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The Other Side of Burton: a reappraisal of the Outsider in *The Melancholy Death of Oyster Boy & Other Stories*

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Abstract:

This essay is aimed at analysing the figure of the Other, also known as Outsider, in one of the most significant literary works by Tim Burton: *The Melancholy Death of Oyster Boy & Other Stories* (1997). We will consider monstrosity as a performative as well as a symbolic trait of the identity of the outsider (rather than a negative feature), reappraising his/her role in a society marked by social conventions and the imposition of limitations according to standards and prejudices. In this context, Burton is aware of the potential relevance of the outsider within society and decides to spread his/her voice, silenced for a long time, by making readers reflect upon the real condition of this character in an attempt to integrate him/her in society. The succession of illustrations alongside the analysis of the multiple poems will help readers to compile general information about the different representations of the outsider and, at the same time, sympathise with these hopeful yet hapless beings, generating attraction and leaving aside any kind of opposition or rejection. Finally, connected with the outsider's marked physicality, different allusions to the burtonesque representation of the eyes will be introduced, giving prominence to their hidden symbolism and how they are portrayed in some of the illustrations drawn by Burton himself.

Key words: other, outsider, monstrosity, identity, society, sympathy, attraction, opposition, eyes, symbolism, integration.

Resumen:

El objetivo de este trabajo es analizar la figura del ‘Otro’, también conocido como ‘Outsider’ (inadaptado social), en uno de los trabajos literarios más significativos de Tim Burton: *La Melancólica Muerte del Chico Ostra y Otras Historias* (1997). Para este propósito, se considerará la monstruosidad como una característica tanto performativa como simbólica de la identidad del ‘outsider’ (más que un rasgo negativo), reevaluando su papel en una sociedad marcada por las convenciones sociales y la imposición de limitaciones de acuerdo con los convencionalismos y prejuicios. En este contexto, Burton es consciente de la relevancia del potencial del outsider dentro de la sociedad y decide impostar su voz, silenciada durante mucho tiempo, haciendo a los lectores cómplices de la reflexión sobre la verdadera condición de este personaje en un intento de integrarlo definitivamente en la sociedad. La sucesión de ilustraciones junto con el análisis de los poemas ayudará a los lectores a recopilar información general sobre las diferentes representaciones del outsider y, al mismo tiempo, permitirá empatizar con estos seres, a la vez prometedores y desafortunados, generando atracción y dejando de lado cualquier tipo de oposición o rechazo. Finalmente, entroncado con la singular fisicidad del ‘Outsider’, se hará referencia a la representación burtoniana de los ojos en el citado poemario, enfatizando su simbolismo oculto y analizando cómo se plasman en algunas de las ilustraciones realizadas por el propio Burton.

Palabras clave: ‘Otro’, ‘Outsider’ (inadaptado social), monstruosidad, identidad, sociedad, simpatía, atracción, oposición, ojos, simbolismo, integración.

1. Introduction: the concept of the Other in Tim Burton:

From his first works as a Disney animator, Tim Burton has become one of the most representative directors of the Twenty-first century. Wherever you go, you may hear references to this versatile figure: producer, screenwriter, illustrator, and, even poetry writer, as we will unveil later on. His number of followers is constantly increasing and the great majority of his films have become very popular among generations, marking a significant change in the conception of film industry.

Most of you may know Tim Burton, but what are the elements that contribute to make his works appealing to a huge number of people? Is there a sense of identification on the part of the audience with the weird characters he presents? If so, can these characters be integrated in society or not?

What is clearly evident is that Burton introduces characters that transcend the limits of the so-called normal reality, exploring the psychological side of those who can be considered shadows in the light of the ordinary life or outsiders from a social point of view. But, what can be Burton's hidden intention in doing that? How can characters such as a corpse bride, a man with scissorhands or an ostrich boy be so close to us even though they are not physically associated with the common human being?

In order to give answers to these questions, it is necessary to begin with a cardinal idea, that of the other or outsider, term applied to a large number of characters (but not all of them) created by Burton which will be defined paying attention to its historical and philosophical background as well as its role from a literary and artistic point of view.

The presentation of multiple ideas related to otherness will lead us to show its presence in Tim Burton's world, and this general point of departure will finally connect with the different notions presented in one of his major literary works exemplifying this concept: *The Melancholy Death of the Oyster Boy & Other Stories*, published in 1997.

We have chosen this work because Burton builds up a clear portrait of the Other in the shape of characters with diverse de-familiarized features such as a girl with many eyes, a toxic boy, a junk girl and so on. By means of these peculiar actants and the so called literary device of defamiliarization, Burton shows a depiction of the Outsider within the familiar frame in an attempt to integrate him in society. Nonetheless, can he really be integrated or not? Burton's characters are merely dysfunctional archetypes, in other words, they are not capable of

accomplishing with the role assigned by society. They reflect social misfits and those who, living in the everyday routine, transgress the normal side of the circle surrounding them. This is the reason why they live in the margins of society, accepted but not completely integrated, and at the same time, representing the voice of the unknown because they enhance the potentiality of diversity.

Furthermore, as He and Magliozzi state (2009: 21-22), “Burton’s archetypes help to define his personal vision of the world”. Two significant archetypes are, for example, the flawed father and the misunderstood outcast. The father, as in the case of *Edward Scissorhands* (1990), is portrayed as an intangible figure projected by means of flashbacks, dreams or hallucinations belonging to Edward’s mind, the outsider’s projections.

1.1. What is Otherness?

To begin with, it is necessary to provide a definition for Otherness so as to understand its relevance in Tim Burton’s works. An important idea to take into account is that there is not a single definition for the concept has a long tradition and is present in so many philosophers, sociologists, psychologists or even writers, who have contributed to spread the horizons of this undoubtedly broad notion.

Thorough history, the term “Other” has played an important role from a philosophical and sociological point of view. It was during the times of Plato when this notion was initially used by the Sophists with the intention of discussing issues which were closely associated with ontological problems such as the distinction between being and non-being or the One and the Other.

In the twentieth century, Plato’s discussion about ontology and alterity can be exemplified in the work of Emmanuel Levinas, a French philosopher who opened the door to the research into “Otherness”. For him, as Herve Corvellec states (2005:2), it is “our potential to open ourselves toward the Other, without setting any demand nor condition, commanding not only our possibility to grow an ethical relationship but even our mere being human beings”. Other relevant authors who have researched about the concept are Hegel and Sartre. The latter made use of alterity so as to study in depth the existence of the self through the eyes of the other (2005:126). Hence, he established that “Otherness” can be found in every daily life situations through elements such as tolerance, sympathy and rejection.

Nowadays, the question of the Other continues fascinating a large number of philosophers, giving rise to numerous questions, such as the following: what are the boundaries between the Other and the Self? Is there an absolute Other, and if so, how does it affect our personal identity?

Leaving aside the controversial issues, how can otherness be currently defined? According to the Oxford English Dictionary, “otherness” makes reference to “the quality or fact of being different”¹. From a social point of view, it is evident that “otherness” can be constructed through alterity and opposition, two notions that go hand in hand.

With regard to alterity, Clive Hazell (2009:17) defines it as “the state or quality of being other, or of not being of the self”. This philosophical principle supports the idea of placing yourself in the place of the Other, alternating your perspectives with those related to the latter; in other words, alterity is based on mutual understanding, promoting dialogues and agreements on the basis that everybody plays an important role in society from an active point of view.

Opposition, on the other hand, can imply a sense of rejection, normally taking place when an individual is perceived as not belonging to a group, which considers itself the standard and starts to judge those who do not meet those primary conditions and, therefore, do not belong to their group. This is the reason why when analysing the concept of the Other, notions such as race, gender, culture, religion, sexual orientation, physicality, nationality or social class are equally essential; in essence, this binary relationship between attraction and opposition constitutes a particular image of the Other depending on the eyes of the person who is perceiving it or perceived².

Thorough history, different scientists and scholars have tried to define the concept of the Other, basing their approaches on multiple fields such as psychology, neurology or psychoanalysis. The implication of these fields for analysing the conception of the Other implicates a solid difficulty for providing a single definition. Below, we will consider different positions from a psychical point of view. An interesting vision of the Other was

¹ Oxford English Dictionary. 2015 <www.oed.com> (last accessed: 3/06/15).

² This idea can be found in Baumeister, R. & Finkel, E. 2009, “Attraction and Rejection” in *Advanced social psychology*. New York: Oxford University Press.

proposed by French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan in his well-known “mirror stage” theory³, a critical reinterpretation of the works carried out by Sigmund Freud.

In this context, Lacan claims that human infants, in their earlier stages of life, experience a particular moment in which an external image of their bodies (reflected by means of a mirror or their mothers), produces an emotional effect on them, giving rise to the mental representation of the “I”. This individualized image or imago (a meaningful form) is established as an “ideal I” that will constitute an important part of these individuals thorough their lives.

As a result, the ego is not an independent psychic instance but it heavily depends on external objects that constitute the Other. The images that human beings have with respect to the environments surrounding them contribute to the development of their psyche, by means of which there is a process of identification: the infant is transformed according to the vision of his image.

On the other hand, it is important to note that the “mirror stage” can point the development of the ego following a fictional direction, in other words, if we consider life as our own story, we become characters in it, playing the role of protagonists of our autobiographies. This illusion is used during infant stage as a way of overcoming ideas such as bodily fragmentation and powerlessness.

Leaving aside the concept of otherness from a psychic point of view, we should concentrate on its predominance in the world of art by pointing out its particular and quite evident functions and providing an example of a Japanese author, Ayaka Yamamoto, who is very representative when linking the idea of women and Otherness, providing an instance of the multiple links that this term has with respect to other fields.

For a long time, art has played an active role in the construction of the Other, trying to give answers to diverse questions such as: Who do we fear or hide from? Why do differences divide us? Or even, how can we overpass assumptions and stereotypes so as to appreciate our humanity and accept our distinctive traits?

³ Lemaire, A. & Macey, D. 1979 [1970], *Jacques Lacan*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd. p. 178

The notion of otherness, although clearly associated with sociology, has been represented in art in so many ways and following countless perspectives. According to Simone de Beauvoir⁴, “the category of the other is as primordial as consciousness itself. In the most primitive of societies, in the most ancient mythologies one finds the expression of a duality – that of the Self and the Other”.

This fact reflects the necessity of looking for ways of representing the Other in art because it has existed since primitive times and continues existing nowadays in our society. Its value constitutes the identity of the human being and can be even a tool for exploring, as mentioned above, social issues, gender, cultural identity or social adaptation. One particular example can be found in the portraits of the aforementioned Ayaka Yamamoto. This photographer introduces images of female characters so as to analyze the female body as form and examine the difficulty of comprehending one's existence. In this sense, he decided to photograph women who came from other countries, representing the hardships they have to go through when adapting to the society of a new country, and even, to communicate fully as well as to work with people that are physically different from them.

As Yamamoto puts it, there is a clear presence of otherness in his portraits. Anonymous women are depicted with neutral attires, deprived of personality but showing a clear conflict between the Self (represented by the visual image, their own identity) and the Other (the society to which they have emigrated and has its own standards).

On the other hand, in spite of the semi-nudity of some of the women, he shows the intention to turn the female form into being, assuming the salience of feminist discourse about the gendered gaze and redundant power relationships. In this regard, Yamamoto tries to explain her own existence by photographing the Other.⁵

This idea shows that the contemplation of the Other can have a potential influence on the construction of society and the Self. It moves society, or even a particular individual, to act in a particular manner. For instance, the Other in a society or the individual who is perceived by

⁴ For further information, check: De Beauvoir, S. 1949, “Woman as Other”. In *The Second Sex* <<https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/ethics/de-beauvoir/2nd-sex/introduction.htm>> (last accessed: 15 Jun. 2015).

⁵ Ayaka Yamamoto stands out in contemporary art, especially in the exhibitions shown at the Taka Ishi Gallery. He depicts, in most of his self-portraits, the notion of otherness applied to categories such as genre or identity. Source: Tran, J. 2014, “It's otherness that helps define self”, in *The Japan Times Culture*. (link in the bibliography).

the group as being different may have few or no legal rights, may be considered immoral or even sub-human, inferior to the rest of human beings.



An untitled image from Ayaka Yamamoto's solo show "Nous n'irons plus au bois" (2013) / courtesy of Taka Ishii Gallery photography/ Film.

In addition, the Other can be used in art to represent the plurality and diversity of cultures and ideologies. A concrete example can be found in the art of authors such as Matisse, Picasso or Derain, who discovered the so-called negro-art, giving birth to primitivism. Its invention, concretely at the beginning of the 20th century, arises from a new relationship with the other in the field of Art. From now on, it starts to deal with political issues such as colonialism or decolonization, offering the possibility of reflecting, as Jean-François Staszak states, on the "relationship of the West and the Other" (2004: 2).

By means of art, people can appreciate the "other" cultures (their diversity, themes, motifs, and so on). The capacity to create manifestations of art gives shape to a particular criterion that differentiates human beings from animals. For this reason, there is a change of view of western society on primitive people because they recognise them as being able to produce masterpieces that represent their own culture and identity. For instance, tribal art accounts for countless representative pieces from an ethnological point of view.

Apart from that, nowadays, the concept of the Other has an enormous cultural and social burden. According to Staszak, it is a construction derived from the discursive process within a given society:

Otherness is the result of a discursive process by which a dominant in-group (“Us”, the Self) constructs one or many dominated out-groups (“Them”, the Other) by stigmatizing a difference - real or imagined - presented as a negation of identity and thus a motive for potential discrimination. To state it naïvely, difference belongs to the realm of fact and otherness belongs to the realm of discourse. Thus, biological sex is difference, whereas gender is otherness. (2008:2)

In the analysis of the notion of otherness, identity plays a fundamental role. Whereas dichotomies associated with this concept (which can be found in every day situation) are natural, social identities are not because they depend on the social order organized with respect to hierarchies, as Andrew Okolie points out:

Social identities are relational; groups typically define themselves in relation to others. This is because identity has little meaning without the “other”. So, by defining itself a group defines others. Identity is rarely claimed or assigned for its own sake. These definitions of self and others have purposes and consequences. They are tied to rewards and punishment, which may be material or symbolic. There is usually an expectation of gain or loss as a consequence of identity claims. This is why identities are contested. Power is implicated here, and because groups do not have equal powers to define both *self* and the *other*. (2003:44)

As we have shown, otherness is a wide concept which requires a long theoretical framework so as to understand its functions, comprising areas such as philosophy (with Plato, Emmanuel Levinas, Hegel and Sartre); psychology, neurology and psychoanalysis (Freud and Lacan); sociology (Simone de Beauvoir); art (Ayaka Yamamoto, Matisse, Picasso, Derain); and ethnography, among others. However, how can this concept be incorporated in the world of cinema and literature? The answer is Tim Burton and his well-known *Outsider* as the materialization of the Other included in most of his works.

1.2. Delimitation and functions of the Other in Tim Burton's works:

First of all, it is important to postulate the following question: what are the delimitations and functions of the Other in Tim Burton's world? To give a proper answer, we have decided to focus our attention on his films. The reason why we have analysed them lies on the fact that they are a perfect representation of the Other in our current society, enhancing his de-familiarized features in order to promote a sense of attraction, as mentioned previously.

With regard to his filmography, Burton is the director of the feature films *Vincent* (1982), *Frankenweenie* (1984), *Edward Scissorhands* (1990) and *Corpse Bride* (2005). He is also the author of other well-known films, but these are the most representative when referring to the concept of the Outsider. From now onwards, we will use the term Outsider instead of Other because it is one of the most used and widespread in the world of Tim Burton.

Following its representation in Burton's works, the outsider has become the archetypal hero and can be defined as a social misfit, a person who lives beyond the limits of the familiar or social system. Although this person can be accepted by society, he is not integrated within a particular community or group. Furthermore, he is also a strange and different character who tends to have problems if he tries to occupy a definite position in society, showing Burton's worries in his adolescence (for instance, those related to the sense of displacement), as Javier Figuero states (2012: 9-10):

De pequeño, Burton vivió aislado, encerrado en su habitación, donde veía películas de terror y dibujaba seres monstruosos. De mayor, él siempre se ha considerado un director ajeno a la industria de Hollywood: forma parte de ese entramado cinematográfico pero se siente extraño en él. Hablando de los directivos de los estudios asegura: «A veces me miran con cara de preocupación, preocupación porque es lo que quiero hacer».

In this conflictive context, Burton's characters try to understand their past experiences and emotional wounds. This is the reason why he uses the cinematographic technique of the flashback, that is to say, an alteration of the story order in which the plot moves back to give narrative continuity to the films and make spectators be aware of the moments that affected these characters in the past (their traumas, motivations or ways of perceiving the world). For

example, in *Corpse Bride*, a flashback unveils when Emily was alive and in love with a lord as well as what happened to her and how she died. Similarly, *Edward Scissorhands* shows the moment when Edward's creator was about to replace his scissorhands with prosthetic ones but this creator dies, making us feel pity for Edward because he was so close to getting human-like hands.

Therefore, the Outsider can be considered a label that comprises all these isolated characters with a clear inner conflict. In his works, Burton distinguishes different types of outsiders, as we will see below, and they play different roles: denouncing a decadent society, the enhancement of the outsider's positive values, the promotion of the connective relationship of sympathy between the spectator and the protagonists, and the expression of the adolescent concerns that have accompanied Burton since then.

The outsider is a paradigmatic character that has given rise to memorable stories from the origins of humanity (Cain or the parable of the prodigal son). In Burton's works, he is characterized by resorting to the world of fantasy or horror as a way of escaping from a society that tolerates but does not appreciate him/her.

Furthermore, his maladjustment is visually represented by means of individuals with temperamental characteristics who are uncompleted, a default which makes them fragile. Apart from that, his condition is closely related to the lack of family ties. This lack gives rise to the figure of the mentor, a character who accompanies the outsider in his melancholy, as in the case of Vincent Price in *Vincent* or in *Edward Scissorhands*.

The most relevant traits of the outsider are (not applied to all Burton's characters): isolation from reality (the vast majority of characters come into contact with society without being integrated in it); they are melancholic, introverted (except for the case of Beetlejuice), depressed, extravagant (in their external appearance or in their behaviour), with split personality (sometimes emphasized by the mask and the costume as it happens with Vincent who is transformed into Vincent Price or Jack Skeleton in *Santa Claus*), occasionally pacific misfits (they are not violent but aggressiveness can appear when they are, as in the case of *Edward Scissorhands*, unfairly accused), misunderstood (their merits are not recognised), dreamer and romantic (with sad ending, as when Beetlejuice wants to marry Lydia to evade the afterlife without achieving it).

To begin with, a relevant example can be seen in *Vincent*, a short film in which Burton introduces an introverted and melancholic boy called Vincent (a homage to the American actor Vincent Price), who tries to fit in a society full of social conventions and impositions. This fact shows his inner repression and isolation, living an existential duality between his inner world (feelings, thoughts and so on) and the external reality marked by limitations.

This first outsider found in the works by Burton will have an important influence on subsequent late films. What makes Vincent original is the use of the literary technique of defamiliarization into cinema so as to turn the outsider into a familiar sign. To be more precise, according to Romantic poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge in his *Literary Biographia*, to defamiliarize is “to carry on the feelings of childhood into the powers of manhood; to combine the child’s sense of wonder and novelty with the appearances which every day, for perhaps forty years, had rendered familiar”(1834: 55).

Another essential aspect of the representation of the outsider in *Vincent* is the metamorphosis of Vincent Malloy in Vincent Price, used to attract the attention of the audience. The charming nature of Vincent experiences a change. Now, we find an ambitious boy trapped in the fabric of his imagination, trying to change the reality that surrounds him by adapting it to his desires; for instance, the transformation of his dog into horrible creature so as to use him to look for victims.

This idea unveils the importance of imagination used as a means of escape from a harsh reality, full of limitations, as well as the recurrence of the metamorphosis in Burton’s works. The boy Vincent can be considered an outsider whose only escape can be found in the splitting of his personality between Vincent and Price, who represents his alter ego (a mad doctor), giving rise to an essential concept: the “doppelganger”. This idea makes reference to a protagonist living in a world which is perceived by the spectator as unreal. In fact, Vincent Maloy is between what he is and what he wants to be, a double line that leads him to the splitting of his personality, a theme that plays an important role in most of Tim Burton’s films.

What is more, the double personality here can be defined as a split of the Self, an idea which is used by Burton to express different worries such as the existential vacuum, the sense of displacement or not belonging to a particular place, or even, the unknown identity of the human being (who are we?). In this context, it is a means used as a source of escape for

evading a distant reality, marked by social conventions as well as limitations imposed by the world that surrounds us, giving rise to stereotypes.



Vincent vs. Price: two sides of the same coin.

After its introduction in Vincent, Burton continues the development of the figure of the Outsider in *Frankenweenie* (1984), *Edward Scissorhands* (1990) and the *Corpse Bride* (2005), among other films.

In *Frankenweenie*, there is a clear reference to the introverted boy in search of his own happiness. The particularity of this boy lies on the fact that he feels more comfortable in the company of his dog than in the society that surrounds him. Again, the idea of an intended isolation is present. The protagonist Victor (clear allusion to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*) distances from the social conventions in favour of the creation of artificial life by becoming a mad doctor and experimenting a conversion, showing the splitting of his personality.

After the accidental death of his dog, Sparky, Victor achieves to revive him by resorting to science, which can be used for good or bad purposes. In this particular case, Victor is a "social outsider" because his creation is not accepted by society, which considers the dog a monster, even though it is heroic character who saves them from other real dangerous abominations.



Sparky: the mechanic dog.

The dog is seen as a monster because of its physical deformity, which is clearly different from that of a common dog. Sparky is made of mechanic pieces, an artificial creation which opposes the nature of an ordinary dog. This idea proves the fact that differences can sometimes imply rejection. A completely weird complexion can be perceived by society as a trait of monstrosity. For this reason, Sparky can be considered a “social outsider” as well. Burton resorts to the Promethean myth of the creation of life of a being which is not socially accepted because of his origin in order to criticise the fact that monstrosity, at the end, can be found in society and not in that being which is simply different. In this regard, he gives a sense of humanity to the Outsider, endowing his capacity with prominence to offer so many contributions to society, or even, to make it better.

The central purpose of Burton is, therefore, to show a story of the friendship between a boy and his dog - both considered outsiders by their neighbours - who try to look for their place in society. He uses de-familiarized elements as in the case of Sparky, the symbiosis of a dog with a machine made of electronic devices (as the name suggests), in an attempt to enhance the perception of the familiar by presenting common things in an unfamiliar way. Even with these odd features, an isolated boy and his mechanic dog can show more humanity than society. In addition, symbiosis, in other words, the living together of two dissimilar organisms is also present in the shape of characters such as Turtlezilla (a resurrected turtle with the tremendous size of Godzilla), Mummy Hamster (a mummy-wrapped little monster) or Vampire Cat (a cat with huge bat wings).

Apart from that, there is a clear allusion to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* in diverse scenes of the film, showing once more the influence of the aforementioned myth as a cultural artifact that contributes to the representation of the deformed physicality as well as the idea of the incompleteness of the body, leading to the concept of monstrosity, as stated by Weinstock:

Frankenweenie ... is obviously intended as a parody of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and, as such, gestures towards an entire history of Gothic literature and film that informs both *Frankenweenie* and Burton's oeuvre more generally; however, the extended and reworked 2012 version of the film, in both its specific details and general themes, also functions as a highly recapitulation of Burton's entire career ... [permitting] insight into the recurring motifs and preoccupations that have structured Burton's body of cinematic work. (2013:2)

On the contrary, in *Edward Scissorhands*, the outsider is created by the mechanization of a human being instead of an animal, the creation of a cyborg, in other words, a person whose physiological functions are linked to or dependent upon an electronic device. Edward possesses hands made of scissors, which gives the film a dramatic tone because if he touches objects, he achieves to create art but with respect to humans, scissors damage them. In this sense, scissors are a symbol of the internal drama of the protagonist (a gift and a curse), provoking his alienation from the rest of society. This idea can be exemplified in the following dialogue between Kim and Edward:

Kim: Hold me.

Edward: *[tries to hold her]*...I can't.⁶

The dialogue emphasizes Edward's impossibility to establish a physical contact with Kim and showing his affective nature, though he perseverates and tries to hold her:



The impossible embrace.

This outsider is created on the basis of one of Burton's illustrations, drawn he was an adolescent, fact that reveals the importance of his drawings in the creation of his films and his most salient poems that will be analysed in depth later in this study.

⁶ Extracted from <https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Edward_Scissorhands> (last accessed: 3/07/15).

In *Edward Scissorhands*, as in *Vincent*, the main protagonist ends up alone and isolated. There is no room for these characters, rejected and marginalized by society. In these cases, the figure of the social outsider is highlighted, as mentioned above. What it cannot be controlled, becomes despicable. This is just what happens to Edward. At the beginning, he is accepted but then he is rejected because of his subversive nature. In other words, he alters the established order.

One of the fundamental ideas introduced by Burton in this work is the unfair label that adolescents have to face in their life, subjected to the opinions and considerations of others. From the very beginning of our lives, we start to be labelled by other people, this fact having an impact on our personality, and even, our identity. For instance, in *Edward Scissorhands*, having hands of scissors provokes a negative vision on his neighbourhood that will have an impact on him.

Anyway, the humanity of the character is thematized because, in spite of his macabre appearance, he has feelings. In this respect, Burton makes evident one of his purposes when introducing these kinds of characters: the identification of the spectator with the protagonist. He wants to make us sympathize with him, showing that Edward has something inside that does not fit with his external image. Apart from that, this protagonist has a more complex representation in comparison with the secondary ones, who are stereotyped. For instance, his neighbours want to earn money, be fashionable or be followed by the rest unlike Edward, who is not contaminated by this world based on consumption and appearances. Their jokes are a constant in the film, anticipating that Edwards does not belong, in essence, to their world, as the following invitation taken from the barbecue scene⁷ suggests:

Neighbour: (to Edward): Eddie. The guys and I were talking, we'd like want to invite you to our card game on Friday night. Would you like that? Only thing is, you can't cut.

Similar to *Vincent* or Sparky in *Frankenweenie*, the main conflict in the film is again Edward's impossibility to adapt to society. In fact, when trying to evoke those horror films

⁷ Script available on <<http://www.imsdb.com/scripts/Edward-Scissorhands.html>> (last accessed: 30/9/15).

such as *Frankenstein*, Burton thinks basically about the feelings of loneliness of the monster he shares a sense of identification with.

What makes *Edward Scissorhands* different from the films mentioned above is the theme of love, which leads him to the impossibility of reaching happiness. It is in this film where Burton abandons the happy end. Edward is repudiated and humiliated by the lies fed by an ignorant society who thought he was a stealer. This fact led him to shelter in his dark mansion (a comfy place for him in comparison to the colourful houses of the town, inhabited by true monsters: society). Nevertheless, in Burton's works, we can also find happy endings but with nuances (not happy endings at all): Edward reconciles with his son in *Big Fish* (2003) but that encounter is the last one or Victor and Victoria end up being together in *Corpse Bride*, although Emily disappears (in a poetic end) without accomplishing her wish.

This story can be perfectly associated with that of the fairy-tale *Beauty and the Beast* (1756) by French novelist Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont, in which Beast tries to look for a way of escaping from his claws so as to be able to caress Beauty. The same happens to Edward, an "emotional outsider" tied to his scissor hands, a damnation or a burden that does not have a direct correlation with his affections because he is a character who is capable of stirring our emotions. The only way of escapism is by means of art, sculpting a block of ice, a way to explore his thoughts.

Finally, with *Corpse Bride*, Burton decides to incorporate the idea of the outsider in the underworld. By means of this gloomy setting, he allocates the characters in a decadent atmosphere revealing their condition: exclusion from society. In their dirty attires, there is a predominance of dark and monotonous colours so as to project their emotional instability.



Emily: the Corpse Bride.

As we can see, one of Burton's particular features is to play with the binary opposition of attraction and rejection. Although we can point out rejected characters in his works, he provokes the reversed effect in the real perception of the spectator: attraction.

In the same way, life and death are fused in *Corpse Bride* as two different overlapping dimensions (the dark and sad living world and the colourful and joyful underworld) in which the relationship between a man and a corpse bride is rejected, but, at the same time, is possible through the eyes of the spectator who feels sympathy for the corpse, a character which opposes the violent nature of the undead (bloodthirsty and moved by the instinct of feeding themselves), represented, for instance, by the American director George Andrew Romero⁸.

The contribution of Burton focuses on the active role of the outsider, no matter their physical appearance. It is a creative figure that subverts the traditional vision of the monster because what is uncommon for one could be normal or natural for others. The appreciation or rejection of the outsider, then, depends on the "eyes" of the beholder. Burton's eyes, to be more concrete, are wide open to the importance of the outsider in society.

As we have seen, the outsider has become the archetypal hero of most of Tim Burton's works. Among his countless sources of inspiration, it is important to remark, as Antonio Sánchez-Escalonilla states (2009:365), the presence of myths, legends, fairy-tales and phantasmagorical short stories by Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) and Guy de Maupassant (1850-1893), without forgetting the cinematographic classic referents of horror and fantasy: Lon Chaney (1883-1930), Béla Lugosi (1882-1956) or Boris Karloff (1887-1969).

So far, we have considered the role of the outsider in some of Burton's films, pointing out how they are represented and its main functions. Nonetheless, there is much more to say. It is clear that Burton is well-known because of his films as well as his contributions to the Disney factory, but what about literature?

Surprisingly, Tim Burton also devoted his time to write a compilation of short poems included in a book entitled *The Melancholy Death of Oyster Boy & Other Stories* (1997). He introduces a group of children, outsiders in search of love and identity in their cruel and mad

⁸ George Andrew Romero (1940) is best-known for the creation of the zombie archetype as in the *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), introducing an apocalyptic vision of flesh-hungry monsters taking place in devastated landscapes. Unlike this director, Burton is more interested in reviving a corpse with feelings in search of her identity and presenting human features such as the capacity of loving or questioning things.

world. In addition to that, he expresses pathos and a sense of understanding for these characters, embracing them as belonging to humanity.

The book contains twenty-three short poems followed by different illustrations created by Burton himself in order to evoke the tragedy as well as the physical representation of these characters which be perfect illustrations of the main features of the outsider from a visual point of view. The analysis of the short poems as well as the attached illustrations will complement the vision of the other or outsider that we have approached on the previous pages.

The Melancholic Death of Oyster Boy & Other Stories does not only make the role of Burton as writer evident but it also emphasizes his capacity for expressing his worries by blending the cinema and literature (the presence of the illustrations accompanied by the literary poem gives a sense of a cinematic progression of images).

All the short poems in the work have a narrative structure (narrative poems) in the shape of stanzas or even lines (some poems are made up of just two lines as “Oyster Boy Steps Out”). Although they are different, there is a especial connection among all the stories: their characters have characteristic features (solitary, extravagant and so on). The mixture of fantasy with reality is clearly evident, introducing readers in these outsider’s world.

Anyway, what makes this work different is the combination of illustrations and poems, suggesting a fusion between the world of cinema and poetry. In this sense, by means of this visual input, Burton invites us to read poetry as if we were watching a film. Although the protagonists are children and the illustrations are vivid, the book is addressed to an adult audience due to the complexity of the vast majority of topics, such as sexual impotence in Oyster Boy’s poem or the adultery with a kitchen appliance in “Robot Boy”. On the other hand, by means of these outsiders, Burton achieves to convey the tenderness or sweetness and, at the same time, the macabre or and grotesque side of human beings , making us, to a certain extent, establish a sympathetic relationship with them. In his works, he is more interested in his characters than in the plot or action. This is the reason why most of his films or poems are entitled after the name of the protagonist, for instance, *Beetlejuice*, “Stain Boy”, *Edward Scissorhands*, *Batman*, so on.

2. Deformity as a performative trait of the Other in *The Melancholy Death of Oyster Boy & Other Stories*:

After tracing the main types and features of the Outsider in Burton's world and presenting a brief description of *The Melancholy Death of Oyster Boy & Other Stories*, we are now ready to give more details about the characterization of his actants by paying attention to a crucial idea within this literary work: deformity. Before analyzing how monsters are created, it is necessary to introduce a theoretical basis related to the most basic structures that are used, in general terms, to make a monster:

Horrific monsters are normally threatening. They tend to be dangerous as well as lethal, with a tendency to kill and maim. In addition to that, they can also be threatening from a psychological, moral or social point of view, looking for devastating the established moral order, or even, promoting an alternative society. One of the most salient features of monsters, as Noël Carroll states (1990:43), is that they can be "physically dangerous, inspiring revulsion and suggesting a sense of impurity which gives rise to the conflict between two or more standing cultural categories". As a result, it is important to point out that most of monster's features are based on combinations that alter their nature, for instance, of a robot with a man (a cyborg), or a man with a chemical plant (as in the case of *The Man-Thing*⁹).

Apart from that, Carroll introduces several structures that play a fundamental role in the creation of a monster, namely fusion, fission, magnification, massification and horrific metonymy, all of them being the major instruments for presenting the monsters of art-horror:

First of all, fusion can be defined as "the construction of creatures that transgress categorical distinctions such as inside/outside, living/dead, insect/human, flesh/machine, and so on" (Carroll, 1990:43). It includes examples such as mummies, vampires, zombies or ghosts, among others. The most salient mark of a fusion figure is "the compounding of ordinarily disjoint or conflicting categories in an integral, spatio-temporally unified individual" (op.cit. 1990:44). This figure can be closely associated with the collective figure of Freud, in other words, the superimposition of two or more entities in one individual, both fused elements having something in common.

⁹ *The Man-thing* constitutes a series of comics published by Marvel Comics (1971) in which the main protagonist is a fictional monster, a humanoid creature composed of vegetable matter living in the fictitious town of Citrusville.

On the contrary, fission implies the “distribution of contradictory elements over different, though metaphysically related, identities” (op.cit.1990:45). This can be found in creatures such as doppelgangers, alter-egos and werevolves. Furthermore, fission can occur in two different forms: spatial fission and temporal fission. Whereas spatial fission is based on the division as well as multiplication of characters in space, temporal fission divides them, but in time. These notions of fusion and fission are useful for making monsters horrific, enhancing their impurity by linking opposed categories (categorical contradictoriness).

Secondly, other recurring symbolic structures for creating horrific monsters are magnification and massification. While magnification consists of “augmenting the degree of revulsion of beings typically adjudged impure or disgusting within a particular culture” (1990:48-49); massification is the presentation of monstrous masses as a way of exploiting the repelling nature of existing phobic creatures. Finally, horrific metonymy is a means of “emphasizing the impure and disgusting nature of a creature by associating it with objects or other entities” (op.cit. 1990:52). It includes examples such as skeletons, body parts, so on.

Deformity definitely has a major role in monsters’ horrific appeal. How can this concept be defined and what is the relationship between the outsider and his physical appearance?

In literature, physical features as well as body imperfections are marked elements to be analyzed. These characteristics can tell the reader what kind of person a given character is. To a certain extent, the perception of physical deformities have been considered grotesque for a long time, normally connected with negative things (for instance, a character with physical malformation was considered to have moral deformity). There was an association of deformity with a curse or even a sin. But, is it the case in *The Melancholy Death of Oyster Boy*? From my point of view, one of the strong points that characterizes Burton is that he breaks with the traditional consideration of deformity as something negative by creating monsters thanks to different techniques that we will exemplify in point 2.1.

The presence of deformity becomes an essential component within the burtonesque creation of the outsider. This idea is an inseparable element that constitutes the identity of these characters and can perfectly be exemplified in one of the short poems included in *The Melancholy Death of Oyster Boy & Other Stories* : “Stain Boy’s special Christmas”¹⁰.

¹⁰ All the poems included in the following parts belong to Burton, T. 2005, *The Melancholy Death of Oyster Boy & Other Stories*. London: Faber and Faber.

In this poem, Burton introduces one of his antiheroic outsiders, who buys a new uniform, described as clean and well pressed unlike his physical condition, which tends to spot everything. The uniform constitutes an element which hides the true nature of the Stain Boy and, consequently, becomes dirty because there is no way of veiling his real condition (“those wet, greasy stains started forming again”, (lines 6-7)).

The trait of deformity, then, is the propagation of the greasy stains, an element that tends to destroy everything it enters in contact with, not only the uniform of the boy but also his desire of being a superhero. These stains represent corruption and impurity, and they can be interpreted as the dark stains of imposition that society applies to those who do not fulfil the standard, killing the boy’s innocence and aspirations. In this respect, the magnification of the stains is not used for enhancing his impurity, but society’s impurity that can even corrupt the boy. Burton uses deformity as a performative trait because it generates a cause and effect relationship. Its presence in these characters moves them to act in a given way, and the dramatic ending, emphasized by means of the succession of images, has the power of having an emotional effect on the reader. To put it in another way, an internal cause represented by the conflict that characters have to face due to their physical conditions and their final failure makes the reader reflect upon transcendental ideas, leading them to wonder whether there is a clear relationship between the physical and the emotional side or if physicality can be a mirror of our internal nature. Other prompting doubts could be: are we, everybody, outsiders? Is it possible to empathize with the Other?

This poem shows that Burton is not interested in offering a deformed vision of these children but of the society that surrounds and limits them. In the *Melancholy Death of Oyster Boy & Other Stories*, there is a social compromise in the sense that he calls for the acceptance of the individual condition; for him, the outsider is not a puppet but an individual full of strength playing an active role in society. In this context, their monstrosity, as Jeffrey Weinstock states, can be a mirror through which a corrupted and unperfected society is reflected:

Burton’s vision in “Oyster boy” is equally dark, but more socially aware. It is not death that menaces Burton’s monstrous children, but social forces that insist on conformity and monsterize deformity and difference. For Burton’s children, monstrosity is an outward, physical manifestation that reflects the world around the individual rather than marking inner psychological turmoil (2013:155).

Nevertheless, “Stain Boy” is also a representation of the antihero, another significant aspect to point out in Burton. An antihero is “one who is the opposite or reverse of a hero; especially a chief character in a poem, play or story who is totally unlike a conventional hero”¹¹. The great majority of Burton’s characters are basically antiheroes who reflect a dark look as well as a criticism towards society. He/she is someone who has suffered rejection from his/her family, society and, in certain occasions, even from himself/herself. With reference to “Stain Boy”, the protagonist is represented in a different way from that of the conventional hero (an opposite hero, in fact, to *Batman* or *Superman*). In the illustration, the T-shirt showing Superman can be considered a reminder of the classical hero. Stain Boy tries to put this shirt on so as to become a conventional hero but his physical condition makes it impossible, this being the dramatic side of the poem. As a result, the sympathetic effect is achieved through a character with uncommon physical features whose only purpose is to become accepted by society, without result, concealing his true nature (hiding his physical appearance), not being successful in it. The positive feature of this character, however, is that he is a free soul because he lives in the margins of society. To sum up, Stain boy is not an evil figure but a social outsider in search of his identity:



For Christmas, Stain Boy got a new uniform.

It was clean and well pressed,

Comfy and warm.

¹¹ Oxford English Dictionary. (2015) <<http://www.oed.com/>> (last accessed 10/07/15).



5 But in a few short minutes,
 (No longer than ten)



 Those wet, greasy stains
 Started forming again. (2005: 54-57)

The poem consists of three stanzas with 3-2-2 lines respectively. The first one is connected with the others by means of the conjunction *but*, marking three differential parts: the initial moment of glory (lines 1-3), the immediate interruption (4-5) and the final dramatic situation (6-7). In the initial positive onset, there is an attractive description of the uniform that Stain Boy gets for Christmas. We have to remark the use of optimistic adjectives linked by means of the conjunction *and*, which accumulates positive information about the initial state of the uniform (*clean, well pressed, comfy and warm*). It is pure, without any trace of corruption. The smiling expression of Stain Boy is evident, he is ready for becoming a hero. The fronting of the adverbial (*For Christmas*) indicates the temporal setting, a moment in which your wishes can be true.

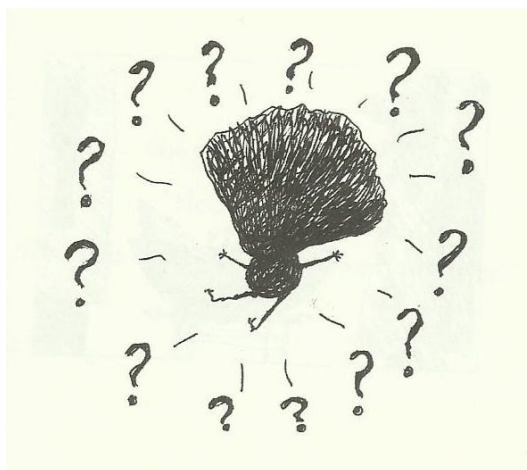
Nevertheless, this moment of glory gets interrupted immediately with the fronting of the temporal adverbial *in a few short minutes*, catching the readers' attention and making them

wonder what is going to happen. The parenthetical information (*no longer than ten*) increases the dramatic effect because the moment of glory is not so long.

Finally, the dramatic denouement takes place and darkens everything. The greasy stains prevent Stain Boy from becoming a hero. He struggles in vain, for he is bound to the stain and cannot change. The uniform is a metaphor for his wishes or aspirations, which finally become truncated. As we have suggested, it can also be interpreted as a symbol of corruption, maybe imposed by society, which excludes him and does not give him the chance to improve and become integrated. Furthermore, the flood of stain illustrates the essence within, which finally emerges, regardless of the artificial skin which covers or hides it.

Apart from Stain boy, it is necessary to make reference to other types of deformities. In this part, we will include an overview of some of the deformities that can be found in the poems by paying attention to how these are verbally expressed in them as well as including some illustrations. In section 2.1, other types of deformities alongside an analysis of different poems will be developed in detail: concretely, those created by de-familiarization and personification applied to daily life objects, by the construction of creatures that transgress the categorical distinction of living/dead by means of fusion as well as horrific metonymy and by metamorphosis.

To begin with, in “The Melancholy Death of Oyster Boy” (2005:29-49), the trait of deformity represented is the multiplication of Oyster Boy’s body members, with “ten fingers, ten toes” (line 13). Although he can hear or feel, he is not considered a normal human being because of his unnatural physical condition.



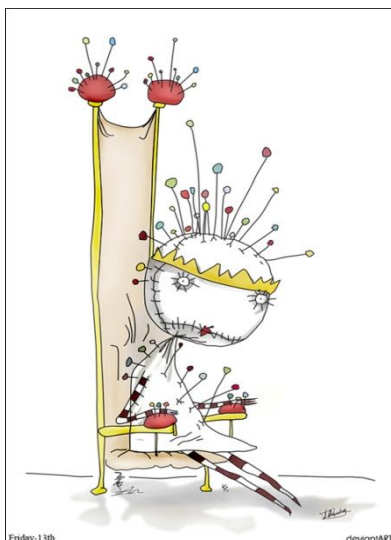
Oyster Boy: as many body parts as traumas.

“Voodoo Girl” (2005:50-53), meanwhile, is portrayed as a character who is all “sewn apart”(line 2) with “many colored pins sticking out of her heart” (3-4). The fact that her body is sewn can be an evidence of the inner break as well as the fragility of Burton’s characters, who are condemned by the pins of society because every time she gets closer to someone, she gets hurt by these pins, suggesting the idea that there is no possible integration for them.



The sublime fragility of Voodoo Girl

“Voodoo Girl” is closely and intertextually connected with “The Pin Cushion Queen” (2005: 92-93), both having the same kind of deformity though in the case of the latter, pins “push through her spleen” (2005: 93) when she tries to sit, making her life difficult:



The pins’ influence: a burden to live with

In “Dirty Girl” (2005: 88-91), Burton introduces a character who stands out because of his dirtiness, considered a trait of deformity by society. She is confined to the dumps, a place where all the dirty things are gathered. But, is she really a human waste? By allocating her in the right place, Burton achieves the opposite effect: this girl is considered an unhappy victim of a dirty society in which there is no room for her. Burton’s use of dark thin strokes for creating this character enhances her deformity, a girl “made up of junk that looked really dirty and smelled like a skunk” (2005: 89), as if her body was consumed by rubbish.



Junk Girl and the disdain of society

Another rendition of deformity is the total disbandment of the body. This case is exemplified in “Char Boy” (2005: 102-103), a character who is mistaken for a dirty fireplace and swept out into the street. The succession of illustrations shows the process of decadence this boy suffers, from being happy with his lump of coal (considered a gift for himself) to be completely destroyed or disbanded as well as transformed into ashes (losing his physical body):



Char Boy and the decadence of humanity.

In the case of “Jimmy, the Hideous Penguin Boy” (2005: 100-101), deformity is created by introducing a short boy whose black and white suit as well as height give him the appearance of a penguin. In this sense, deformity is represented by animalization, comparing this character with other animals, giving them their qualities, in this case, a penguin. This character can be intertextually connected with Burton’s *Batman Returns* since the main villain is represented in the same way:



Jimmy: the Hideous Penguin Boy or the representation of American dystopia.



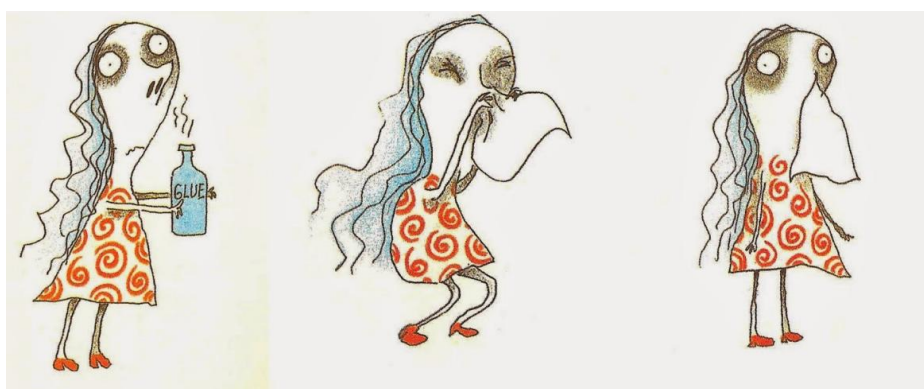
Danny DeVito’s, the Penguin in *Batman Returns* (1992).

Deformities are also represented by physical damages which lead to psychological inconsistencies. In “James” (2005:70-71), scratches around the eye show external injuries on the boy. Santa offers him a teddy bear without knowing that he has been mauled by a grizzly, provoking psychological damage and fear because of his traumatic experience. The scratched eye is a true representation of this boy’s inner fears:



A cruel gift for James.

Nevertheless, Burton’s poems depict the psychic deformity in the shape of characters who are bound to certain uncommon habits and cannot abandon them. This is the case of “Sue” (2005: 96-97), a girl who likes sniffing lots of glue. As a result of this, when she tries to blow her nose, the “kleenex sticks to her face” (99). This character can be a clear portrait of those people who depend on other things, particularly material ones, to be happy and provoking their obsession. This idea of obsession is emphasized in the hypnotic sign of Sue’s dress, a vicious circle that continues and never ends:



Sue, the girl who sniffs glue: an uncommon obsession

Finally, another trait of deformity is the sacrifice of one sense in order to strengthen others that the author wants to remark. This idea can be seen in “Roy, the Toxic Boy” (2005: 62-69) in which his the mouth is sealed by means of needlework to make his sense of smelling more powerful, so exposed to a stinking atmosphere, that of society and its contagion. Another interpretation can relate to the fact that the Toxic Boy is a silenced character in the sense that he wants to show his emotions but he cannot, being considered a monster who only “smokes cigarettes and loves ammonia and asbestos” (2005: 63):



Toxic Boy: the silenced character.

2.1. Visualizing the monster: modalizations of deformity in the work:

As mentioned above, deformity constitutes an important element in the development of Burton's characters. The aim of this section is to analyze how the outsider is created in terms of deformity by making reference to the illustrations included in the work as well as the short poems.

For Burton, monstrosity is not something terrifying that has to be hidden or destroyed but an element that constitutes an important part in our lives, and we have to live with it. This is the reason why his representation of monstrosity is, to some extent, lovely, a pure metaphor for expressing his main concerns. The internal rejection of these characters in the book has a common purpose: making us accept them and judge society as well as helping children to lose their fear of monsters. *The Melancholy Death of Oyster Boy & Other Stories* includes different poems, each of them related to a particular character made explicit in the title and

rendered visually by means of the illustrations. We will concentrate on those who have the most distinct deformity traits.

The most common types of deformities in Burton's poems are created by means of: de-familiarization and personification applied to daily life objects ("Stick Boy and Match Girl in Love"), fusion of robotic and human features ("Robot Boy"), the construction of creatures that transgress the categorical distinction of living/ dead by means of fusion as well as horrific metonymy and massification ("Mummy Boy") and metamorphosis into common objects ("The Girl Who turned into a Bed").

In the vast majority of the examples included in this work, Burton achieves the appealing deformity of the characters by the so-called literary technique of de-familiarization. According to Victor Shklovsky, and from a more technical point of view than Coleridge, de-familiarizing consists in "making forms difficult to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged" (2004: 16).

One particular trait of monstrosity is created by means of de-familiarization in "Stick Boy and Match Girl in Love" (2005: 1-3). Two objects which lack feelings acquire them by means of personification, in other words, human values are attributed to daily life objects, making them unfamiliar. Furthermore, Burton gives them facial traits, making them similar to humans, as if the stick were a boy and the match, a girl:



Distinct facial traits of Match Girl and Stick Boy

Both want to have a love relationship but it is impossible because of their physical condition, a stick which is a burning agent while the other is a burning sufferer. As a result, their monstrosity generates a particular relationship not a passionate one but that of consumption, suggesting that there is no room for them to have an everlasting relationship due to the unintentional side effects of their physical bodies, which trap and separate them, making their union difficult. The emotional side can be exemplified in the illustration by showing the expression of shock on the part of the match while the stick burns.

Anyway, it is necessary to remark, as mentioned by Weinstock, that in the face of a society that rejects difference, Burton's characters have opportunities to meet kindred spirits. While Match Girl and Stick Boy literally consume each other, their figurative consumption also and positively represents a moment of joy, hope, and passionate love:



Stick Boy liked Match Girl,
He liked her a lot.
He liked her cute figure,
He thought she was hot.



But could a flame ever burn

For a match and a stick?

It did quite literally.

8

He burned up pretty quick. (1-3)

The poem is made up of two stanzas with the same proportion of lines (4-4). The first one focuses on Stick Boy's feeling of attraction to Match Girl, as expressed by the succession of different declarative sentences: "Stick Boy liked Match Girl", "he liked a lot", "he liked her cute figure" and "he thought she was hot" (lines 1-4). The intensifier "a lot"(2) tells us that there is a true feeling, though it is not so clear: Stick boy is trapped between love and passion ("hot" and "cute figure" can have a sexual connotation). Nevertheless, what about Match Girl? we do not know what she really feels because all the information included in the poem is closely associated with him (as the use of the pronoun "he" shows us). Consequently, she is even more silenced than the other outsider.

After that, the dramatic tone of the poem is emphasized by means of a rhetorical question introduced by the speaking voice to make a point (the author realizes their impossible love) rather than elicit an answer, involving the reader in a direct way: "but could a flame ever burn for a match and a stick?" (5-6). Once the question is introduced, it is immediately interrupted by Stick Boy's process of consumption taking place, all his feelings "burned up pretty quick" because it is impossible for a match and a stick to have an everlasting relationship. In this sense, Burton's outsiders also try to find love or passion and be integrated within a normal relationship, but they cannot.

On the other hand, there are other ways of representing the monstrosity of the outsider. It is important to point out, as we have underlined, that this concept will not be used as a negative feature but rather as an inherent trait that makes the excluded particular.

Another way of representing the outsider is by means of fusion of robotic with human features. As we mentioned above, fusion is defined by Noël Carroll as “the compounding of ordinarily disjoint or conflicting categories in an integral, spatio-temporally unified individual” (1990:44). This idea can be exemplified in the second poem included in this work, the one titled “Robot Boy” (2005:5-9). This robot is the result of a sexual encounter between a woman and a kitchen appliance, an unreal situation expressed by means of defamiliarization because it is impossible for a woman to have sexual intercourse with a microwave and give birth to a robot. The bitter and sad end of the poem, in which the robot is confused with garbage and is also rejected by the fake father, can make us reflect upon the degree of acceptability of the outsider in society. It can be closely related to *Edward Scissorhands*, two outsiders who try unsuccessfully to find their place in the ordinary world.

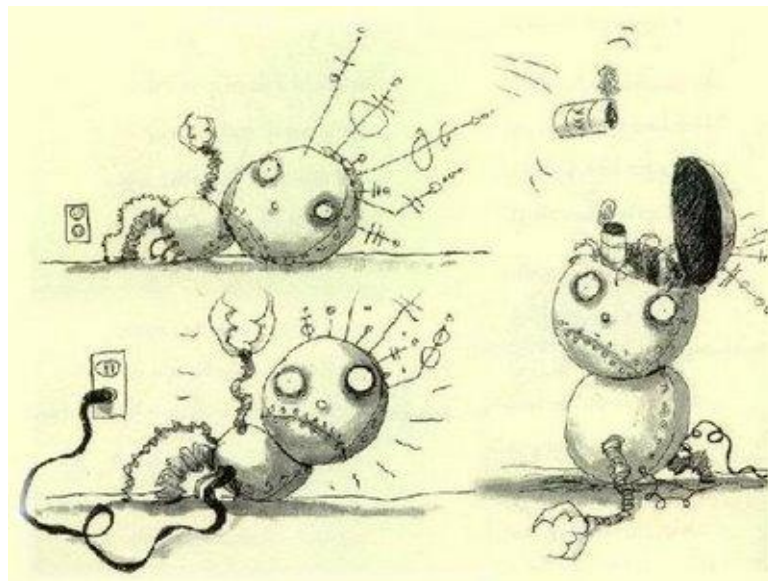
In this point, we should make reference to the cyberpunk culture since the robot can be considered a clear representation of the high tech life, a character which leads to a breakdown of the social order due to its features based on advanced technology. The term cyberpunk (combination of cybernetics and punks) was initially coined by Bruce Bethke in 1983 by means of his short story called “Cyberpunk” in which he introduces a technology-gone-wild scenario, in other words, a setting of social breakdown where machines are allowed to control every aspect of human life.

In 1948, William Ford Gibson, considered the father of Cyberpunk, continued the development of this genre thanks to his well-know novel *Neuromante*. This concept is used to make reference, with a lot of pessimism, to the dangers of computer technology, which can dangerously trespass the limit that separates humans and machines. In this genre, main characters are normally alienated and marginalized by society. Its relevance can be understood when considering the context of science fiction, as Sabine Heuser states:

One arrives at a very different evaluation depending on whether one looks at cyberpunk from within the genre or from the vantage point of mainstream literary culture. Whether one adopts a view from below or on high, cyberpunk has unquestionably left its marks on both realms (2003: 4)

In this regard, Burton creates an outcast in the shape of a robot to explore a crucial question nowadays: can robots have artificial intelligence? The robotic outsider plays an active role and is revalorized, becoming a prominent figure under analysis and more than just simply a social outcast.

Consequently, we find a double function in this poem which can be applied to the vast majority of the stories included: while the narrative poem introduces stories of misunderstood outcasts (narrative function), the illustration gives us clues or overt details, inviting us to save them by means of empathy (interpretative function). In this context, Burton only acts as an objective lens, a painter drawing different illustrations and the creator of a narrative poem as if it were a testimony (written in the third person with no personal opinion). Therefore, it is up to the reader to interpret the function of the outsider:



Mr. an Mrs. Smith had a wonderful life.
 They were a normal, happy husband and wife.
 One day they got news that made Mr. Smith glad.
 Mrs. Smith would be a mom
 which would make him the dad!
 But something was wrong with their bundle of joy.

It wasn't human at all,
 it was a robot boy!
 He wasn't warm and cuddly
 and he didn't have skin.

Instead there was a cold, thin layer of tin.
There were wires and tubes sticking out of his head.
He just lay there and stared,
not living or dead.

The only time he seemed alive at all
was with a long extension cord
plugged into the wall.

Mr. Smith yelled at the doctor,
"What have you done to my boy?
He's not flesh and blood,
he's aluminum alloy!"

The doctor said gently,
"What I'm going to say
will sound pretty wild.
But you're not the father
of this strange looking child.
You see, there still is some question
about the child's gender,
but we think that its father
is a microwave blender."

The Smith's lives were now filled
with misery and strife.
Mrs. Smith hated her husband,
and he hated his wife.
He never forgave her unholy alliance:
a sexual encounter
with a kitchen appliance.

And Robot Boy
grew to be a young man.

Though he was often mistaken
for a garbage can. (4-9)

The poem consists of eight stanzas that can be thematically divided according to the idea developed in each of them. In the first stanza (lines 1-6), the speaking voice introduces a normal husband and wife who are going to have a child. The main focus is on their life (considered “happy” and “wonderful”) and the anticipation introduced by the conjunction “but” (line 6), opposing the happiness mentioned in the previous lines, suggesting that it is not forever and something is going to change it.

The second stanza (7-10) focuses on the presentation of this creature, the fusion of a boy with a robot, as his name suggests (Robot Boy). The emphasis is not on the positive but rather on the negative features of this robot precisely by the negation of positive adjectives (line 9: “he wasn’t warm and cuddly”) as well as introducing traits that are not associated with human beings (line 10: “he didn’t have skin”). In addition to that, the accumulation of characteristics related to robots provides readers with a clear portrait of the like, as the third stanza makes evident, “the only time he seemed alive at all was with a long extension cord plugged into the wall” (15-17), emphasizing his condition of robot. The extension cord can be interpreted as an umbilical cord and the Robot Boy can be a metaphor of a malformed baby that provokes unhappiness to a particular family suggesting the idea that nowadays, we continue having fear of deformity, rejecting the nature of a malformed body. Apart from that, he can also represent those ill people who are connected to machines to survive. If these machines are disconnected, there is no probabilities for them to go on living.

After that, stanzas fifth and sixth (18-30) incorporate a dialogue in direct speech between the supposed father and the doctor. The latter claims that the child is the result of the union between a woman and a microwave blender. This sexual union can be considered a trait of the literary non-sense because it is impossible or even absurd for a woman to have sexual intercourse with a machine and give birth to a robot boy. According to Jean-Jacque Lecercle, literary non-sense “supports the myth of an informative and communicative language and deeply subverts it by first whetting then frustrating the reader’s deep-seated need for meaning” (1994:3). One of the possible influences of Burton in this poem could be Lewis Carroll (his influence is even present in one of his films, homage to Carroll’s novel *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, published in 1865), who made literary nonsense a worldwide phenomenon.

Finally, there is a change in the life of this family. As the seventh stanza shows (31-37), the initial situation of happiness lapses into a tragic train of events when Robot Boy comes to life.

The rejection of his family obliges him to grow alone, and, finally, he becomes an instrument (a garbage can). From a formal point of view, the poem presents elements that are used to portray as well as emphasize this robot boy's physicality (uncommon because "he didn't have skin" (10) and "there were wires and tubes sticking out of his head" (12)) such as the use of exclamative sentences (showing shock and surprise on the part of the narrator and characters as in "it was a robot boy!" (8) or "he's aluminum alloy!" (21)), antonyms and oppositions (enhancing the difficulty for defining this character and provoking uncertainty because he was "not living or dead" (14)), direct speech dialogues (developing the narrative action of the poem and anticipating the dramatic ending, "what have you done to my boy?" (19), alliteration and repetitions (showing Burton's interest in depicting his characters as they are, for instance, by alternating the use of "it wasn't" (7) or "it was" (8)).

So far, we have considered two main modalizations of deformity in the work clearly exemplified in "Stick Boy and Match Girl in Love" and in "Robot Boy": defamiliarization and personification of two ordinary objects and fusion of robotic as well as human features. Another way of creating monstrosity is by introducing a mummified outsider, as in "Mummy Boy" (2005: 76-87), a character with so many teeth and bandages covering his face, suggesting horror not only for his physical appearance but for the strange game he plays with the kids (the sacrifice of virgins) as well as his blending of living and dead features. At the same time, the poem suggests mystery because the reader feels impelled to wonder about this mummy's true identity behind the bandages: is he a monster or has he preserved human feelings after his death?

As his description in the poem indicates, he is an abnormal outsider in the sense that he is the result of a supernatural reincarnation as well as an old pharaoh's curse. Consequently, it seems that his acts have made him become a monster but is he really evil? By a succession of habits and actions shown by narrative images, Burton clarifies that this outsider is not as evil as it seems. He acts as a human being trying to play with other kids (sign of humanity), eating cereals or even protecting a dog. In this respect, his monstrous appearance opposes his feelings (not associated with that of a monster because he is showing affection towards the other).

In spite of his human condition, he is punished and condemned because of his physicality (confused with a piñata), the same case as "Robot Boy" who was confused with a garbage

ban¹². This fact unveils an important aspect in the *Melancholy Death of Oyster Boy & Other Stories*. First of all, we find the conflict between *what we are* and *what we want to be*. While *what we are* is delimited by our personal and physical circumstances, what we want to be is the process of going one step further and change in order to adapt ourselves in a society which is constantly flowing. In this process of adaptability, we are like outsiders because we are trying to fit in a particular place, being exposed to different reactions: attraction (being accepted socially) or rejection (the opposite process shown in these poems). In the case of the burlesque characters, it is society that decides whether these characters can be integrated or not. The sad ending of their lives suggests that there is no room for these creatures, and, consequently, no integration.

With the sad denouement, Burton achieves a sound effect on the reader. The multiplication of the signs of deformity opposing these characters' remarked feelings is used to cause attraction, making the reader reflect upon the necessity of integrating everybody, no matter their physical differences.

The poem starts with a focus on the physical qualities that this mummy lacks, so once again insistence on default traits, "he wasn't soft or pink" (line 1), emphasizing the elements that make this character different. The first stanza is divided into two juxtaposed simple sentences by means of a semicolon which separates the qualities he lacks from the ones he has (3-4: "he was hard and hollow, a little boy mummy"), establishing a clear contrast. After that, there is a dialogue in direct speech (5-12) in which there is a comparison of "bundled of joy" with "bundle of gauze". Gauzes can be considered a symbolic element for hiding the inner decay and, at the same time, an element of liberation or regeneration into a new creature, when its removal takes place. If you remove the bandages, you become a new person. There is also a reference to the supernatural reincarnation but we have no empirical evidence about where this creature comes from (17-20):

¹² Confusion implies the outsider's unstable identity as seen from the conventional lens of society.



He wasn't soft and pink
with a fat little tummy;
he was hard and hollow,
a little boy mummy.

5 "Tell us, please, Doctor,
the reason or cause,
why our bundled of joy
is just a bundle of gauze."

10 "My diagnosis," he said
"for better or worse,
is that your son is the result
of an old pharaoh's curse."

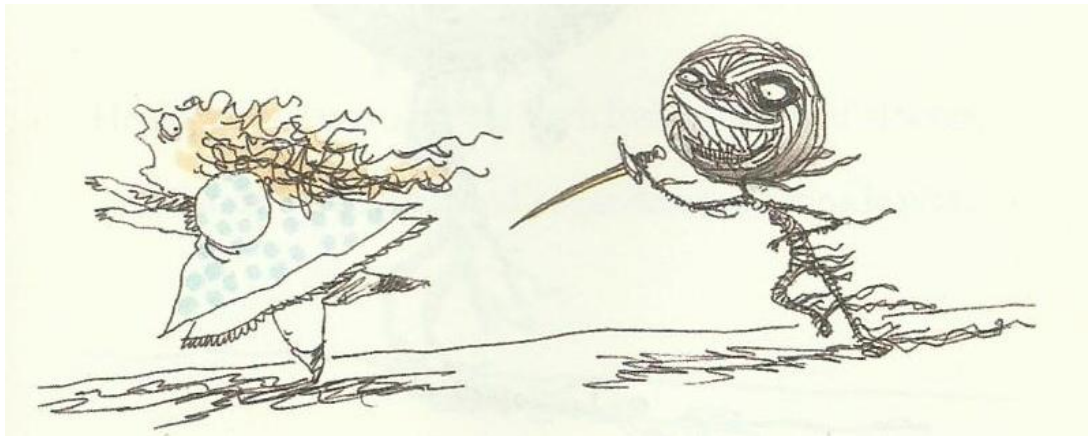
15 That night they talked
of their son's odd condition-
they called him "a reject
from an archaeological expedition."

20 They thought of some complex
scientific explanation,
but assumed it was simple
supernatural reincarnation. (76-78)

The Mummy Boy tries to fit with other kids by playing with them, but terrorises all of them with the virgin sacrifice, a game which is considered inoffensive for him though dangerous for them, establishing a separation between the outsider (isolated and rejected) and the other characters. The use of the aside ((“But the kids ran away, saying, You aren’t very nice”) (line

24)) reminds us of a remembrance, as if the narrator were the one who suffered that action or, in other words, the Mummy Boy:

With the other young tots
he only played twice,
an ancient game of virgin sacrifice.
(But the kids ran away, saying, "You aren't very nice.") (79)

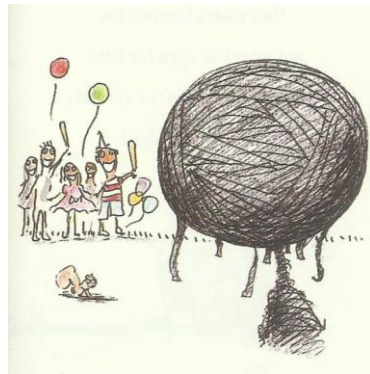


Line 25 makes reference to the two adjectives (fronted in the poem) that can be applied to the vast majority of Burton's outsiders: they tend to be "alone" and "rejected" characters. As a result of this state of rejection, this outsider resorts to his cabinet. Besides, The "snack food" can be considered a way of softening the monstrous properties of this mummy because he acts in the same way as human beings do (he eats the same food as some of us and "weeps" as we normally do when we are sad):

25 Alone and rejected, Mummy Boy wept,
then went to the cabinet
where the snack food was kept. (80)



The consideration of the Mummy Boy as an object, concretely a papier mâché (line 39) is clearly reflected in this part. Even kids are not capable of seeing him as any other kid but an instrument. In this context, They expect to get the candy and the toys, but can these things be found inside a monster's body? We find the most terrifying and sad part of the poem in its closure, the direct speech dialogues (40-43) anticipate that death is near:



35 The park was empty
 except for a squirrel,
 and a birthday party for a Mexican girl.

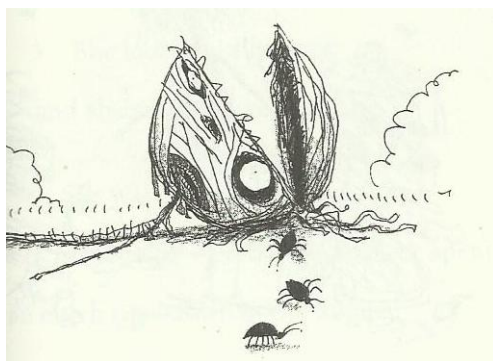
The boys and girls had all started to play,
but noticed that thing that looked like a papier mâché.

40 "Look it's a piñata,"
 said one of the boys,
 "Let's crack it wide open
 and get the candy and toys."

45 They took a baseball bat
 and whacked open his head.
 Mummy Boy fell to the ground;
 he finally was dead. (85-86)

It is in the last lines of the poem where we can find the most terrifying and sad part of the poem: the plague of beetles that abandons his head after death. In this respect, there is an exemplification of two of the most relevant structures to create a monster: massification, in other words, phobic creatures grouped into horrific hordes, as well as horrific metonymy because the mummy is particularly associated with entities that are already reviled, in this case, with beetles, which appear as a result of the cruel action of society. They would not have appeared, if the kids had not killed him. At the same time, they can also symbolize resurrection to a new life:

Inside of his head
were no candy or prizes,
just a few stray beetles of various sizes. (87)



Leaving aside the Mummy Boy, it is important to point out that a clear example of the conflict between *what we are* and *what we want to be* is to be found in “Oyster Boy Steps Out” (2005:112-113), the last short story consisting of ten words. This poem is an epicentric illustration of intertextuality, quite a resourceful mechanism of reference in Burton since some of his characters, themes, poems, films, notions or influences are linked in some way, creating the burtonesque universe. In Burton’s world, the idea of intertextuality plays an important role thanks to the introduction of echoing characters, in other words, characters than appear more than once in his poems. For instance, Oyster boy becomes the protagonist of two of them, namely The “Melancholy Death of Oyster Boy” (2005:28-49) and “Oyster Boy Steps Out”, showing an inner intertextuality in his book.

In addition to that, there is also intertextuality between his poems and films that can be perfectly exemplified in the fact that there are so many elements in the poems, or even, in the illustrations that have a direct correlation with his films. For instance, the moving bathtub with feet, depicted in Stick Boy's Festive Season (2005:72-73), is a de-familiarized element which is present in one of Henry Selick's well-know films, *The Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993), whose story was created by Burton:



Bathtub motif in Stick Boy's Festive Season



Lock, Shock and Barrel: the bathtub kids in *The Nightmare Before Christmas*.

Burton's characters are also connected within his poems by means of the diverse deformities they have. This is one of the reasons why we have presented a general overview of how this trait is portrayed in each actant. But, they are also associated by the depiction of their eyes, as we will point out in next section.

Finally, there is intertextuality between Burton and tradition because the vast majority of his works (both films and poems) are influenced by the gothic-expressionist sources. As in the same case of Edward Gorey or Charles Addams, Burton resorts to themes such as the macabre, the sinister, the stories with sad endings, the different, or even, the unknown in order to show dissatisfaction with the contemporary life as well as the necessity to widen our experience of reality, including the broader scope of dimensions beyond. In this sense, Burton considers the gothic-expressionist ideas as the main engine of his works, looking for, as Lucía Frasquet states (2003:324), "a way of perceiving the buried universe under social conventions".

A clear example of Burton's gothic-expressionist tradition can be found in the fact that he wants to bring to the forefront the true nature of things, which are not what they seem to be. At the same time, he gives prominence to the supremacy of passionate subject beyond social conventions, emphasizing the importance of the intuition as well as the irrational. On the other hand, the expressionist aesthetic is also present in Burton's use of different levels of illumination, *chiaroscuros*, extremely long shadows, angular shots, in short, an asymmetric architecture that interacts with the characters and complement them.

Anyway, with regard to Oyster Boy, in the first allusion, the narrator doubts about his nature because of his physical condition ("he could hear, he could feel, but normal? No quite" (lines 15-17)), anticipating the dramatic ending in which Ostrich Boy will be murdered and his memory will "lost with one high-tide wave" (line 86). The sand, element which is closely related to his physical condition belonging to the sea, will become his tomb. There is no room for this strange boy in society but a return, an exile back to his place of origin.

On the other hand, in the second allusion, we find a representation of the conscious outsider, a character who is aware of the problematic side of his physical condition and wants to become somebody else, a human in order to fit in society (For Halloween, "Oyster boy decided to go as human" (1-2). The monstrosity of "Oyster Boy" is just a reminder of how cruel human beings can be. The tendency of considering somebody who has different physical conditions from us as a monster turns ourselves into monsters.

“Oyster Boy” is presented as a typical human being, with feelings and desires (instead of his physical differences) that give shape to his identity. But, this condition of being a human is not met because he is considered an instrument: the cure for his father’s impotence, being finally devoured.

While the first allusion is longer because it is an explanation of the circumstances surrounding this boy, the second one is shorter due to the fact that it is a representation of his thoughts by means of a narrator who acts like a witness (except for the asides as in “The Mummy Boy” or the “Girl with Many Eyes”). This fact emphasizes the importance of the narration rather than the wishes of the character. The narrator is judging a world based on the prominence of facts over inner desires and feelings, a world that gives more importance to the external image rather than to the feelings that these characters have to restrain and whose only way of expression is the eyes¹³.

The presentation of the “Oyster Boy”, a conscious outsider rather than an immoral monster, has a clear purpose in mind: to make readers feel identified with him. In the same way, we are outsiders longing for ways of fitting in society. We may be monsters according to the opinions of other people. Consequently, what at the beginning seems to be monstrous, is actually not.

Finally, another way of representing monstrosity is by means of metamorphosis. This term is defined as a major change in someone’s or something’s appearance or character. It can be perfectly exemplified in “The Girl Who Turned Into a Bed”(2005: 58-61), a poem in which

¹³ A very similar topic and criticism was shown by Charles Dickens in one of his well known novels in the nineteenth century, *Hard Times* (1854), in which teachers used to teach children according to facts and objective ideas without leaving place to feelings. To a certain extent, this author was predicting the conflict deriving from teaching in that manner: the creation of mechanic children who do not take feelings into consideration, so founding an artificial society unable to understand and accept human differences and plurality, since each human being has his own identity:

Now, what I want is facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts: nothing else will ever be of any service to them. This is the principle upon which I bring up my own children, and this is the principle on which I bring up these children. Stick to facts, Sir! (2003:20).

the protagonist fully changes her physical appearance voluntarily, as the title indicates. Tim Burton's characters are constantly changing. For instance, in *Frankenweenie*, throughout the day, Victor is a boy who becomes a scientist when the night falls.

2.2. A Stigma to See: the Representation of the Eyes:

So far, different modalizations of deformity in Burton's literary work have been considered as body motif constituting the identity of the outsider, provoking attraction on the readers (thanks to the use of illustrations that foster their imagination and help them to sympathize with these characters) or rejection by a society marked by fixed and stereotyped models. Within the representation of the outsider, and quite easy to notice, Burton emphasizes a concrete characteristic of the body in most of his characters: the eyes.

Being considered one of the most symbolic parts of our body, the eyes are a true representation of human beings as ocular animals. They compile information and stimuli from their surroundings. Apart from that, they have the quality of conveying sensations deriving from human emotions.

By analysing most of the poems and relating them to the concept of the eyes, we can infer Burton's need to make them the most significant trait of all his characters. The reason for this obsession or proclivity is to be found in his adolescence. The director lived in a suburb in Los Angeles called Burbank where Margaret Keane's pictures representing children with big eyes were more than popular. These eyes had an enormous influence on him because they were quite disturbing. After his first encounter with those pictures, he realized that the eyes had the power to provoke multiple reactions on people, stirring their mind as well as allowing access to inner consciousness.

From Burton's point of view, eyes are a way of connecting people with the collective subconscious. There are images that are more likely to be retained in our memories, and, consequently, his characters are illustrated with peculiar eyes so that their expression can be easily remembered. In fact, eyes are, in a certain way, open doors for spectators, focal points to orientate the readers into the character's essence. Hence, eyes are the maximum grade of expressivity. Their influence can be perfectly exemplified in most Burton's films as well as in the *Melancholy Death of Oyster Boy & Other Stories*.

Burton uses eyes in order to portray the nature of his characters and it is through their expression, that he achieves to convey their intimate and personal side as well as establishing a process of mutual intelligibility and cooperation among subjects, namely between character and character. Outsiders are described on a stage of contrastive traits. They not only present different kind of deformities but also different types of eyes, expressing a large variety of feelings. Among the most relevant eyes portrayed in Burton's films, it is worth-mentioning the following:

First of all, big self-autonomous highlighted eyes are one of the most common in most of burtonesque works. An example can be found in *Vincent* (1982), where his big marked eyes are a true representation of what he wants to see. No matter what other people can show him, these eyes are only open to his own world. At the same time, these eyes are bigger than other parts of the character's body because these express more things with them than with words or gestures:



Vincent's eyes: the door to his own world

Secondly, obsessively precise eyes play an important role in some of his films. These are oriented to details, with the prospect of solving problems as well as mysteries by paying attention to every single piece of evidence. This is the reason why they tend to be projected through lens, symbolizing the eternal struggle between appearances and reality, as in the case of *Sleepy Hollow* (1999) in which one of the main features of the protagonist, Ichabod Crane, is these inquisitive eyes by means of which he tries to solve the mystery of the headless horseman:



Precise eyes projected by lens in *Sleepy Hollow* (1999)

There is also a representation of the macabre and threatening eyes in the character of the Headless Horseman, a detail that defines his brutal and sadistic soul:



The disturbing stare: Christopher Walken as the macabre Headless Horseman

Other kind of eyes which can be perceived in Burton's films are: sad and absent or empty eyes. Whereas the former are portrayed by means of a depressed look, orientated downwards and showing a sense of decay because of difficult situations, absent or empty eyes do not convey anything. As there are no eyes from a physical or empirical point of view, you cannot notice whether these characters are observing you or not. In this sense, this lack of eyes can be interpreted as an index of dislocation because the characters are not integrated in society (their eyes are only shadows of the system that does not accept them). Haggard eyes can be

seen in *Edward Scissorhands* (1990) and absent or empty eyes in *The Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993):



Edward Scissorhands' tragic and victimized stare



Where are Jack Skeleton's eyes?

We can also find paranoid and challenging eyes in Burton's works. In this case, they are connected with characters with an ironic sense of humour, showing their necessity of being always a resisting sign, in conflict with society. Visually, these eyes are characterized by hard features, with a tight frown that inspires respect, giving us the impression that they are

examining us. A particular example can be seen in Tim Burton's *Batman* (1989), concretely in the figure of the Joker:



The grinning enigma: Jack Nicholson as The Joker

Finally, bulging eyes are introduced in some of Burton's films. They are related to spontaneous (they show themselves as they are) and curious characters whose ambition is to discover the mysteries of the world surrounding them. They want to know and to be known. For instance, the inquisitive stare of martians in *Mars Attack* (1996):



New worlds: new discoveries

As this typological classification manifests, we can find as many ways of expressing the physicality of eyes as characters because they are the most important physical trait in the

burtonesque world. All the essence of human beings can be conveyed thanks to the look. In addition to that, the introduction of the deep look in characters is a way of making the reader participant of the narrative action, or even a mechanism used to establish other kind of connective relationships: that of the character and the reader. When we look at the illustrations, the eyes of the characters address us and indicate that something is happening, so, consequently, we are led to read the poem. That is why Burton's eyes express emotions, states or, to sum up, more than the words contained in the poems, moving us to interact with the lines.

This idea can be exemplified in the poem "Melonhead" (2005: 94-95) in which the eyes of the protagonist tell us about his condition of sadness. His white eyes are looking at the readers directly and contrast with the green and black colour of the other parts of his body to create a guiding thread that allows us to pay attention to their expressivity, in this particular case, showing pity. The poem gives us an existential clue: he wants to die:



There once was a morose melonhead,
who sat there all day
and wished he were dead

But you should be careful
about the things that you wish.
Because the last thing he heard
was a deafening squish. (94-95)

The poem contains two stanzas with three and four lines respectively in which the author introduces an initial situation (his death wish) which has an immediate effect (his flattening), emphasizing the cause and effect relationship by means of the movement from the first to the second stanza.

The use of the conjunction “but” allows the authorial voice to change the perspective to address the readers and provide them with a moral: be careful with what you wish for (lines 4-5). With the use of the pronoun “he” (line 6), Burton emphasizes that the character has an identity as a human being, enhancing his relevance in spite of his final end. With regard to the eyes, the image suggests one of the main ideas in Burton’s fiction: eyes are incorruptible or indestructible. Although Melonhead is squashed, his eyes remain looking directly at the readers, a fact that emphasizes once more that eyes are more important than his body: they are the witnesses of the unkindness of human beings because this character suffers the repulsion of society through direct violence, being squished by the context’s stepping on him.

On the other hand, eyes are preserved because they are the windows of the soul. As mentioned above, they are a recurrent index to represent the nature of the characters. Whereas their bodies are represented in a defamiliarized and evanescent or invisible way, their eyes, are more likely to remain intact suggesting their incorruptible soul.

Nevertheless, there is another notion which plays an important role in the representation of the eyes in Burton’s works: the eye as a focalizer (similar to the camera lens in a film that focuses on what they want to show or remark), the presentation of a scene by means of the subjective perception of the character, similar to a point of view shot .

The deep glance, in other words, a glance that surpasses the readers’ soul, plays an important role within the work. Without the power conveyed by the image, the poem would not have sense because we sometimes need to see in order to be able to interpret (should an image of the book be omitted, the poems would lose their essence). On the other hand, it tells that there is something mysterious that has to be decoded, it is a way of making the reader focuses on the illustration rather than on the poem itself, because the letter is just an external, and, consequently, with limited knowledge, vision of the character in the sense that it only reflects a state of affairs (similar to a reporter who is providing information related to what he sees) without taking into account their inner thoughts. There is a clear separation between the illustration (representation of the true condition of the character), and the poem (similar to a kind of testimony, as if the narrator found a description of the character and reproduced it).

As a result, the eye is similar to a key that opens a door, in this case, the door which leads to the encounter between the character and the reader. Once the door is opened, there is a process of judging. Whereas the reader judges whether the information provided in the poem is veritable or not by looking at the illustration, the character judges all the readers, in other words, the world.

This idea can be perfectly exemplified in “the Girl with Many Eyes” (24-25), a poem which enhances the acceptance of strangeness. This image reminds us of a character typically recurrent in Mythology, especially in the *Metamorphoses* written by the Latin poet Ovid: Argos Panoptes¹⁴. To be more specific, Argos was a hundred-eyed giant, the guard that was sent by Hera in order to keep an eye on Io, the secret lover of Zeus. After being murdered by Hermes, this enormous giant was transformed by Hera into a peacock so as to immortalize him. To a certain extent, Argos could have served as a source of inspiration for Burton, fusing the mythological side with the current daily life.

In his poem, Burton alludes, as the title indicates, to a girl with many eyes, a very peculiar character then. The multiplication of this sign of deformity, in this case, the eyes, is a way of directing the readers straight to them, the focal point in the illustration. In this sense, there is a clear representation of the so-called massive deformity or massification structure, that is to say, exploiting the repelling aspect of existing creatures not only by magnifying, but also by massing. The presentation of multiple eyes, distributed in the creature’s face as a set firms up her features, catching the readers’ attention easily.

The fusion of the multiplied eyes (an uncommon sign) as well as the familiar atmosphere (a park), and the recreation of friendship makes us think, once again; about one of Burton’s central purposes: his attempt to integrate these characters in society. The eyes, in this particular context, are a means of attraction, inviting us to look into their minds.

Another possible interpretation of the presence of so many eyes can be closely related to the philosophical view known as perspectivism. There are as many perspectives as people. Our vision of the world and, in this case, of this creature, is subjected to our personal perspective as well as our circumstances. Burton leaves the door open to interpretations but always firming up the role of the outsider as an active focalizer or agent in this democratic play of meanings.

¹⁴ Ovidio. *Metamorfosis*. Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra (2013). p. 228

Furthermore, the introduction of so many eyes and the effect of getting wet as a result of her crying is used by Burton to lessen the degree of monstrosity by showing her human side, and, at the same time, to heighten the idea of grief. This fact can be closely connected with Weinstock's opinion:

There is a deep recurrence in *Oyster Boy* of normalization of the grotesque, from the innocence of the highlighted characters and the harmlessness of their deformities to the acceptance of the monstrous in many of the poems or the expression of pity rather than fear (2013:157).

To multiply the eyes implies making them recurrent and possibly setting up a norm. In this respect, eyes are not only defined in the book by their indestructibility but also by their capacity of being multiplied, as shown in the poem we are analyzing:



One day in the park
I had quite a surprise.
I met a girl
who had many eyes.

5

She was really quite pretty
(and also quite shocking!)
and I noticed she had a mouth,

so we ended up talking.

10 We talked about flowers,
 and her poetry classes,
 and the problems she'd have
 if she ever wore glasses.

15 It's great to know a girl
 who has so many eyes,
 but you really get wet
 when she breaks down and cries. (24-25)

The poem consists of four stanzas (four lines in each one) in which the witness narrator describes the encounter with a peculiar girl. The repulsive but attractive aspect of this girl because of those eyes, grouped together and massified, is expressed by the author's aside, remarking the contrastive feeling he has for her (lines 5-6: "quite pretty and also quite shocking!"), suggesting attraction to the different (they are even more remarked than the mouth). As a result, the poem emphasizes the first part of the body we look at when we meet a new person: the eyes, which can be considered as a means of communication beyond words.

After introducing a meeting by chance (stanza 1), the speaking voice (we can infer it is a boy because of the image) points out the importance as well as the power of the eyes because it is the first feature that strikes him. As meaningful as the poem, the image completes it. There is a contraposition of colours, while the girl with many eyes is colourful, the boy is portrayed in dark, giving his back to the reader, so impossible to identify. This none or everyone represents society, including us as members of it, trying to judge the girl on the basis of what we see but do not categorize (as the interrogation marks suggest). Another interpretation is that the boy could be anyone of us and this is the reason why he is not defined. Furthermore, Burton decides to incorporate vivid colours because he wants to present her from a positive point of view, not as a monster.

Other representations of the eyes in this book transcend the limits of the believable, as in the case of "The Boy with Nails in his Eyes"(2005: 22-23), in which Burton gives

prominence to pity over fear. A boy is the centre of the illustration; he appears with a hammer in his right hand, suggesting a possibility: he is the agent that has replaced the eyes by nails. But, why has he decided to do something so macabre? There is an idea that catches the attention of the reader: the aluminium tree.

Throughout history, the tree has had a strong symbolic meaning: life. The fact that the tree is made of aluminium could be the representation of an artificial life dominated by technology. He has become a victim of the impositions by society and decides to replace his eyes by nails (as a way of catching the attention of the reader) so as not to see. As a stoic, he decorates the tree, standing as a martyr but adapting to society, remaining blind for the external circumstances:



The Boy with Nails in His Eyes

put up his aluminium tree.

It looked pretty strange

because he couldn't really see. (22-23)

The poem consists of four lines divided in two simple sentences so as to emphasize two particular images: the aluminium tree (line 2) and the protagonist's incapacity to see (4). These images are also marked by means of the rhyme, which connects them with the illustration in a direct way. When we read *tree* and *see*, the musicality alongside the fact of being monosyllabic words makes us focus our attention on the creature as well as the tree.

With regard to nails, they can symbolize crucifixion. Consequently, we can infer that there is a clear parallelism between Jesus Christ and the boy. Whereas the former was crucified for being a revolutionary, that is to say, for subverting the socio-political order of the Roman Empire, the latter has been crucified for being different, opposing the standard society. In this sense, the poem unveils another of the features of Burton's representation of eyes: the possibility of being manipulated to deal with transcendental ideas. This is the reason why eyes are not only used for aesthetic purposes.

At the same time, Burton also makes reference to blindness, considering it an element of dislocation. When you are blind, you can live in your inner world, a place where there is no room for rejection and everything is possible thanks to the imagination. Nowadays, blindness can be something dramatic because it is catalogued as a way of suffering. In the Twentieth century, for example, every aspect concerning suffering was, as Zabaluev states, a manifestation of something antiaesthetic:

However, at the beginning of the 20th century there is a turning point in understanding of suffering: now suffering is perceived as something self-valuable and antiaesthetic, and the proof of that is German Expressionism with its aesthetics of disgraceful things. In Expressionism contents prevail over form, and we incur boldness to assert that Expressionism is the art of degrading forms. Expressionists represent suffering as evil, and they represent evil for its sake without seeking for ways of overcoming it (2005:10).

This importance had previously been noted by authors such as John Milton, who lost his eyes in 1651. For him, blindness became a symbol of spiritual vocation. If we compare that idea with this little boy, we can deduce that he prefers to live happily with the potential strength of his inner light (creating his own world) rather than being exposed to the shadows of society, capable of corrupting his soul.

Unlike “The Boy with Nails in his Eyes”, there is a girl introduced in the “Staring Girl” (2005: 10-21) whose curious attitude is staring at anyone or anything. Her eyes evoke, again, a sense of mystery, suggesting countless interpretations. The most symbolic is that of orientation or direction. She is tirelessly looking for something, making readers wonder what she really wants to find:



I once knew a girl
 who would just stand there and stare,
 At anyone or anything,
 she seemed not to care.
 She'd stare at the ground,
 She'd stare at the sky.
 She'd stare at you for hours,
 and you'd never know why.
 But after winning the local staring contest,
 She finally gave her eyes
 a well-deserved rest. (10-21)

5

10

The poem opens up using the first person narrator so as to make this character closer and familiar to the readers (as if the witness narrator knew the focalized outsider). The progression of different images of the girl looking at different directions increases the level of uncertainty, and we wonder if she is looking for something material or not. The orientation of her eyes at different positions can be considered a metaphor for mood. According to Ronnie Dingman (1999:24), moods set the conditions under which our brain operates; they influence the way we emotionally experience and interpret the world.

The mystery ends once she wins the local staring contest. It is then that she decides to give her eyes a rest, suggesting the ending of her quest. In spite of the existence of multiple interpretations about this fact, the most obvious is that her eyes are constantly seeking an identity. In this sense, the girl is obsessed with the need to find a place in reality since winning a prize implies being accepted in society. Possibly, this is the only poem with a happy ending in this book but we have to state that the prize is probably a recognition of her abnormality (the girl as a “freak” with a suspended meaning), so no veritable evidence of acceptance is shown, for she is only accepted as true opposite materialisation of the conventional.

The “Staring Girl” reminds us of Anne Chambers or the “Weird Girl” in *Frankenweenie*, showing an intertextual relationship between Burton’s poems and films thanks to the use of eyes. Both characters are intertextually connected in the sense that they share the same shocking stare as well as the big white eyes, allowing us to identify their characters as well as pay attention to these misfits. By making eyes bigger, Burton achieves to make them remarkable and, at the same time, noticeable, readable, inviting us to look into her soul.



Anne Chamber’s shocking stare

3. Conclusions:

After analyzing the presence of the outsider in Tim Burton's works as well as his/her representation, several conclusions can be drawn:

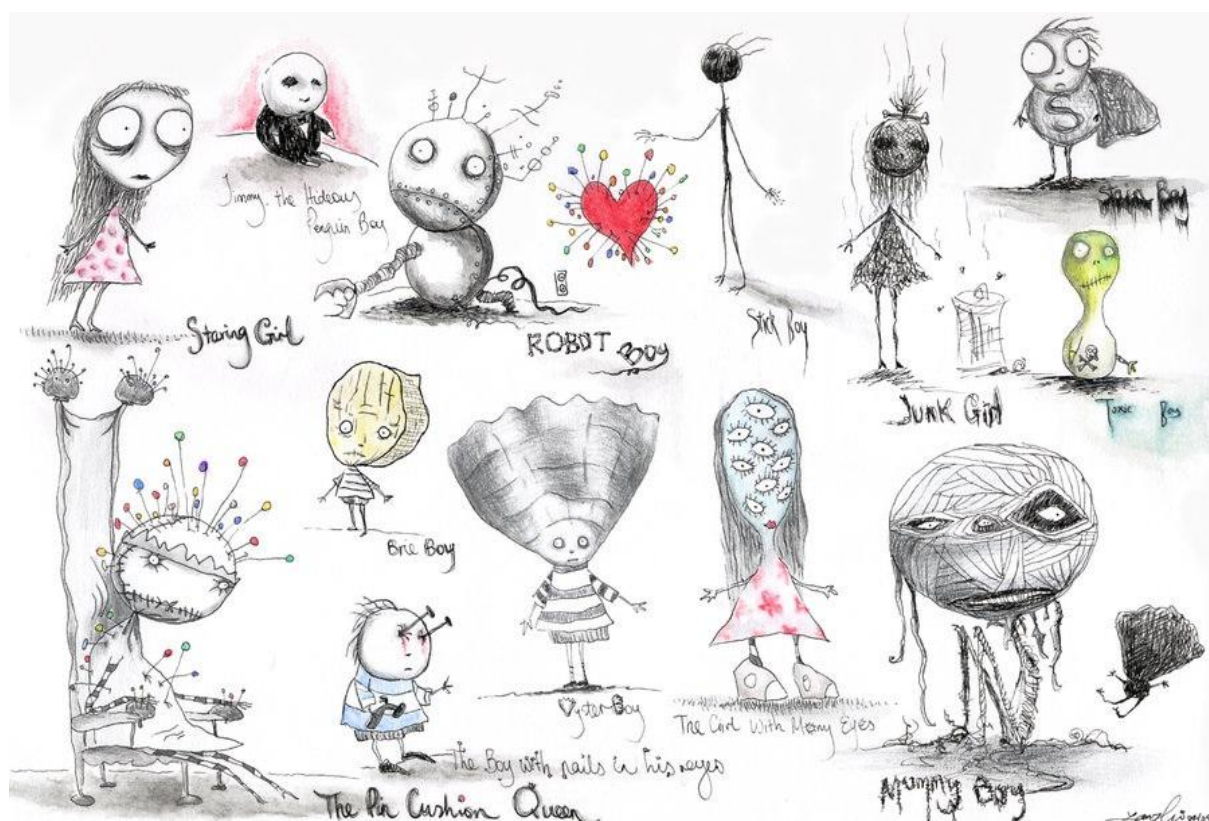
On the one hand, monstrosity, in general, and the eyes, in particular, are used as a bridge to connect both characters and readers. The latter are the maximum exponent within the Burton's universe, showing many inner feelings and having the potential of being multiplied, or even, manipulated in order to express what words cannot show. Nevertheless, the eyes will always be subject to numerous interpretations because defamiliarization can allow us to generate countless representations of them, probably expressing our most intimate thoughts and fears.

The analysis of Burton's characters is a way of reflecting upon the fact that it is difficult to understand where the boundaries of monstrosity lie. Throughout history, the notion of monstrosity has been posed as something negative but what if it is only a distinctive feature - not conventional at all - of a particular person that makes him/her particular; is that person to be defined as a monster?

We are still living in a society full of stereotypes and clichés. So we have a long way ahead. *The Melancholy Death of Oyster Boy* is just a metaphor for the melancholy death of the Other, considered inferior and neglected by social conventions, a mirror that reflects the damnation thousands of people suffer due to their physical image. Burton's intention trespasses frontiers: he wants to enhance the role of the outsider so as to promote a humanistic vision of the different or weird individual. For him, the figure of the outsider is a means to criticise the incompleteness of a society which rejects those who are simply unknown or impossible to label.

In this sense, he prefers attraction rather than rejection. The former can be even achieved by means of monstrosity, as the director shows in most of his films as well as his poems, it becoming a performative trait constituting the nature of every individual. The humanity of his characters lies on their inner feelings and capability to struggle against difficulties. They are true representations of the common human being in spite of their defamiliarized features because they have the power of stirring our emotions. Their presence in films or illustrations moves us as if they were our close friends thanks to the capacity Burton has to connect us with his characters, establishing an empathic link between the reader and them.

With regard to the initial question we posed at the beginning of this approach, whether there is a final and complete integration of these outsiders in society, I personally believe that, unfortunately, as Burton suggests in his films or in *the Melancholy Death of Oyster*, there is little room for them in reality. They try to fit in, but, do not succeed or manage to do so. Hence, Burton wants to raise awareness about this social need and, in doing so, surprisingly, finally integrates them in a better place than society: within our hearts, where we find the motivation to build a better society so as to live without allowing rejection or discrimination rule our day by day. Burton has taught us that if we are able to feel pity for these characters, we will be able to evolve as human beings because accepting the outsider is accepting ourselves since we are, in a sense or in essence, also outsiders.



“One person’s craziness is another person’s reality”

(Tim Burton)

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