

***Tim Burton: The Monster and the Crowd: A Post-Jungian Perspective*, Helena Bassil-Morozow. London and New York: Routledge, 2010 (200 pages). ISBN: 9780415489713.**

A Review by Deborah Mellamphy, University College Cork

It is nothing new to discuss cinema in terms of analytical psychology: Gregory Matthew Singh's *Film After Jung: Post-Jungian Approaches to Film Theory* (2009), *Jung and Film: Post-Jungian Takes on the Moving Image* (2001), edited by Christopher Hauke and Ian Alister, and *Mis/takes: Archetype, Myth and Identity in Screen Fiction* (2006) by Terrie Waddell all discuss archetypes and the concept of the collective unconscious within classical and contemporary cinema. In *Tim Burton: The Monster and the Crowd: A Post-Jungian Perspective*, Helena Bassil-Morozow utilises post-Jungian theory to analyse the concept of creativity within the filmmaker's entire oeuvre from *Vincent* (1982), his first short made while working at Disney Studios in Burbank, to *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* (2007), making it an ambitious and varied psychoanalytical study of some of the most popular and financially successful Hollywood films of the past thirty years. In her preface, Bassil-Morozow justifies her approach to Burton's films, tracing her interest to her own childhood in the Soviet Union "in the predominantly collective mentality which presumes that the individual's life, both personal and social, belongs to the community" (ix). She explains that Burton's films are appealing within such a society as they feature, and celebrate, the maladapted, autonomous outsider, thus resisting conformity. Bassil-Morozow also explains that her upbringing is similarly responsible for her interest in Jungian psychology, particularly in the concept of "individuation", or how a person attains the self, thus developing "into an autonomous individual", which occurs through the individual's encounter with the psyche and the bringing of the unconscious into the conscious (Preface). According to Jungian psychology, neurosis, which occurs when the psyche is unable to adapt, is a common trait in the maladapted autonomous individual. These are precisely the types of characters (or "monsters", as Bassil-Morozow calls them) in which Burton specialises. The author discusses the social conflict that exists between the monster, or outcast individual, and the crowd, or collective, mainstream society. Her central treatise, expressed by Dr. Luke Hockley in his foreword, is: "how is it possible to live in a society where you don't feel you belong?" (xi). Bassil-Morozow fully justifies her theoretical framework at the beginning of the book by relating Burton's filmmaking to Jungian theory, commenting that "Tim Burton's concerns, it appears, are similar to Jung's" (47). Both focus on the "outcast" figure, whose individualism sets him/her at odds with mainstream society, and both are concerned with this figure's conscious and unconscious relationship with the rest of society.

Each of the book's six chapters takes a different archetypal individual character and, using a post-Jungian analysis, examines how the character became maladapted and the implications of this for society. Bassil-Morozow moves from the child to the monster, the superhero, the genius, the maniac and, finally, to the monstrous society, assigning a range of

Burton's male and female characters to one, or sometimes two, of these categories, an approach that is overly reductive. Chapter One is undoubtedly the most significant chapter as it focuses on childhood, the most fundamental stage of individuation for Jung, but also for Burton, as his characters, even if they are grown, remain infantile and deeply affected by their childhoods. Bassil-Morozow explains Jung's belief that childhood "represents the 'infancy' of the individuation process, its very beginnings" (34). This is the stage when an individual's personality is established, determining his/her autonomy and lifelong social relationships. Abandonment by parental figures is one negative childhood experience that produces the disturbed individual. As Bassil-Morozow argues, Burton's films are full of abandoned and damaged children, from *Vincent's* Vincent Malloy to Edward Scissorhands, to Pee-Wee Herman, to Willie Wonka. She reminds us that "Burton's 'children' never become 'adult heroes'—i.e. they never grow up or outgrow their infantile complexes. They prefer to continue existing in proximity to the darkness of the unconscious, rather than adopt an adult, mature, conscious attitude to the world" (30). The remainder of the book examines the many archetypal possibilities that result from the maladapted ego.

"The Monster" is the focus of Chapter Two, which includes a rigorous discussion of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818). Bassil-Morozow argues that all of Burton's monsters derive from the Prometheus myth, as the question of the father is responsible for the disturbance of many of Burton's characters. Absent fathers occur in many of Burton's films including *Edward Scissorhands* (1990), which is discussed here. Bassil-Morozow discusses Burton's use of visual metonymy to demonstrate the fragmentation of the eponymous character following his abandonment. She contends, however, that the "evil" shifts in this case from the father to the community are due to the unscrupulous and callous nature of the members of the neighbourhood. Thus, the strength of the individual character is reinforced, regardless of how "strange" they are. Here, the author allows insufficient space to discuss Burton's films within the context of the cited mythology, instead relying too heavily on her analysis of Shelley's *Frankenstein*, accompanied by unnecessarily long quotations, which renders this chapter one of the book's weakest.

Chapter Three is dedicated to "The Superhero". Bassil-Morozow focuses on the ambiguity, moral and otherwise, of Burton's superheroes, arguing that they possess *doppelgangers*. For example, she discusses Selena Kyle/Catwoman as Jungian anima, or the ideal feminine image of Bruce Wayne/Batman, suggesting that this indicates Wayne's struggle to "resolve the cluster of problems with his inner feminine" (92). However, such a resolution would result in the maturation of Bruce Wayne/Batman and, hence, the end of Batman. The superhero is thus intrinsically a childish persona. Bassil-Morozow proceeds to discuss the ambiguous nature of Edward Bloom in *Big Fish* (2003), Ichabod Crane in *Sleepy Hollow* (1999) and Victor in *Corpse Bride* (2005), arguing that each is a character "in between" different worlds and states and that each is necessarily childish owing to their individualism. The term "superhero" is applied too broadly here as Edward Bloom, Ichabod Crane and Victor are referred to as such, alongside Batman, with this label never discussed or justified.

The focus of Chapter Four, "The Genius", is the origin of talent in Burton's "monsters", a concept that Bassil-Morozow relates to Tarkovsky's belief that art brings us closer to childhood states and that to be a creative person one must necessarily retain one's childishness. To attain such creativity and to develop as a genius, one must be emotionally damaged by a "wounder", who is usually a parent (116). Bassil-Morozow discusses the

examples of Ed Wood and Willie Wonka, using the overly reductive allegory of Michael Jackson in relation to the latter character.

Chapter Five, “The Maniac”, discusses the characters of Betelgeuse, the Joker and Sweeney Todd in relation to the archetypes of the “trickster”, which is the unconscious maniac, and the “shadow”, or the conscious maniac. Bassil-Morozow argues that the latter occurs when disturbed children grow up and “cross the line between infantile rage and adult aggression” (140). According to Jung, the shadow can lead to the desire for power and to psychosis and criminal behaviour. Bassil-Morozow also discusses Jung’s theory of the collective shadow: a “collective projection...a summation of individual ‘hatreds’, directed against another group of individuals, a culturally and socially different ‘enemy’”, a theory that Jung used to explain the hatred directed towards the Jewish population before and during World War II (144). Bassil-Morozow applies this theory particularly in relation to Burton’s two *Batman* films and *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, explaining that this is what causes Burton’s autonomous characters to become demonised and ejected from society.

The final—and shortest—chapter underlines and fully illustrates the book’s argument through an innovative reading of “The Monstrous Society”. Focusing on Burton’s two critical and box-office failures, *Planet of the Apes* (2001) and *Mars Attacks!* (1996), Bassil-Morozow attributes their failure to the fact that they do not focus on individual characters, but on societal systems and on “the American collective shadow” (173), making the films intrinsically more politicised. She argues that Burton’s art is located in his depiction and celebration of outcast monsters, not on larger examinations of society.

Burton’s enormous popularity makes this well-written and interesting book significant and timely, although its synchronic structure renders it repetitive at times. It is refreshing to read a theoretical book on Burton rather than a biography that simply links the filmmaker’s *mise-en-scène* and themes with his childhood, an approach that Bassil-Morozow believes is too simplistic. At times obsessed with ascribing authorship, she discusses Burton as a “different type of auteur”, arguing that he is anti-authoritative and “anti-auteurish” because he doesn’t storyboard and freely acknowledges others’ central contribution to the films (7, 11). However, while she begins by discussing the book within the canon of auteur studies, she also argues that “authorship can only be approximate” (8).

This is an ambitious book, which succeeds in attributing critical and academic gravitas to Burton’s films. Although Bassil-Morozow uses challenging Jungian psychology in her study, the accessibility of the widely known, mainstream films and characters discussed makes it accessible also. Yet the book only scratches the surface of the many layers of artistic merit and academic worth of Burton’s films. The brief consideration of gender representation in the cases of Pee-Wee Herman, Ichabod Crane and Catwoman illustrates the need to conduct further critical study in this area. Notwithstanding, the book emphasises the theoretical richness and epistemological value of popular culture, leading us to question the distinction between high and low culture as well as causing us to rethink what the academy considers valuable artistic cinema.

Works Cited

- Batman*. Dir. Tim Burton. Warner Brothers, 1989. DVD.
- Batman Returns*. Dir. Tim Burton. Warner Brothers, 1992. DVD.
- Big Fish*. Dir. Tim Burton. Columbia Pictures/Cohen Company/Zanuck Company, 2003. DVD.
- Corpse Bride*. Dir. Tim Burton. Warner Brothers, 2005. DVD.
- Edward Scissorhands*. Dir. Tim Burton. Twentieth Century Fox, 1990. DVD.
- Hauke, Christopher and Ian Alister. *Jung and Film: Post-Jungian Takes on the Moving Image*. Hove, East Sussex; New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2001. Print.
- Mars Attacks!* Dir. Tim Burton. Warner Brothers, 1996. DVD.
- Planet of the Apes*. Dir. Tim Burton. Twentieth Century Fox/Zanuck Company, 2001. DVD.
- Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein; Or, The Modern Prometheus*. Ware: Wordsworth Classics, 1999. Print.
- Singh, Gregory Matthew. *Film After Jung: Post-Jungian Approaches to Film Theory*. New York: Routledge, 2009. Print.
- Sleepy Hollow*. Dir. Tim Burton. Paramount Pictures/ Scott Rudin Productions/Mandalay Pictures. 1999. DVD.
- Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*. Dir. Tim Burton. Warner Brothers/DreamWorks Pictures/Zanuck Company, 2007. DVD.
- Vincent*. Dir. Tim Burton. 1982. Included on *The Nightmare before Christmas Special Edition*. Disney Studio, 2003. DVD.
- Waddell, Terrie. *Mis/takes: Archetype, Myth and Identity in Screen Fiction*. London; New York: Routledge, 2006. Print.

Deborah Mellamphy completed her PhD at University College Cork in 2010. Her thesis is entitled *Hollyweird: Gender Transgression in the Collaborations of Tim Burton and Johnny Depp*. She teaches undergraduate and postgraduate courses in Film Studies at UCC, and has published journal articles in *Widescreen* and *Film and Film Culture*, as well as a book chapter in *Dexter and Philosophy: Mind over Spatter* (Open Court, 2011).