of the creature associated with them, impact the actions of multiple government organizations. Ultimately, Hellboy will be analyzed in relation to the nationalist discourses and anxieties that emerge in times of war.

3.2.1 The Intertextual Origins of Hellboy

In the opening sequence of *Hellboy*, it is revealed that the film’s title character is summoned from another dimension. Del Toro uses an established mythology to introduce and contextualize the inter-dimensional border crossing. The film opens with the following introductory title card:

“In the coldest regions of space, the monstrous entities Ogdru Jahad – the Seven Gods of Chaos – slumber in their crystal prison, waiting to reclaim Earth... and burn the heavens”
- *Des Vermis Mysteriis*, Page 87⁶

The opening quotation originates in *De Vermis Mysteriis*, a fictional book of monsters and the occult included in the short stories of horror authors Robert Bloch and H.P. Lovecraft. For the authors, the text functions as an intertextual tool and shared diegetic mythology to construct a horror narrative across various short stories with different authors. In this capacity, multiple authors work to develop and extend a single narrative. Del Toro’s reference to this lineage of literary horror is self-reflexive: by beginning his film – based on a popular comic book series – with a quotation from another elaborate mythology, the director advances his own story while reflecting on the nature of authorship. In this sense, intertextuality functions as a mode of authorial exploration,

⁶ In *Hellboy*, the text is cited as *Des Vermis Mysteriis* but it is listed as *De Vermis Mysteriis* in the texts and works referenced in this section. For the sake of consistency with other scholarship, the text will be referred to as *De Vermis Mysteriis* unless directly citing del Toro’s introductory text.

intertwining the texts, traditions and conventions of various authors and genres in a new work.

The quotation utilized in the opening of *Hellboy* originates in the works of Bloch and Lovecraft. In “A Literary Tutelage: Robert Bloch and H.P. Lovecraft”, S. T. Joshi traces the personal and professional friendship of Bloch and Lovecraft. He explains that the text first appears in *The Shambler from the Stars* (1934) by acclaimed horror author Robert Bloch (Joshi 26). In the story, an unnamed author discovers a copy of *De Vermis Mysteriis*, an ancient spell book describing demons and monsters existing in other dimensions in space; when the text is read out loud, an other worldly evil is summoned. Bloch is careful to establish a dangerous and potentially evil origin for the text in the short story. Treating the work as a real, if not historical document creates a richly detailed legacy for the sinister text. In Bloch’s story, *De Vermis Mysteriis* functions as an almost canonical occult text with its own mythology; characters in the story are aware of the book’s rumored supernatural power.

The legacy of *De Vermis Mysteriis* extends beyond Bloch’s story as the text appears in the short stories of H.P. Lovecraft as well. In *The Cult of Alien Gods: H.P. Lovecraft and Extraterrestrial Pop Culture* (2005), Jason Colavito explains that Lovecraft frequently made direct references to the stories and mythologies of other authors (Colavito 80). This shared mythology can be seen in Lovecraft’s short story *The Haunter of the Dark* (1936) in which Bloch’s *De Vermis Mysteriis* is mentioned as a known work about monsters and evil (Joshi 25): the text becomes an intertextual connection between authors and narratives, as new stories emerge from multiple authors working with a shared mythology, fostering a collaborative approach to authorship. The identity of an individual writer is then positioned within an intertextual framework of authors and intra-textual, or diegetic, mythologies.

In “Myth and Monstrosity: The Dark Realms of H. P. Lovecraft and Guillermo del Toro”, Rebecca Janicker traces H.P. Lovecraft’s themes, images and narratives in del Toro’s films. She argues that del Toro’s reference to *De Vermis Mysteriis* in *Hellboy* can best be understood as an homage: “[v]ia Mignola, then, del Toro pursues a tale of

mythology and monstrosity that he embellishes with further Lovecraftian allusions to alien gods and the clandestine groups who seek to restore them to supremacy. It is through such intertextual references and knowing allusions that del Toro pays homage to Lovecraft...” (Janicker 53). Still, even though del Toro and Lovecraft have significantly different tones, as Janicker indicates, it is limiting to consider del Toro’s use of Lovecraft and Bloch’s text as simply an homage. Del Toro’s reference to *De Vermis Mysteriis* transports the text to a new narrative context and uses its dark themes to introduce a creature whose destiny is to enact the apocalypse. It is a meaningful intertextual reference, which establishes the world-destroying power and danger embodied by the character of Hellboy.

3.2.2 The Monster and the American Government

With his use of *De Vermis Mysteriis* at the start of *Hellboy*, del Toro introduces his film into the tradition of the fictional occult text’s mythology and authorial collaboration, situating the character of Hellboy within the traditions and conventions of Bloch and Lovecraft’s treatment of the horror genre. The presence of the text integrates the apocalyptic implications of the figure of Hellboy, a monster destined to bring about the end of the world, with the similarly apocalyptic mythology of Bloch and Lovecraft. The suggestion within the narrative of the familiarity of the national agencies’ – and their authorities – with *De Vermis Mysteriis* informs the way in which Hellboy is treated by said agencies and heightens the sense of danger ascribed to him. When Hellboy is brought to work for the United States, he has little freedom or agency; he is forced into the role of a secret operative of a classified government organization. His upbringing appears to be more an act of recruitment rather than childhood. Booker explains, “Moreover, through his association with the BPRD [the Bureau of Paranormal Research and Defense, a covert branch of the American government working with monsters and the occult], which is itself a secret branch of the FBI, Hellboy is an agent of the U.S. government, so his allegiances are vaguely American. He is, however, no Superman-style defender of truth, justice, and the American Way” (Booker 150). Hellboy’s existence presents the potential threats and dangers of creatures from other dimensions to world

governments. The character of Hellboy, a creature without any affiliation to an Earthly nation, is immediately introduced into an American context.

When confronted with a supernatural phenomenon and the existence of monsters, the United States government appropriates and controls the creature. In her study of Hellboy as a monstrous hero, Podalsky also examines his treatment by the government. She explains, “Nonetheless, both *Hellboy* and *Hellboy II* include an important subplot highlighting how dominant (white, human) society marginalizes yet also depends upon (nonwhite and/or nonhuman) ‘others’...” (Podalsky 112). Hellboy is kept under constant surveillance and supervision, unable to leave or act without permission; his existence is controlled by a government agency. His freedom to cross borders and exist independently is taken away from him by American forces.

Hellboy first arrives on Earth in the midst of a fictional battle between American and Nazi forces in World War II; for each group, acquiring the creature becomes a primary objective. Within the highly political and, ultimately, national contexts of war, a moral binary is created as the Nazis are introduced as villains and the Americans, with whom the narrative anchors the story, are presented as heroes. Booker explains that these narrative roles are traditional within American comic books. He writes, “Nazis, of course, are staple villains of the comics, dating back to the 1930s – and especially to World War II, when numerous American comic featured battles against Nazis as part of a program to support the American war effort” (Booker 151). Glenn Ward echoes these sentiments in his analysis of *Hellboy*, explaining that “...few would doubt that Nazis deserve their place in horror cinema’s rouges’ gallery” (Ward 26). American identity, to contrast the Third Reich, is presented as admirable and desirable. By relying on these common nationalistic narrative tropes and through establishing spectator identification with American forces, the film seems to provide the United States government with a diegetic justification for their appropriation of Hellboy.

In *Hellboy*, the government agency and Professor Broom, in particular, function as a surrogate guardian or family to the monster: he is “raised” and observed by government officials and trained to defend the interests of the organization and the

United States. The contexts of family and government service are intertwined in the narrative. Though Hellboy has issues with the limiting aspects of his upbringing and the secretive nature of his existence and work, the significant relationship he has formed with Broom clouds his well-founded objections. As Booker explains, "...we are meant to understand that the professor and Hellboy love each other as much as any father and son could – though one could certainly ask whether Hellboy is in fact being exploited by the U.S. government with [Broom's] full participation" (Booker 156). Working with the American government is not coded as simply professional or patriotic, rather it is situated as a form of familial loyalty as well.

Hellboy is forced into a specific role by the military and government officials in power. Because Hellboy is deemed valuable and put to work by the government, perpetuating their ideals and ideologies, he is kept alive and used to stop monsters, which have been identified as threats by a government agency. The prominent role of government in the narrative provides del Toro the context from which to criticize the loyalty and loss of individuality required by agencies while also addressing the limitations placed on personal freedoms by national authorities. The theme of American appropriation and anxieties surrounding personal identity continue in *Hellboy II: The Golden Army*. At the end of the sequel, Hellboy abandons his "home" and leaves his responsibilities at the BPRD to build a life for himself. In this declaration of autonomy, his actions are a deliberate move away from the government agency, asserting his own identity and individuality and rebelling against the rigid structures that have informed his life. However, McDonald and Clark read this act as yet another extension of the traditional and stereotypical politics of masculine American identity in film as what is most desired is freedom and individuality (McDonald and Clark 174). The influence of Hellboy's time working with the BRPD become apparent, as his actions, removing himself from the government agency, are consistent with nationalistic ideologies. Though he was born outside of the context of Earthly nations, the concerns and values of the United States shape his character: in this case, discourses on nation directly influence Hellboy's identity.

3.3 *Pan's Labyrinth* and the Transnational Contexts of Fairy Tales

Hellboy is neither del Toro's first examination of war nor of the fusion of history and fantasy. In 2001, he brought the conventions of the horror genre to the Spanish Civil War in *The Devil's Backbone*, a film that explored the narrative of a ghost story set against the backdrop of war. In the years following the film's release, del Toro began to plan another film set during the Spanish Civil War. Much like *The Devil's Backbone*, *Pan's Labyrinth* depicts the perspective of an imaginative child trapped in a time of war. This time, though, rather than revisiting the horror genre, del Toro worked within the traditions of fairy tales to situate the story of Ofelia, a young girl living at a rural military compound following the Spanish Civil War, who encounters magical creatures amidst the chaos and brutality of war and fascism. This section will examine the presence of monstrosity in the depiction of the national crisis following the Spanish Civil War. Through his use of fairy tale monsters and traditions, the elements of fantasy can be read in direct relation to the historical and political realities of the film while also extending to more contemporary contexts. The conventions of fairy tales become an intertextual element of the construction of the narrative of *Pan's Labyrinth*, allowing del Toro to navigate the film's historical conflict while also evoking the fears and concerns of multiple cultural contexts.

3.3.1 Conventions of Fairy Tales in Representations of History

In the director's commentary, del Toro explains that he created *Pan's Labyrinth* as a companion to *The Devil's Backbone*, setting it five years after the ghostly events set in the orphanage. The thematic connections shared by the films are as much informed by the Spanish Civil War as they are by events contemporary to the release and production of the films. Though *Pan's Labyrinth* is set shortly after the Spanish Civil War, del Toro explains that his return to the historical period was shaped by the terrorist attacks on September, 11th, 2001 in the United States. The passage of time between the films – five years between both the production and the setting of the narrative of each film – was meant to mirror the changing cultural and political context following 9/11. Del Toro noted that the response of the United States to those events was similar to that of Spain

following the Spanish Civil War: both were characterized by a pervasive sense of fear and obedience to national mandates (del Toro *Pan's Commentary*). His use of fantasy engages the historical context of the Spanish Civil War, while also opening the film up to broader interpretations pertaining to the timing of its production.

Del Toro is able to combine the realities of war and the monsters of imagination through his use of fairy tale conventions. In *Fairy Tale* (2013), Andrew Teverson situates the origins of fairy tales in folklore and human experience. Teverson explains that these stories traveled across cultures and nations, appearing in new contexts and changing with the individuals and cultures telling the stories (Teverson 11-12). Across the cultural variations, a clear narrative form began to emerge for fairy tales. To define the fairy tale, Teverson writes:

A fairy tale typically deals with the experiences of a youthful protagonist engaged on a journey, or in a series of tasks and trials, that has been necessitated by a change in his or her status: the death of a parent, or the loss of a magical object. This journey or series of tasks takes place in an imaginative environment, peopled by strange beings and wonderful creatures, some of which prove helpful, and some of which become hazardous threats (Teverson 32).

These conventions, as outlined by Teverson, appear in *Pan's Labyrinth*. In it, the journey and tasks of the fairy tale are interwoven into the film's historical setting. The narrative traditions of the fairy tale do not diminish the film's historical and political aims, rather they expose the systemic cruelty and intolerance of the newly established fascist regime.

Antonio Lázaro-Reboll examines the role of horror and genre in del Toro's depiction of history and fantasy in *Pan's Labyrinth*. He finds that the two modes of storytelling, though seemingly opposed, are made to deliberately coexist. He writes, "The fairy-tale narrative and stylistic framework functions as yet another allegorical layer contributing to the dialectical form of representation mobilized in *El laberinto del fauno*. The seamless merging of the fantasy world and the real world is articulated through parallel plotting and montage" (Lázaro-Reboll 266). As Lázaro-Reboll explains, the "layers" of storytelling influence each other: Ofelia's imaginative worlds of fantasy are shaped by the realities of post-Civil War life and the historical narrative takes on the

structure of the fairy tale. By juxtaposing reality and fantasy, del Toro is able to make deliberate connections between the monsters of fantasy and the characters and ideologies of the period.

However, the monsters of Ofelia's imagination are not the only monsters of the film. As Ofelia is made to confront the horrifying realities of history, the monsters of her childhood fantasies fade away. She is left alone with a real world monster, a monster of history: Captain Vidal. The connection between the monsters of fairy tale and Vidal as a human monster is most clearly articulated in the climax of *Pan's Labyrinth*. In the sequence, Ofelia is first confronted by the faun and then Vidal as each demands that she surrender her brother. When Ofelia refuses the faun, Captain Vidal stumbles into the heart of the labyrinth and, for the first time in the film, another human character shares the frame with a monster (Figure 3: Vidal locates Ofelia and his son in the labyrinth in *Pan's Labyrinth*. In this shot, the Captain is seen occupying the same space as Ofelia's fantasy world.). When the sequence cuts to Vidal's perspective as he enters the labyrinth, there are no monsters; Ofelia is seen standing alone (Figure 4: When the sequence cuts to Vidal's perspective, Ofelia is shown standing alone, talking to herself in *Pan's Labyrinth*.). As the spaces of fairy tale and reality are largely kept physically separate in the film, the intrusion of Vidal into the world of fairy tales creates a deliberate link between Vidal and the monsters imagined by Ofelia. Even though Vidal is human, he is able to occupy the same space as the monsters of Ofelia's imagination. Much like the faun, the giant toad, or the Pale Man, Vidal is monstrous; situating Vidal and the faun within the same frame reveals that monsters exist as much in reality as they do in worlds of fantasy. The image of the two figures functions as a reflection on the nature of storytelling itself, as the worlds of history and fairy tale are forced into confrontation. Stories, whether they are fantasy or other works of fiction, are always anchored within the specific contexts of the storyteller. At this point of collision, the innocence of fantasy disappears and what is left is the reality of Ofelia's situation.

3.3.2 Identifying Monsters across Historical Contexts

Though the characters and the action, both of fairy tale and history, are set in a specific national context, they are evocative of more contemporary concerns as well.

Jeffrey Jerome Cohen explains that monsters in art, film and literature are influenced by the different cultures and traditions from which they originate, but that they are also reflective of contemporary concerns and issues. Cohen writes

Monsters are never as idiosyncratic as they seem. They are drawn from a shared vocabulary, even if this lexicon's expression takes on the contours of the location in which the monster's presence is felt. To the monster belongs a body both particular as well as transhistorical. The monster arrives in the present yearning to impart an old story, a narrative from the deep past (Cohen "Postscript" 451).

The contemporary context of the storyteller and the story being told impacts the nature of monsters in fairy tales, myths, legends, or history. Across time and culture, monsters evolve to present the fears and concerns of the authors or artists depicting them.

Working with Cohen's concept, the monsters of *Pan's Labyrinth* operate in this trans-historical capacity as they are situated within the specific context of Spain following the Civil War, but they are also the product of another, more contemporary time and place. In "Transnational Political Horror in *Cronos* (1993), *El espinazo del diablo* (2001), and *El laberinto del Fauno* (2006)", Tierney examines the use of horror and fantasy to explore political concerns in del Toro's Spanish language films. In her analysis of *Pan's Labyrinth*, Tierney situates the film as a transnational work that stages the historical and psychological context of a specific nation. She writes, "[r]ather than an escape, therefore, the film's fairy tale/fantasy elements are more of an alternative and sometimes horrific form of representing the (historical) reality around Ofelia" (Tierney 175). Instead of viewing the worlds of history and fantasy separately, Tierney situates the fairy tale as another method of staging the film's historical concerns.

For example, creatures such as the giant toad in the tree and the Pale Man represent glutinous and indifferent systems of power; in both instances, the monsters of Ofelia's fairy tale world destroy the world around them, much like the fascist regime of Spain. In "Malevolent Fathers and Rebellious Daughters: National Oedipal Narratives and Political Erasures in *El laberinto del fauno* (2006)", Ana Vivancos contends that the aspects of fantasy and fairy tale in the film reinforce the historical nature of the narrative. She explains: "...the other monsters in the underground kingdom also work as hidden

doppelgangers of the material powers in the real world. The next monster Ofelia confronts, the Pale Man, holds custody of unimaginable quantities of food, in a not-so-subtle reference to Captain Vidal's control over the community's reserves" (Vivancos 887). Ofelia's journey into fantasy presents del Toro's story of the Spanish Civil War through the imagination of a child; the creatures stage the oppression of fascism in the familiar structure of a fairy tale.

Del Toro's monsters exist in fantasy and history allowing the creatures to function in the film's historical contexts while also expressing more contemporary concerns through fairy tale form. The figure of the Pale Man is a widely studied character and image in del Toro's filmography, one that makes direct references outside of the immediate context of the Spanish Civil War. Tierney and Kotecki address the large pile of children's shoes seemingly abandoned in the Pale Man's layer, connecting the pile of shoes to another historical context (Tierney 178) (Kotecki 244-245). Tierney explains that the shoes draw connections between the monster, the Spanish Civil War and the Holocaust; in this case the monster functions across time and history. Tierney writes:

These shoes both recall the historical reality of the Holocaust (specifically the death camp at Auschwitz, where piles of belongings including the shoes, of its victims are displayed as a testament to the murder of millions of Jewish people) and *stand in* for those missing children. The use of Holocaustal imagery in this scene correlates with the growing use of the term in accounts of the numerous deaths in Spain's Civil War and its aftermath (Tierney 178).

As Tierney notes, the Pale Man engages numerous cultural and historical contexts. It is in this use of fairy tale to confront history that the monster is able to reference and comment on other historical or fantastical contexts.

In "With Spain in Our Hearts: The Political Fantastic of Guillermo Del Toro's *Laberinto Del Fauno* (2006) and *El Espinazo Del Diablo* (2001)", Christopher Hartney suggests that the Pale Man is a psychologically and historically significant monster due to the physical location of the Pale Man's lair: the monster lives "in" Ofelia's home. He explains, "Unlike her previous mythic task, where Ofelia must enter an archetypal axis mundi, the realm of the Pale Man is located just below the surface of Spain, 1944. He

lives in a chamber just beyond the walls of Ofelia's room; to reach him, she need only draw a door on a wall with the magic chalk the faun provides" (Hartney 198). Ofelia does not have to leave her home to confront this monster; the monster is already there. For Ofelia, the real world monster is Captain Vidal, her fascist stepfather. The Pale Man is situated most directly in the historical circumstances of the Spanish Civil War and the Holocaust, but Hartney's reading of the Pale Man suggests that the worst monsters may already be close, but unknown to us, either personally or culturally.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has examined how the monsters of *Blade II*, *Hellboy*, and *Pan's Labyrinth* are linked to discourses on nation. In the films, the identities of the monsters are largely defined by their relationship to, or their interactions with, the social, the cultural and the surrounding historical and national contexts. The monster serves as a critique of the nation and the governing or ruling agencies depicted in the film. Rather than affirming national constructs or nationalist, patriotic ideals, del Toro uses the monster as a means to expose racist institutions, fascist systems, and the communities that ignore (or possibly enable) these realities. Whether it is a nation of Vampires, the American government or a Spanish military compound, the monsters challenge systems of authority and present the fears and preoccupations of various national communities. Through intertextuality, del Toro makes reference to diverse texts and storytelling traditions; this engagement with pre-existing texts takes on a transnational quality as the texts broaden the artistic, cultural and political contexts of the films' narratives. In his films, representations of monstrosity function as discourses critical of nationalist ideologies. Ultimately, the creatures reveal the implications of power, class and race informing social and national contexts.

As this chapter has addressed, national discourses appear in del Toro's films made in the Hollywood studio system (*Blade II* and *Hellboy*) and in his films which utilized independent or international modes of financing (*Pan's Labyrinth*). In the next chapter, the context of the Hollywood studio system will be the focus of analysis. Del Toro's next features, *Hellboy II: The Golden Army* and *Pacific Rim*, are both major American blockbusters. Working with Hollywood studios on these high profile releases, del Toro

secured the highest budgets of his career. With the exposure implicit in the marketing and distribution of blockbusters, it is interesting that del Toro engages in self-reflexive depictions of monsters; in each film, the monster is positioned as a commodity, to be bought, sold, or mediated in some capacity. Ultimately, the chapter will consider del Toro's position as auteur in the Hollywood studio system and will analyze his complex treatment of the monster in relation to the industrial pressures of the summer blockbuster.

Chapter 4

4 Commodity Monsters: Industry and Mediated Representation in *Hellboy II: The Golden Army* and *Pacific Rim*

“Hey, guys. You’re missing this. We’re on TV.”

- Hellboy, *Hellboy II: The Golden Army*

“We watch the monstrous spectacle of the horror film because we know the cinema is a temporary place, the jolting sensuousness of the celluloid images will be followed by reentry into the world of comfort and light. Likewise, the story on the page before us may horrify (whether it appears in the New York Times news section or Stephen King’s latest novel matters little), so long as we are safe in the knowledge of its nearing end (the number of pages in our right hand is dwindling) and our liberation from it” (Cohen “Culture” 17).

- Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, “Monster Culture: Seven Theses”

The previous chapter of this thesis explored the connections between the monsters of *Blade II*, *Hellboy* and *Pan’s Labyrinth* and the discourses on nation presented in each film. In del Toro’s films, the monster, a creature of fiction and fantasy, is used as a key to better understand the real world: it functions as a critique of the nation and its history, exposing the realities of community, politics and systems of authority. These discourses on nation continue to be ever present in *Hellboy II: The Golden Army* and *Pacific Rim*, however, another significant discourse manifests itself in the production context and narrative content of del Toro’s latest films to date: the economics of the Hollywood studio system. This chapter will examine the influence of the profit-driven nature of the American film industry on representations of monstrosity in the films. Del Toro presents the monsters in a self-reflexive capacity: mirroring the media frenzy surrounding the release of a major blockbuster, the creatures are routinely featured in television broadcasts or they inspire significant financial enterprises. As media representation and financial discourses become important narrative concerns, analysis will also address the industrial contexts that have informed these central themes.

As del Toro has constructed a career narrating and presenting monsters to international audiences, it is noteworthy to see this very process interrogated in *Hellboy II*

and *Pacific Rim*. To examine the representation of monsters as commodities and media spectacle, this chapter will consider the films in relation to their place in the film industry, in other words, as the expensive products of major American studios that they are. Specifically, the films have been marketed and promoted, by their respective studios, as major summer blockbusters. Attached to the high profile release, distribution and marketing of these films is a financial imperative to perform in terms of worldwide box office. In addition to the industrial pressures that have been incorporated into the narratives of each film, del Toro also makes significant references to classic film monsters. The use of these references will be studied to situate the connection between the characters and narratives across texts. Finally, analysis will extend to ancillary products created in direct relation to *Pacific Rim* as a form of intertextuality; in these additional works, the characters and narratives of a film are revisited to simultaneously extend the industrial brands and diegetic worlds of the film. Ultimately, the financial concerns of blockbusters and the Hollywood studio system will be positioned as a significant influence on the monster's identity and representation.

4.1 *Hellboy II* and Mediated Monsters

In the director's commentary of *Hellboy II*, del Toro briefly explains the development process of the sequel. Rather than beginning with creative details or an explanation of the film's narrative origins, he contextualizes the industrial and financial realities surrounding the release of the first film that led to the production of the sequel. Del Toro explains, "The movie, *Hellboy II*, started almost immediately after the first one opened. Much like this one, it was opened in a very tough weekend and it did not do very well on theatrical but fortunately the first movie made enough on DVD and ancillary stuff that they decided to try for a second one" (Del Toro *Hellboy II* Commentary). Del Toro's remarks illuminate the significance of the film's industrial context; because of the success of the first film, he was able to continue the story of Hellboy on screen. Released the weekend of July 11, 2008, the film debuted during the high profile summer release season and was positioned by its studio as a major summer release (*Hellboy II* boxofficemojo.com). This section will first examine the industrial context surrounding

the release of *Hellboy II* through analysis of recent scholarship on the scope and cost of blockbuster cinema.

Next, the impact of these financial and industrial concerns on the narrative will be analyzed, as the film is thematically preoccupied with media exposure and the implications of reaching mass audiences; this section also will consider the presence of monsters on diegetic screens within the film. In del Toro's sequel to *Hellboy*, the existence of the title character becomes widely known after an explosion knocks him into a street in front of numerous national news crews; subsequently, Hellboy appears on screens across the country in news broadcasts and as fodder for late night television hosts. Stories of Hellboy's existence, which are only speculation in the first film, are made real, and mainstream, by his constant appearance on screens in the sequel. But Hellboy is not the only monster present on screens in the film: *The Bride of Frankenstein* (Whale, 1935), *The Wolf Man* (Waggner, 1941), and *The Creature from the Black Lagoon* (Arnold, 1954) play on television screens in his room. In all of these films, the monster is depicted as a tragic or dangerous figure, but one with some connection to humanity. Thus, by means of these clips, del Toro inserts Hellboy into a cinematic legacy of monstrosity.

4.1.1 Blockbuster and Spectacle

With its summer release, *Hellboy II* was positioned as one of a number of high profile superhero films and comic book adaptations released in 2008, together with *Iron Man* (Favreau, 2008) and *The Dark Knight* (Nolan, 2008). For Universal Studios, the film was a potential blockbuster. In the introduction to *Movie Blockbusters* (2003), Julian Stringer analyzes the term blockbuster, relating the concept to both narrative and industrial contexts. He explains that while the term is used quite frequently, its implications shift depending upon the context in which it appears. To approach the idea, Stringer identifies a number of commonalities across the term's varied uses. He explains that blockbusters are characterized by a large scale, both narratively and in terms of production: these films have an epic quality whether through visuals or scope of story (Stringer 3). In "Origins of the Contemporary Hollywood Blockbuster", Warren Buckland explains that films of this size must be considered as an investment and a

product to be sold. He writes, “[a] blockbuster can be defined in terms of two variables: the huge sums involved in production and the amount of revenues received” (Buckland 17). The significant scope and scale of the blockbuster narrative is directly related to financial and industrial contexts that enable its creation.

The industrial and narrative implications of the blockbuster, high production costs and epic scale in story, are pertinent in the analysis of *Hellboy II*. In terms of production, del Toro’s sequel was given a much more prominent release than the first film in the series. *Hellboy* was released in April of 2004, prior to the highly visible and promoted films of the summer, with a budget of \$66 million (*Hellboy* boxofficemojo.com). On the other hand, *Hellboy II* was made with a significantly larger budget: \$85 million dollars (*Hellboy II* boxofficemojo.com). The increased cost of the development of the sequel indicates a larger financial investment taken on by the studio. In *Blockbusters: Hit-Making, Risk-Taking, and the Big Business of Entertainment*, Anita Elberse examines the financial implications and business considerations that inform major releases across artistic industries. She suggests that while the investment in a blockbuster release is a risk, it has the potential to be incredibly lucrative. On the film industry, she writes, “[r]ather than dividing its resources evenly across the products in its portfolio, a movie studio following a blockbuster strategy allocates a disproportionately large share of its production and marketing dollars to a small subset of products in the hope that they will bring in the lion’s share of revenues and profits” (Elberse 18). The increased investment in *Hellboy II* signals this blockbuster status. As a summer release, the film takes on a prominent position in the studio’s distribution schedule; the timing of the film indicates its importance as a franchise with the potential for further grosses and development in the form of additional sequels or titles.

The implications of franchise building can already be seen in the *Hellboy* series; *Hellboy II* is a sequel and the direct result of successful franchising. In between the release of *Hellboy* in 2004 and its sequel in 2008, two short animated films, *Hellboy Animated: Sword of Storms* (Weinstein and Stones, 2006) and *Hellboy Animated: Blood and Iron* (Cook and Stones, 2007), were made to further expand the brand of *Hellboy*. Both films were set within the *Hellboy* universe and featured the cast of the first film as

voices. The animated films served as a franchising bridge between the release of the first and second live action film.

The high cost of production, characteristic of many blockbusters, allows filmmakers, for example, to stage more impressive action sequences or more elaborate special effects. Stringer contends that this kind of extravagant on-screen content can be thought of as a form of cinematic spectacle. He notes that blockbusters are not the only style of filmmaking to incorporate spectacle, but that it is a recurring, identifiable trait of many major studio films (Stringer 5). Spectacle is employed to capture the attention of audiences and to turn the film into an event. Stringer explains, “Public consciousness is achieved through the thrilling assurances held out to the blockbuster’s spectator; this movie will excite you, expose you to something never before experienced, it will prick up your ears and make your eyes bulge out in awe” (Stringer 5). In *Hellboy II*, monsters, and the highly stylized battles and conflicts that arise between Hellboy and others, become spectacle in the blockbuster. Elaborate visual, prosthetic and make-up effects function as a source of awe as audiences are introduced to creatures never before seen in the *Hellboy* film series. Creatures such as the gigantic plant Elemental and the immortal Golden Army are impressive displays of visual effects, all utilized to give the film its epic quality.

4.1.2 The Monster on Screen

Not only are the Elemental and the Golden Army new to the film series, they are distinct additions, created by del Toro, to the Hellboy universe. Because of their prominence in the narrative of film, it is important to consider the role del Toro plays in shaping the narrative and the mythology of Hellboy. Deborah Shaw notes in her study of *Hellboy II* that while the film is a sequel to the first comic book adaptation, the film itself is based on an original story and concept conceived by del Toro. As she explains, “[w]hile del Toro collaborates with Mignola and assigns him credit for the creation of the comics... he does establish his authority over the film text, with Mignola’s acquiescence” (Shaw “Three” 48). One of the ways in which del Toro asserts his authorial identity is in the complex depiction of monsters in the film. Within the narrative, the monster is presented as a spectacle of blockbuster cinema for audiences, but the spectacle also

functions in the diegesis as a critique of media industries and media consumption. In *Hellboy II*, del Toro creates a meta-narrative by positioning the spectacle witnessed by the film's viewers as events which have also fallen under intense media scrutiny in the film. When Hellboy is discovered, he, along with the Bureau of Paranormal Research and Defense, becomes a national obsession. To illustrate the extent to which his existence is covered by the media, del Toro depicts Hellboy on a number of fictitious news broadcasts and also includes a short clip of popular late night talk show host Jimmy Kimmel discussing Hellboy on television screens in Hellboy's home. By placing Hellboy on diegetic screens, del Toro engages discourses on representation: he is critical of how stories are told and who has the power to tell these stories.

In "Guillermo del Toro's Monsters: Matter out of Place", Ann Davies examines the monster as a physical being that transcends the basic categories of human, animal and real world biology and that "...blurs the boundary between self and other because the monster is not totally alien to the self but has characteristics in common" (Davies 32). Given its ability to transcend basic biological classifications and any number of real world spaces, as Davies argues, the monster reveals the inconsistencies of locations and cultures. Thus, in her analysis of *Hellboy II*, she connects the transcendent nature of Hellboy, as a monster, to the media institutions that expose his existence. She explains that the character moves from the limited world he inhabits to a place of almost complete visibility when he is seen by members of the general public and, most significantly, by the cameras of the news media. Ultimately, Hellboy is powerless before the narrative constructed by the media. The mediated images come to define him to the general public. Davies explains:

Hellboy's presence on the New York streets becomes an unwelcome reminder of the abject, blurring the separation between mainstream and marginal spaces. It is Hellboy's emergence into spaces where he was supposed to maintain a semblance of invisibility that causes the most discomfort among the people of New York. He 'comes out' in a dual sense of the phrase, literally removing himself from his New Jersey bunker – near New York but not exactly of it – and also confirming his existence to the assembled media. His whole purpose in doing so is to ensure not only that the monstrous matter is put back in its place – which is not the streets of New York – but also that he is explicitly seen to do this (Davies 35-36).

For Davies, the move from private to public becomes a metaphorical space crossed by Hellboy. In this transition, the media plays a significant role in transforming him into a well-known figure. Their reports and coverage, however, focus on the monstrosity of Hellboy, not the particularities of the individual. As messages of difference and potential danger frame the media narrative of Hellboy, the complexities of identity are ignored in favor of speculation and sensation.

Shortly after Hellboy is first filmed by news crews, the character is shown in his home watching the ever increasing news coverage (Figure 5: Hellboy watches himself in various television broadcasts in *Hellboy II: The Golden Army*. In this shot, del Toro juxtaposes the real monster with the mediated image.). The dual image of Hellboy, the physical character and his media presence, illustrates a tension between the accessibility of the image made possible by the media and the actual individual. The juxtaposition of Hellboy's physical presence and his mediated image presents the discontinuity between the real and how it is represented. The general public is able to see these images of Hellboy in the media, without having a personal experience of the monster. Hellboy's image, however, is accompanied by the incorrect information reported by anchors and news stations. Though viewers of the film are able to laugh at the inaccuracy or the speculation, diegetic audiences have no other source to inform their opinions.

The mediated spectacle of the film draws attention to the act of spectatorship, how messages and images are communicated and the extent to which they are distributed. The thematic preoccupation with modes of representation is consistent with del Toro's interest in the act of storytelling itself – a theme significantly explored in *Pan's Labyrinth* – but it also functions as a self-reflexive move by the director. As a blockbuster, *Hellboy II* is a film positioned for mass consumption by global audiences, and yet del Toro critiques the authenticity and reality of the mediated image. The self-reflexive use of screens is an acknowledgment of the media industries surrounding the film. Much like the industrial concern of the film industry is to sell a product to a mass audience, the media in *Hellboy II* are determined to capitalize on a breaking story. The news reports transform a complicated, revelatory event, the existence of monsters and their role in a

government defense agency, into a media phenomenon, one that is composed of easily digestible images and, often false, pieces of information.

4.1.3 Screening Classic Monsters

Throughout the film, questions of representation are further complicated by the intertextual references to classic monsters from American horror cinema on screens. Instead of paying homage to or restaging iconic moments from horror films, del Toro incorporates unedited clips directly from the original films into *Hellboy II*. In *Intertextuality: Debates and Contexts* (2003), Mary Orr examines the various links between texts to understand the literary and structural significance of incorporating other texts into a new work. Orr examines the use of quotations in literature as an intertextual connection, writing, “Quotation is therefore the most condensed form of paradigm shift, transmuting the context, form and meaning of the items both inside and outside the quotation marks. It is always enrichment by inclusion, integration and proclamation of otherness, a dialogue not a monologue” (Orr 133). Though Orr’s work primarily focuses on literature, the ideas are applicable to film and the references to classic monsters in *Hellboy II*. Reading these sequences as visual quotations, del Toro juxtaposes his narrative, characters, and depictions of monsters with those of the films previously mentioned. As Orr suggests, he enters into a dialogue with the traditions of horror cinema through his inclusion of these sequences. The cinematic texts shown on Hellboy's television screens connect him with a filmmaking tradition that approaches monstrosity through a distinctly human lens. In the Universal horror films, monsters are a source of fear, but they are routinely depicted as tragic and, sometimes, even human.

In *Hellboy II*, the visual quotation from *The Wolf Man* appears after Hellboy’s fight with the Elemental. As Liz, a human with the ability to generate fire and explosive power with her thoughts and feelings, treats Hellboy’s wounds, a sequence from *The Wolf Man* plays on multiple screens in the foreground (Figure 6: Liz helps Hellboy as television screens play a sequence from the classic monster movie *The Wolf Man* and present news coverage in *Hellboy II*). The sequence depicted on screens features Larry Talbot in werewolf form, attacking Gwen Conliffe. The violence of the visual quotation

is at odds with the tender sequence in Hellboy's living space. On screen, the wolf man attacks the woman he loves, while Hellboy is given medical care by his romantic partner.

In *Universal Horrors*, Tom Weaver, Michael Brunas, and John Brunas explain that Larry Talbot is characterized by a "dual personality" (Weaver, et. al. 265). The authors characterize the werewolf as a division in Larry's identity, explaining that there is a distinction between the goodness of the human side and the violence and evil represented by the monster (Weaver, et. al. 265). Though Larry Talbot may have a dual personality – his human self and the werewolf into which he transforms – the werewolf is depicted as entirely monstrous. As evidenced in the sequence, the wolf man attacks Gwen without hesitation even though his human side is deeply in love with her; the monster has no capacity for humanity. Larry's transformation becomes a loss of self and identity; the werewolf is entirely devoid of Larry's personality. It is compelling to see these characters next to each other: the werewolf on screen and Hellboy in person. Whereas the monster on television is depicted as a singular, corrupting evil, Hellboy's characteristics are more complicated as he is seen in an intimate moment with Liz. Though Hellboy appears on screens much like the wolf man, the monsters are fundamentally different. With the werewolf and other creatures appearing on screen as sources of fear and, often, violence, it is not surprising that the diegetic audiences and spectators in *Hellboy II* fear monsters. The cruelty of the wolf man conflicts with the traits of Hellboy developed throughout the series, but it contextualizes the human response to monsters in the film. With this use of intertextuality on diegetic televisions, del Toro reflects upon the implications of viewership and perception of mediated messages. By presenting Hellboy on screens alongside classic monsters, the film engages audience reception, drawing a parallel between the fear associated with werewolves and vampires and its own hero. In this mediated capacity, the character is defined entirely by his monstrosity.

4.2 *Pacific Rim* and the Monster as Industry

Pacific Rim, del Toro's epic of monsters and robots, is also a major summer blockbuster. Made for Warner Brothers, the film cost \$190 million dollars to produce; to date, the film is his highest budgeted project (*Pacific Rim* boxofficemojo.com). In it, giant monsters called Kaijus come to Earth through an inter-dimensional portal beneath

the Pacific Ocean. To combat this threat of invasion, a multinational response, the Jaeger program, is commissioned to construct robots to fight the aliens. Once the Jaeger program is successful, the Kaijus are transformed from figures of fear to ones of entertainment through commodification. This section will examine the commodification of films – as blockbusters and products in additional industries – and monsters – within the narrative of the film.

Pacific Rim, del Toro's first completely original screenplay in English, makes significant references to *King Kong* (Cooper, 1933) and the *Gojira/Godzilla* (Honda, 1954) franchise. Much as the monsters of the earlier films are presented as diegetic sources of spectacle, *Pacific Rim* continues the tradition of the genre by mediating and merchandizing the monster. The mediated depiction of monsters in *Pacific Rim* will be analyzed in terms of intertextuality, pondering how the monsters are ultimately transformed into commodities as well. Another kind of text also becomes relevant in studies of the film and intertextuality: since the release of the film, a series of graphic novels, beginning with *Pacific Rim: Tales from Year Zero* (Beacham, 2013), has been commissioned to extend the brand and narrative of *Pacific Rim*. The emergence of new texts based on del Toro's film will be analyzed to further contextualize the significance of branding for contemporary Hollywood blockbusters.

4.2.1 Blockbuster Franchising, Merchandising and Branding

In the creation of the Hollywood blockbuster, the role of industry and finance become central considerations influencing the production of a film. The economic factors, including the size of budget and sources of financing, shape the content of the film but also determine how the film is marketed and distributed. Due to the high cost of blockbuster films, both in terms of production and marketing, the films depend on high theatrical grosses in order to turn a profit. Buckland explains that recouping the initial budget or cost of production is no longer enough to be considered a successful blockbuster. He writes, "Film industry analysts generally agree that a film has to make 2.5 times its negative cost in order to break even" (Buckland 19). In this regard, a blockbuster's high gross is not a guaranteed measure of financial success. Using Buckland's formula and considering its \$190 million budget, *Pacific Rim* would then

need to earn at least \$475 million in order to simply break even. In reality, though, this was not the case for the film. Earning only \$101 million, approximately half of the film's production budget, at the domestic box office, *Pacific Rim* does not meet the criteria introduced by Buckland. When the film's foreign box office is added, \$309 million, the total gross now reaches \$410 million, but it still falls short of the target \$475 million break-even point (*Pacific Rim* boxofficemojo.com).

In "Following the Money in America's Sunniest Company Town", Jon Lewis studies the rise of journalism surrounding box office figures. He explains that many contemporary blockbusters are made with the intention to make sequels, earning the studios and financiers additional possible returns on their investments. Lewis writes, "Blockbusters are positioned within the larger film marketplace through 'sequelization'" (Lewis 66). With the possibility of sequels, studios are able to build audience awareness and possibly create more fans, or more accurately customers, before another installment is released. Though it was not an overwhelming success upon its initial release in theatres, a sequel, *Pacific Rim II*, is in pre-production and scheduled for release in August 2017 (*Pacific Rim II* boxofficemojo.com).⁷ As Buckland notes, since the early 1990's there has been a significant increase in franchising films, creating additional sales and merchandising opportunities (Buckland 19). If a blockbuster becomes a franchise, sequels are made and it is possible to extend the narrative experience of the film while also expanding revenue.

Beyond global theatrical grosses, blockbusters have the possibility of creating products, and potential customers, beyond movie theatres. In "The New Hollywood", Thomas Schatz chronicles the rise of the blockbuster and the impact it has had on narrative content and studio business models. He explains that blockbusters can inspire the creation of new works to be purchased by audiences. He writes, "...a film's theatrical release, with its attendant media exposures, creates a cultural commodity that might be

⁷ The most current information available on *Pacific Rim II* at the time of writing this chapter has been included. As the production of films rely upon many interdependent factors, both financial and creative, it is important to note that this information is subject to change.

regenerated in any number of media forms” (Schatz 35). In addition to the film itself, the blockbuster presents possibilities for merchandising and additional grosses.

The process of regeneration, creating new products based on a specific property, is relevant to analysis of the monster in *Pacific Rim*. In order to examine how merchandizing manifests itself in the film’s narrative, it is first important to identify the varied forms of commodification typically associated with the blockbuster. In *Brand Hollywood: Selling Entertainment in a Global Media Age* (2008), Paul Grainge asserts that the financial pressures surrounding the profitability of blockbusters have necessitated the creation of additional products connected to the release of the film. He writes, “In economic terms, film has become less important as a discrete commodity than as a brand platform that can be transfigured across industries and cultural fields” (Grainge 52-53). As Grainge explains, these new products can be as diverse as toys, books, attractions, video games, and even fast food; he contends that these items are important in developing a recognizable brand for a film or franchise (Grainge 53).

Though the act of merchandising is intricately bound to finance and industry, the items created have a unique connection to the source material. In “‘Holy Commodity Fetish, Batman!’ The Political Economy of the Commercial Intertext”, Eileen Meehan analyzes the media presence of the character of Batman following its theatrical release. With appearances in advertising, music, and merchandise, Meehan explains that the industry surrounding the character of Batman, and ultimately supporting the release of the film, are significant texts to analyze in terms of content and financial relevance. She writes:

This deluge of material has generated a complex web of cross references as the major text, *Batman*, ricochets back in cultural memory to Bob Kane’s original vision of a caped vigilante, then up to the more recent dystopian *Dark Knight Return*, with ironic references to the camp Crusader of television and all the intervening Bat-texts. This web of cross references creates an intertext into which we fit ourselves, positioning ourselves to construct different readings of the film and positioning the film and its intertext to suit our own particular purposes (Meehan 313).

Meehan suggests that the merchandized products and various media appearances of Batman represent a form of intertextuality. The financial imperatives driving merchandising create various works and texts that reference and even extend the narrative of the source text. Materials created in the process of merchandising are then relevant when evaluating the intertextual nature of the blockbuster.

4.2.2 Narrating Merchandizing in *Pacific Rim*

In the opening sequence of *Pacific Rim*, del Toro introduces a world on the brink of complete collapse as monsters, Kaijus, emerge from the Pacific Ocean to destroy major cities. With the development and (temporary) success of the Jaeger program, fear of the Kaijus dissipates around the globe and they are transformed into commodities. Because of the success of the human response, the narrative surrounding the Kaiju changes. The protagonist of *Pacific Rim* explains in the opening sequence, “Jaeger pilots turned into rock stars. Danger turned into propaganda. Kaijus into toys” (*Pacific Rim*). This sequence functions as a kind of narrative reenactment of the franchising, merchandising and branding which extend the potential sources of revenue for many contemporary blockbusters to external industries. By beginning *Pacific Rim* with the commodification of monsters and past traumas, del Toro presents an industry at work, one that is based on finance, promotion, and merchandise. The film begins with a self-reflexive statement, blatantly addressing the financial and industrial concerns of the film industry. Before any of the protagonists are introduced, many of the forms of promotion and streams of revenue designed for a film of this size are represented in the diegesis. The merchandizing of the Kaiju in many ways echoes the merchandizing that has become implicit in the marketing and production of contemporary blockbusters.

The process of commodification is important within the context of the narrative of *Pacific Rim*. The Kaiju is rebranded in the opening of the film; rather than a harbinger of death and destruction, the monster is transformed into an enjoyable distraction. When its threat subsides, what was once a source of terror and danger becomes a source of entertainment. In the sequence, a montage depicts the shifting cultural attitudes toward the years of trauma and tragedy caused by the Kaiju: the remains of a creature are exhibited in a museum, Jaegers and their pilots are featured on magazine covers and talk

shows, performers in elaborate Kaiju costumes are shown on international gameshows, shoes and video games are designed and branded based on Kaijus and children play with Kaiju action figures (Figure 7: A child is shown playing with Kaiju action figures in the opening montage of *Pacific Rim*). Much like a kind of global coping mechanism, the monster becomes a form of entertainment and is embraced by popular culture; the monsters are now acceptable for public consumption.

Jeffrey Jerome Cohen explains that the tension between fear and entertainment is implicit in the monster. He writes, “The monster is continually linked to forbidden practices, in order to normalize and to enforce. The monster also attracts. The same creatures who terrify and interdict can evoke potent escapist fantasies; the linking of monstrosity with the forbidden makes the monster all the more appealing as a temporary egress from constraint” (Cohen “Culture” 16-17). The process of normalization addressed by Cohen is at work in the opening of *Pacific Rim*; the threat of the Kaiju is transformed into an enjoyable, and marketable, spectacle. Instead of eliciting feelings of horror and dread, the Kaijus are refigured into cathartic trans-media experiences. Through commodification, people are able to interact with the monster in a non-threatening capacity: they are able to watch television, buy toys or go to museums. By rebranding the creatures as forms of entertainment, they become an acceptable part of everyday life.

4.2.3 The Monster as Intertextual Commodity

Representing the commodification of the Kaijus also establishes a connection between del Toro’s film and classic monsters of film history: specifically King Kong and Godzilla. In both of these films, the monster is presented to the public in the most immediate and accessible forms of mass distribution, making use of the available technology of the time. In *King Kong*, the giant ape is shipped to New York City where it is cruelly put on display on a Broadway stage; King Kong is chained and presented for the amusement of paying audiences. An elaborate, but vague marketing campaign is employed to bring audiences to the theatre nightly; though the monster is never described or depicted in any of the marketing materials, a sense of spectacle is built around the claim of King Kong as a “Wonder of the World”. In the film, spectacle is made a direct commodity. Interestingly, it is not a representation or image of King Kong that is

transformed into a commodity, rather it is the actual creature that audiences are paying to see at the show “King Kong: Eighth Wonder of the World.” The monster is made a spectacle to be sold to the largest possible audiences, but in the 1933 film, it is not made into a toy like the Kaiju of *Pacific Rim*; the monster itself is merchandized.

The monster as media spectacle is also a trope explored in Ishiro Honda’s classic film *Gojira/Godzilla*. In it, a giant, reptilian creature from deep beneath the ocean attacks 1950’s Japan. As McDonald and Clark suggest, del Toro’s Kaijus are influenced by the popular film and its subsequent franchise. The authors explain, “Honda’s film... inaugurates the Kaiju monster tradition in Japanese film and del Toro acknowledges his debt by calling his own monsters in *Pacific Rim Kaiju*” (McDonald and Clark 196-97). While *Pacific Rim* continues the legacy of *Godzilla* in the appearance and design of its creatures, the films also approach contemporary mass media similarly. In *Godzilla*, news stories about the monster and its attacks across Japan appear in newspapers which are shown on screen and incorporated into the narrative of the film. The creature is mediated, appearing across the pages and headlines of major publications. Niamh Thornton explains in her article “*Pacific Rim*: Reception, Readings, and Authority” that del Toro’s presentation of the Kaijus in global television news broadcasts is inspired by the use of newspapers in *Godzilla*. She writes, “The use of mass media in *Pacific Rim* is integral to the geek auteurist aesthetic and narrative approach. *Gojira* frequently uses newspaper headlines to narrate plot developments or the scientist’s reactions to assessments of unfolding events” (Thornton 128). She further contends that the TV screens in *Pacific Rim* replace the newspapers of *Godzilla* to provide additional narrative context (Thornton 129). Thus, even if the mediated mode of representation and distribution differs in each film, the monster is still presented as a spectacle through the lens of various forms of media. This use of media simultaneously extends the narrative to include events or images outside of the immediate setting while also grounding the film, in the case of del Toro’s, within the familiar format of television news: the broadcasts add a sense of realism to the fantastical elements of science-fiction.

4.2.4 Merchandise and Intertextuality

In addition to the diegetic intertextuality of the monster as commodity and mediated spectacle, *Pacific Rim* has inspired the creation of an array of texts following its release. These works function as industrial intertextuality, extending the narrative and world to other sources beyond the film itself and potentially introducing new audiences to the original blockbuster. One of the most prominent texts inspired by *Pacific Rim* is the graphic novel *Pacific Rim: Tales from Year Zero*. The novel functions much like a prequel in that it positions characters from *Pacific Rim* in events years before the film is set, while also providing additional narrative context for the development of the Jaeger program.

Though the graphic novel features Guillermo del Toro as a supervising editor, it is primarily written by the film's co-screenwriter, Travis Beacham. In his introduction to the text, Beacham explores the relationship between the film and the novel. He characterizes the film as only a small part of the overarching *Pacific Rim* universe. Beacham writes:

This was, and is, much of the lasting fun of working on *Pacific Rim* – not just inventing and falling in love with these characters or fantasizing about god-like battles between sky-scraping machines and hellish behemoths, but also imaging the world a decade of giant monster attacks would create. What that meant in practice was building volumes upon volumes of supplemental information. We all knew we probably wouldn't even use most of this narrative "dark matter" in the movie and our awareness of it would nevertheless inform the unseen weight of this universe. We've always known that the film was but one story in a whole world of possible stories (Beacham).

Beacham's description of the storytelling process and the construction of a fictional world highlights the wealth of material which has been conceptualized but not yet used. Though this is likely true, it also functions as a kind of authorial stamp of approval on additional merchandizing efforts. Future materials may now point back to this statement to claim narrative legitimacy or authenticity even if the sole reason for the production of the text is to generate merchandizing dollars. It is little surprise, then, that plans are already in place to continue the graphic novel series: Lussier reports that the next

installment in the series, *Pacific Rim: Tales from the Drift*, is scheduled for release in November of 2015 (Lussier slashfilm.com). With this continuation of the series, it is apparent that the commodification of the monster extends beyond the narrative of *Pacific Rim* to the branding and merchandizing of the developing franchise.

4.3 Conclusion

As Hollywood blockbusters, *Hellboy II: The Golden Army* and *Pacific Rim* are influenced by the financial and industrial contexts of production, distribution and merchandizing. Each film was made as, or has become, part of a franchise due to the economic realities that shape content produced by studios. The pressures of profitability and appeal have permeated the films' thematic concerns and representations of monsters: the creatures are transformed into media spectacles or commodities to be sold to mass audiences. Whether spectacle or commodity, the identity or individuality of the monster becomes secondary to the industrial machinations of the media or the business endeavors of various industries. Del Toro achieves this by positioning his monsters, and other iconic horror movie monsters, on diegetic screens within the film and by showing the evolution of fear into entertainment commodities in the narrative. Through screening the monster and the processes of commodification, del Toro enters into a dialogue with the traditions of classic movie monsters, while simultaneously critiquing the financial realities of blockbuster culture and the American film industry.

The industrial discourses present in *Hellboy II: The Golden Army* and *Pacific Rim* inform the representations of monstrosity in the films, much like the discourses of familiarity and nation examined in previous chapters. Whether the monster is staged in an intimate narrative or as an epic spectacle, it is connected to human contexts. Throughout his filmography, del Toro has used monsters as a significant narrative tool to explore the dynamics of various social groups and organizational systems. Del Toro's transnational perspective and frequent use of intertextuality also emerge as defining characteristics in the figure and identity of the monster. In the conclusion of this thesis, the interaction between texts, cultures and discourses will be reflected upon.

Conclusion

5 Reflections on Monstrosity

This thesis has examined representations of monstrosity through the lens of a single auteur, Guillermo del Toro. From the intimacy of his early productions to the spectacle and scale of his most recent blockbusters, my analysis has used the chronological release of his films as a framing device to study representations of monstrosity. Though the narrative context shifts between films, the monsters are consistently informed by transnational discourses and intertextual references. To establish the contexts necessary for this analysis, the first chapter of my thesis reviewed research on transnational cinema, intertextuality and monstrosity: in each section, the key definitions were introduced and then situated within the context of del Toro, his films and his monsters.

In Chapter Two: “Familiar Monsters”, the intimate, personal context of the narrative and the monster were studied. With analysis focusing on *Cronos*, *Mimic* and *The Devil’s Backbone*, this chapter examined the intentional relationship between humanity and monstrosity created by del Toro. Rather than assigning ‘othering’ labels or characteristics to the monsters, he firmly situates them within the personal and social contexts of the human characters, ultimately positioning the central creature/s as the result of human actions. Following trends in scholarship on monstrosity, this chapter ultimately positioned the intimate, interpersonal narrative in relation to the broader societal implications of the monster: in this regard, they take on greater cultural and political significance.

The third chapter of this thesis, “National Monsters” explored the connection between monstrosity and discourses on nation in *Blade II*, *Hellboy* and *Pan’s Labyrinth*. Within each film, thematic concerns about the nation become intertwined with those of the monster: the dynamics of community and the power of systems of authority inform the characteristics of the creature. Whether it is a nation of vampires or the imagination of a child, the realities of corrupt national systems expose a direct connection between humankind and the monster. The monster becomes a narrative tool to criticize the

workings of the nation within each story. In the creation of these narratives, del Toro utilizes intertextual references and his own perspective as a transnational auteur to destabilize the authority and centrality of the idea of nation.

In the fourth chapter “Commodity Monsters”, the monsters of *Hellboy II: The Golden Army* and *Pacific Rim* were analyzed in relation to the industrial context surrounding the production and release of both films. The implications of contemporary blockbuster cinema can be seen in them as both are expensive, summer releases produced by major American studios: accordingly, there is a great deal of pressure for the films to perform financially and reach global audiences. Del Toro addresses the financial and industrial realities of blockbusters by incorporating them self-reflexively into the narrative of the monster. In each film, the creatures are presented as diegetic media spectacle: they are depicted in television broadcasts or as merchandized commodities to be bought and sold. With this treatment of the monster, del Toro comments on the commercial realities surrounding high-profile studio releases while intertextually engaging the contexts of other cinematic monsters.

5.1 The Monster and del Toro

In each of these chapters, del Toro’s representations of monstrosity are consistently framed within human contexts. In the first chapter of this thesis, I referenced Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock’s article “Invisible Monsters: Vision, Horror, and Contemporary Culture”: in it, he explores the link between monsters and culture. He positions humanity as the author of monstrosity. Though Weinstock’s work addresses a wide array of contemporary fiction – including a mention of *Hellboy* as a sympathetic monster (Weinstock 279) – the central thesis of his work is pertinent to this study of del Toro. He writes, “We inevitably make our own monsters with the ingredients we have on hand, so the recipe keeps changing...The implications of the shifting social constructions of ideas of monstrosity are particularly significant when one bears in mind that what is monstrous is always defined in relation to what is human” (Weinstock 275). Weinstock’s analysis is directly applicable to the films of del Toro as the director uses monsters in a self-reflexive capacity: to expose the various motivations, anxieties and fears of an individual or a culture. Though the narrative, national and industrial contexts change,

monstrosity is consistently anchored both within discourses of transnational cinema and references to intertextual sources in his films. It is in these contexts, or “ingredients” to use Weinstock’s terminology, that del Toro situates his monsters.

Using transnational cinema and intertextuality as the primary theoretical concepts organizing my analysis, this thesis extends pre-existing scholarship which has examined del Toro and his films. As I have noted throughout this project, recent research has analyzed the director and the transnational and intertextual components of his oeuvre, but my work has sought to position the monster as a unique narrative element simultaneously focusing on both these aspects. Authors have studied del Toro as a transnational figure or have identified intertextual elements in his films, but as this thesis has explored, the monsters of his films comfortably occupy both transnational and intertextual spheres. My reading combines the two ideas and focuses on monstrosity as a sustained form of critical and cultural inquiry across his oeuvre.

By moving chronologically through his films, this thesis illustrates the significance of the monster in each text while acknowledging the shifting production contexts – both national and industrial – that have shaped his authorial perspective and the content of his films. As del Toro navigates different modes of financing, production and distribution, representations of monstrosity are inevitably affected. From *Cronos* to *Pacific Rim*, the scope – and size – of the monsters depicted has changed in large part due to the evolving industrial realities of the films. The tagline of *Pacific Rim*, “Go Big or Go Extinct”, almost doubles as a meta-narrative for the often expanding budgets and productions that characterize the director’s most recent works.

5.2 Areas in Need of Further Analysis

In my research of monstrosity in del Toro’s oeuvre, I have found a significant amount of literature – in the form of articles, reviews, and other news sources – regarding del Toro in both English and Spanish. I have worked with only English language sources for this thesis. In future research, it is my intention to further develop my reading comprehension in Spanish so that I may include an even more widespread array of sources in an effort to further explore additional perspectives.

A number of choices were made to focus and structure my analysis, first among them was to only analyze completed films directed by del Toro. Though the decision provides a clear body of work to consider, it, however, also excludes a number of projects in which the director is centrally involved. Although his authorship extends beyond film, this thesis did not address the monsters of del Toro's works of literature and television. To date, he has co-authored a popular series of vampire novels known as *The Strain Trilogy* – *The Strain* (del Toro and Hogan 2009), *The Fall* (del Toro and Hogan 2010) and *The Night Eternal* (del Toro and Hogan 2011) – and, since their initial printing, the books have been adapted to television: the second season of *The Strain* (2014-present) is currently airing on FX: the series – both novel and television – prominently feature vampires much like the Reapers of *Blade II*. The texts and monsters, however, require more attention than a section of a chapter. Possible areas of analysis include situating del Toro as auteur of page and screen, tracing the image of the vampire across all of his assorted works, and positioning the differing industrial contexts of film and television.

In addition to his projects in literature and television, del Toro has worked extensively as a producer. His role in the production of films from new or up-and-coming directors has become a significant component in the marketing of these works. For example, the release of the Spanish horror film *El orfanato/The Orphanage* (Bayona 2007) was promoted using del Toro's name (*The Orphanage* amazon.com): marketing materials and ancillary products, including the Blu-ray release of the film in the United States, featured the phrase "Guillermo del Toro Presents" (Figure 8: Del Toro's name appears on the Blu-ray release of *The Orphanage*). Though he did not direct or write the film, del Toro's name, his brand, became an important component in the distribution and sale of the film. It would be worthwhile to further analyze del Toro's role as a producer of genre cinema to examine how the monsters of these films enter into a dialogue with creatures featured in his own directorial efforts.

Also of interest in studies about del Toro is the role of fan cultures surrounding the director and his films. With the rise of social media and other forums that encourage the growth of fan communities, fans are able to interact with each other and also with the people responsible for creating and distributing the content they enjoy. Though del Toro

himself is not active on social media, his films and speculation pertaining to future projects are popular topics on many online platforms. Ethan Anderton reports that as recently as June 2015, *Hellboy III*, a project without the backing of a major studio or a formal release date, was widely discussed by fans on social media websites following online statements by *Hellboy* actor, Ron Pearlman (Anderton slashfilm.com). Social media has also served as an effective method for promoting upcoming releases, including del Toro's forthcoming English language horror film, *Crimson Peak* (2015). On March 16, 2015, acclaimed horror author Stephen King tweeted praise for the film: "Was treated to a screening of Guillermo del Toro's new movie, CRIMSON PEAK, this weekend. Gorgeous and just (...) terrifying" (King Twitter). Though not an official piece of the film's marketing, the tweet serves as a high-profile endorsement from a celebrity fan, one with a great deal of currency for genre fans. It will be interesting to see if this acclaim for the film, from a respected figure in horror literature, is integrated into later promotional materials. An industrial analysis of online fan cultures could examine the role these groups have in shaping del Toro's various brands and influencing authorial content, while also addressing the interaction between film and new media.

The additional areas of inquiry that I have briefly introduced are only a few of the possibilities for future studies on del Toro and monstrosity. With prominent discourses of transnational cinema and intertextuality informing the various works authored or produced by the director, the opportunities for further analysis seem unending. As del Toro releases future films, the evolving image of the monster will continue to be a source of fascination and scholarship.

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- Frankenstein*. Dir. James Whale. Perf. Boris Karloff and Colin Clive. Universal Pictures, 1931. Blu-ray.

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Mimic. Dir. Guillermo del Toro. Perf. Mira Sorvino and Jeremy Northam. Dimension Films, 1997. Blu-ray.

Nosferatu. Dir. F. W. Murnau. Perf. Max Schreck. Walking Shadows, 1922. DVD.

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Pacific Rim. Dir. Guillermo del Toro. Perf. Charlie Hunnam and Rinko Kikuchi. Warner Brothers, 2013. Blu-ray.

The Strain. Dir. Guillermo del Toro, et. al. Perf. Corey Stoll and Mía Maestro. FX. 2014 – present. Television.

The Wolf Man. Dir. George Waggner. Perf. Lon Chaney Jr., Evelyn Ankers, and Claude Rains. Universal Pictures, 1941. Blu-ray.

Curriculum Vitae

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Master of Arts: Film Studies
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