

**EYE PROTEIN?**  
— **The Cinema of Attractions**  
**in Guillermo del Toro's *Hellboy* films**

University of Jyväskylä  
Art History (Digital Culture)  
Department of Art and Culture Studies

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Master's Thesis

February 2014



# JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO

Tiedekunta – Faculty Faculty of Humanities	Laitos – Department Department of Art and Culture Studies
Tekijä – Author Mirkka Suhonen	
Työn nimi – Title EYE PROTEIN – The Cinema of Attractions in Guillermo del Toro's <i>Hellboy</i> films	
Oppiaine – Subject Art History (Digital Culture)	Työn laji – Level Master's Thesis
Aika – Month and year 02/2014	Sivumäärä – Number of pages 101
Tiivistelmä – Abstract	
<p>The cinema of attractions is a phrase coined by Tom Gunning and André Gaudreault, referring to an aesthetic of astonishment that dominated the early film prior narrativization. It is a cinema that keeps the spectator aware of the act of looking by taking direct contact and engaging curiosity. According to Gunning, it never truly vanished, and continues to serve as an essential part of narrative films. The concept has been highly influential. In recent years, there has been discussion whether it would be useful also in examining Hollywood's contemporary spectacle film. Driven by the spectacular, Hollywood today is said to be closer in spirit to the cinema of attractions than it has been in decades. Emphasis on the spectacular, frequently associated with the digital threshold, has led to dismissal of spectacular Hollywood blockbusters as empty spectacles, nothing more than special effects. It has fed concern for the demise of the narrative, and even the death of film itself. It is argued, however, that these films continue to tell reasonably coherent stories, and that the relation between spectacle and narrative should not be conceived in terms of opposition but dialectical tension. In this thesis, the cinema of attractions is used as a tool in examining the part spectacle actually plays in Hollywood's spectacular blockbusters. Because what is spectacular is not only the full use of (digital) sfx, an examination on the actual traits of the cinema of attractions is found necessary.</p> <p>The films analyzed from the frame of reference of the cinema of attractions are Guillermo del Toro's comic book based <i>Hellboy</i> (2004), and especially its sequel <i>Hellboy II: The Golden Army</i> (2008). The view is cultural historical, as it is supposed that the single case of <i>Hellboy</i> films can tell something general about Hollywood's contemporary spectacle film. It is asked how the traits of the cinema of attractions return in <i>Hellboy</i> films, and in process, how the concept works in analyzing new cinematic spectacles. By comparing the starting points of Mike Mignola's original <i>Hellboy</i> comics series and the first film adaptation, it becomes clear that the film strives for both spectacular and narrative appeals, and that these tendencies are not necessarily in contradiction with each other. It seems, however, that spectacle is still considered subordinate in comparison to the narrative. In the spirit of Erkki Huhtamo's media-archaeology, a cultural historical look on the cinematic spectacle is provided. It is argued that spectacle has always played a core part in film, and it is no wonder, as the roots of cinema are in the traditions of magic lantern and other forms of pre-cinema. After analyzing <i>The Golden Army</i>, it is confirmed that <i>Hellboy</i> films represent multiple traits of the cinema of attractions, such as exhibition of oddities and the human body (violence, death, decay, and erotic display), exotic sceneries, feel of novelty, more or less direct address to the spectator, etc. Attractions, however, are very much intertwined with the narrative. Still, it is argued that narrative purposes do not necessarily "tame" attractions, as often implied. The concept proves a helpful tool in examining Hollywood's contemporary spectacle film, for it reveals the spectacular core of film underneath the narrative line, and examining spectacle in relation to narrative helps see how these two tendencies can coexist. Finally, it is proposed that eye candy of attractions can be seen as "eye protein" (as del Toro puts it), because of its narrative purposes, but also because it is important as such. Experiencing attractions soothes anxieties regarding the changing world, and feeds our imagination.</p>	
Asiasanat – Keywords: the cinema of attractions, blockbuster, Guillermo del Toro, Hellboy	
Säilytyspaikka – Depository	
Muita tietoja – Additional information	

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Tiedekunta – Faculty Humanistinen tiedekunta	Laitos – Department Taiteiden ja kulttuurin tutkimuksen laitos
Tekijä – Author Mirkka Suhonen	
Työn nimi – Title EYE PROTEIN – Attraktioelokuva Guillermo del Toron <i>Hellboy</i> -elokuviissa	
Oppiaine – Subject Taidehistoria (Digitaalinen kulttuuri)	Työn laji – Level Pro gradu
Aika – Month and year 02/2014	Sivumäärä – Number of pages 101
Tiivistelmä – Abstract	
<p>Attraktioelokuva on Tom Gunningin ja André Gaudreaultin kehittämä fraasi kuvaamaan hämmästyksen estetiikkaa, joka oli vallalla varhaisessa elokuvassa ennen narrativisaatiota. Kyseessä on elokuva, joka pitää katsojan tietoisena katsomisesta ottamalla kontaktia katsojaan ja kiehtomalla tämän uteliaisuutta. Attraktion estetiikka ei Gunningin mukaan koskaan hävinnyt, vaan jäi olennaiseksi osaksi kertovaa elokuvaa. Konsepti on ollut hyvin vaikutusvaltainen. Viime vuosina on virinnyt kysymys voisiko sitä käyttää myös tutkiessa Hollywoodin nykyaikaista spehtaakkelielokuvaa; sen sanotaan olevan hengeltään lähempänä attraktioelokuvaa kuin vuosikymmeniin. Spehtaakkelin korostunut asema—joka usein liitetään digitaalisuuteen—on johtanut Hollywood-blockbustereiden pitämiseen tyhjinä spehtaakkeleina, pelkinä erikoistehosteina. On pelätty, että elokuvan narratiivi olisi kokonaan häviämässä. Vaikuttaa kuitenkin vahvasti siltä, että nämä elokuvat kertovat edelleen kohtalaisen johdonmukaisia tarinoita, eikä spehtaakkelia ja narratiivia tulisikaan tarkastella toisilleen vastakkaisina. Lisäksi on huomattava, että spehtaakkelimainen ei merkitse vain (digitaalisia) erikoistehosteita, kuten usein annetaan ymmärtää.</p> <p>Tässä tutkimuksessa attraktioelokuvan konseptia käytetään työkaluna nykyaikaisen elokuvaspehtaakkelin avaamiseen. Tutkittavat elokuvat ovat Guillermo del Toron sarjakuvataustaiset <i>Hellboy (2004)</i> ja erityisesti sen jatko-osa <i>Hellboy II: Kultainen armeija (2008)</i>. Näkökulma on kulttuurihistoriallinen, ja yksittäisen tapauksen oletetaan kertovan jotain myös yleisesti Hollywoodin nykyaikaisesta spehtaakkelielokuvasta. Kysytään, kuinka attraktioelokuvan piirteet ilmenevät <i>Hellboy</i>-elokuviissa, ja kuinka konsepti toimii uusien elokuvaspehtaakkeliin tutkimisessa. Vertailemalla Mike Mignolan alkuperäisiä <i>Hellboy</i>-sarjakuvia ensimmäiseen elokuvasovitukseen, selviää että elokuva pyrkii panostamaan niin spehtaakkeliin kuin kerrontaankin, ja että nämä pyrkimykset eivät ole välttämättä ristiriidassa keskenään. Ilmenee, että spehtaakkelia pidetään edelleen alisteisena kerronnalle. Erkki Huhtamon media-arkeologian hengessä toteutettu kulttuurihistoriallinen katsaus elokuvaspehtaakkelin historiaan kuitenkin osoittaa, että spehtaakkeli on aina ollut elokuvan ytimessä. Tämä ei ole ihme, koska elokuvan juuret ovat taikalyhydyssä ja muissa spehtaakkelimaisissa esielokuvan muodoissa. Perustuen <i>Kultaisen armeijan</i> analyysiin, päätellään että <i>Hellboy</i>-elokuvat edustavat monia attraktioelokuvasta tuttuja piirteitä kuten outouksien esittelyä, ruumiin attraktioita (väkivalta, kuolema, hajoaminen, ja myös eroottisuus), eksoottisia näkymiä, uutuuden tuntua, enemmän tai vähemmän suoraa katsojan puhuttelua, jne. Attraktiot ovat kuitenkin hyvin pitkälti yhteenkietoutuneet narratiivin kanssa. Tämä ei silti välttämättä ”kesytä” niitä, kuten usein esitetään. Attraktioelokuva osoittautuu hyödylliseksi työkaluksi Hollywoodin nykyaikaisen spehtaakkelielokuvan tutkimiseen. Se paljastaa spehtaakkeliytimen kerronnallisen kaaren takaa, ja tutkimalla spehtaakkelia suhteessa narratiiviin auttaa ymmärtämään kuinka nämä kaksi pyrkimystä voivat olla olemassa yhtä aikaa. Lopuksi esitetään, että attraktioiden silmäkarkki voidaan tulkita myös silmäproteiiniksi (”eye protein” –del Toro), koska sillä on kerronnallisia tehtäviä, ja koska sillä on arvoa itsessään. Attraktioiden kokeminen lievittää muuttuvan maailman aikaansaamia ahdistuksen tunteita ja toisaalta ruokkii mielikuvitusta.</p>	
Asiasanat – Keywords: attraktioelokuva, blockbuster, Guillermo del Toro, Hellboy	
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## PREFACE

### Into the exhibition

*On a sunny day in June 2009, I was strolling in Eixample, Barcelona—when I saw this.*



1. Kroenen at the *Art of Deception* exhibition in Palau Robert.

*Of course I got curious: What is this dreadful, disfigured body, and what is it doing here, lying stiff in an archway by a lovely, peaceful park area? Approaching, I noticed some kind of a metallic object planted in its chest... and then it struck me. What I was looking at was K. R. Kroenen, a villain from the film *Hellboy* (2004), directed by Mexican visual artist Guillermo del Toro. I looked around—carefully, for in the scene where Kroenen appears like this, he ends up coming back to life!—and saw more creatures in glass cabinets. Behind me, a big sign with a Spanish headline and a picture of the Faun from another del Toro film, *Pan's Labyrinth*<sup>1</sup> (2006), advertised some sort of an*

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<sup>1</sup>aka *El Laberinto del Fauno*.

*exhibition. Without further thought, I hurried up the stairs, asked for a ticket, but did not get one—the exhibition was free of charge and even photographing was allowed!*

*Receiving a leaflet<sup>2</sup>, I rushed to a doorway leading to the exhibition's indoor section. There the Pale Man, a terrifying baby-eating monster from the same Pan's Labyrinth, already sat waiting. His presence as a physical prop felt nearly as frightening as in his memorable screen moment: sitting still by a set dining-table, facing a plate containing two red eye balls; a young girl examining him warily. Like Kroenen, the Pale Man too was to wake up from his deathlike slumber, after the cursed meal was touched by the lured, hungry child. Hereby, mixed with emotions of fright and delight, watching my back but looking much forward to more surprises, I stepped in and began to fill up the little that was left in my camera's memory card...*

It goes without saying, I knew these monsters were *not* going to stir awake and attack me. Yet I wanted to imagine they might, just for the sake of the experience. Silly? Perhaps. Thrilling? Most definitely! Again my thoughts go back to the genesis of film, in which I have been academically interested for a few years now.<sup>3</sup> I recall the story of a naive spectator who, foolstruck by the realism of the moving image, screamed, and attempted to dodge the approaching train in *Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat (1896)*<sup>4</sup>. Later on, the story has proved more likely a myth; a media-exaggerated version of the actual happenings, as Erkki Huhtamo (1997) puts it. Most likely, the early spectator was well aware of the presence of a medium. If she did respond to the approaching train, it was because she wanted to give in to the thrilling experience, and because others did the same. The effect must be familiar to viewers of all those massive 3D films playing as I am writing this thesis.<sup>5</sup>

Tom Gunning (1989/2009) states there is no doubt that a reaction of astonishment and even a type of terror accompanied early film exhibitions—but that does not mean the early spectator would have naively confused the image for its reality. On the contrary, it was partly this acknowledgement of the capacity of the new technology to create so authentic an illusion that caused the reaction. Gunning stresses what is too often left unmentioned, that

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<sup>2</sup>Palau Robert 2009a.

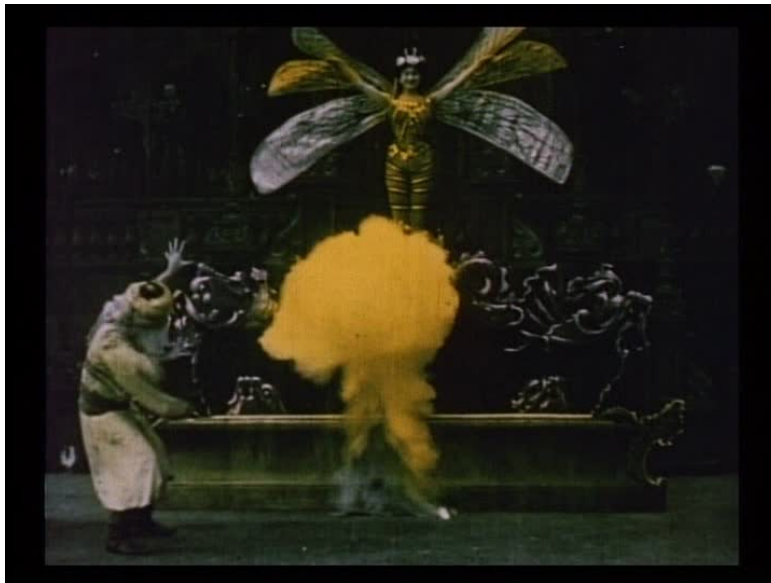
<sup>3</sup>My interest in the birth of film dates back to 2007—2008, to the time I wrote my first Master's thesis for the University of Lapland. The thesis was titled *Birthmyth of Film — A cultural historical approach on film education of young people*, and it studied the use of cultural history as a view in teaching film history. The birthmyth of film refers to many myths—value-loaded, disputable or false information—surrounding early cinema. Suhonen 2008.

<sup>4</sup>aka *L'arrivée d'un train à La Ciotat*, by Auguste and Louis Lumière. *The Movies Begin (2002)*.

<sup>5</sup>Huhtamo 1997, 40–41; see also Gunning 1989/2009, 736–738, 743; Bolter & Grusin 2002, 155–156.

early Lumière exhibitions were first presented as still images. The commentator (conventionally used to demonstrate films<sup>6</sup>) made sure that the audience's full attention was on the screen before the image was set to motion. This *"sense of expectation, sharpened to an intense focus on a single instant transformation, heightened the startling impact of the first projections"*. The audience got what they came for: the marvel of motion, enhanced by preparing for and delaying its appearance.<sup>7</sup>

Restored to its proper historical context, the early film was born into a vivid field of competing visual entertainments, to a tradition that valued realism largely for its uncanny effects. Many early spectators recognized the first projections of films as a crowning achievement in the sophisticated art of magic theatre. At the turn of the century, this tradition used the newest technology to make visual something that was impossible to believe. The man often titled the father of fiction film, Georges Méliès, says his film career was deeply linked to his other doings at Robert Houdini magic theatre. For him, the film was simply a new way to conjure magic tricks. Méliès said himself: *"As for the scenario, the 'fable', or 'tale', I only consider it at the end. I can state that the scenario constructed in this manner has no importance, since I use it merely as a pretext for the 'stage effects', the 'tricks', or for a nicely arranged tableau"*.<sup>8</sup> Developing one of the earliest forms of cinema, the trick film, illusionists and showmen like him laid the foundation of special effects still used today.<sup>9</sup>



2. Ferdinand Zecca's *The Golden Beetle* (1907)<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup>Enticknap 2005, 102; Gunning 2006, 37.

<sup>7</sup>Gunning 1989/2009, 740–742; see also Huhtamo 1997, 27; Røssaak 2006, 321–322.

<sup>8</sup>Gunning 1989/2009, 738–739; Gunning 1986/1990/2009 382–383; Huhtamo 2000, 9.

<sup>9</sup>Barnouw 1981, 6; McClean 2007, 6; Huhtamo 2000, 12.

<sup>10</sup>aka *Le Scarabée d'or*. *The Movies Begin* (2002).



*The next moment I realized I had entered an exhibition about special effects. I thanked my luck, for on top of all the other happy coincidences, I seemed to have arrived at the right time. I was the only visitor present for most of my visit... or could it be that I only felt I was? I just barely noticed a guard standing by the wall, sometimes walking closer to view the curious objects behind the glass. The exhibition was cleverly titled 'Art of Deception' (L'Art de l'engany), referring to the nature of special effects. Specialized props, small-scale representations, prosthetic make-up and animatronics<sup>11</sup> as well as short video documentaries were set to display a glimpse to the industry and craftsmanship of non-digital film-making, and especially del Toro film. Being a fan of Mike Mignola's comic book creation Hellboy, I was thrilled to see *The Right Hand of Doom*, and other props from the two Hellboy films. The history of special effects was traced to milestones such as *King Kong* (1933), *Jason and the Argonauts* (1963) and *The Terminator* (1984). To my surprise, also the tentacle-head of Xavier Cambarro from the B-movie *Dagon* (2001) was there. Cut-off "body parts" and other things grotesque necessitated a warning that "some viewers may find the content disturbing".<sup>12</sup>*

Although some impulse towards storytelling exists from the beginning of cinema, Gunning argues that what dominated was an aesthetic of astonishment he refers to as "the cinema of attractions". At first, the film as a technology was enough of an attraction—films per se were evidently of no special interest, as screenings were promoted with new inventions and cinematic techniques.<sup>13</sup> But once a spectator had experienced "the train effect", Charles Musser (2006) says its thrill rapidly abated, forcing producers and exhibitors to mobilize other methods of maintaining interest. Attention was transferred more and more to the films themselves. The audience was offered sights of exotic, distant landscapes, and other things spectacular—even shocking.<sup>14</sup> The concept of the cinema of attractions has raised a lot of attention, and has been widely influential. In recent years there has been discussion, whether or not it could also be used in examining today's Hollywood's special effects cinema.<sup>15</sup> Inspired by the exhibition at Palau Robert, I will examine Guillermo del Toro's *Hellboy* film series in order to look into the "new cinema of attractions".

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<sup>11</sup>"Animatronics are electronic and mechanical creatures that performs as actors on a live-action shoot. (...) sometimes an animatronic is an entire creature, while on other occasions it is only a head worn by a performer in a body costume." Netzley 2000, 12.

<sup>12</sup>Palau Robert 2009a&b.

<sup>13</sup>Gunning 1986/1990/2009, 382–383; Gunning 1989/2009, 742–743; Gunning 2006, 36–37; see also Huhtamo 1997, 27; Seppälä 2010, 16.

<sup>14</sup>Musser 2006, 169; Gunning 1986/1990/2009, 381–382; Gunning 1989/2009, 744, 746; see also Seppälä 2010, 17.

<sup>15</sup>Strauven 2006; Jenkins 2007, 7; Bukatman 2006, 71.

## 1.2 The (new) Cinema of Attractions

“The cinema of attractions” is a phrase coined by film historians Tom Gunning and André Gaudreault in the mid-1980s. Its purpose was, not to rename a period, but to generate discussion on the early cinema, and to provide a tool for critical analysis. In his influential essay “*The Cinema of Attraction[s]: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde*” (1986/1990/2006), Gunning states that the history of early cinema, like the history of cinema in general, has been written and theorized under the hegemony of narrative films. In process, the early cinema has been misinterpreted as primitive, although it was not dominated by the narrative impulse. Instead, it is “*harnessing of visibility, this act of showing and exhibition*”, which the first decade of cinema displays most intensely. Production was focused on actuality film (travelogues, newsreels, re-enactments) and even the films involving a plot are basically series of displays, while the story simply provides a frame for demonstrating the magical possibilities of the cinema.<sup>16</sup>



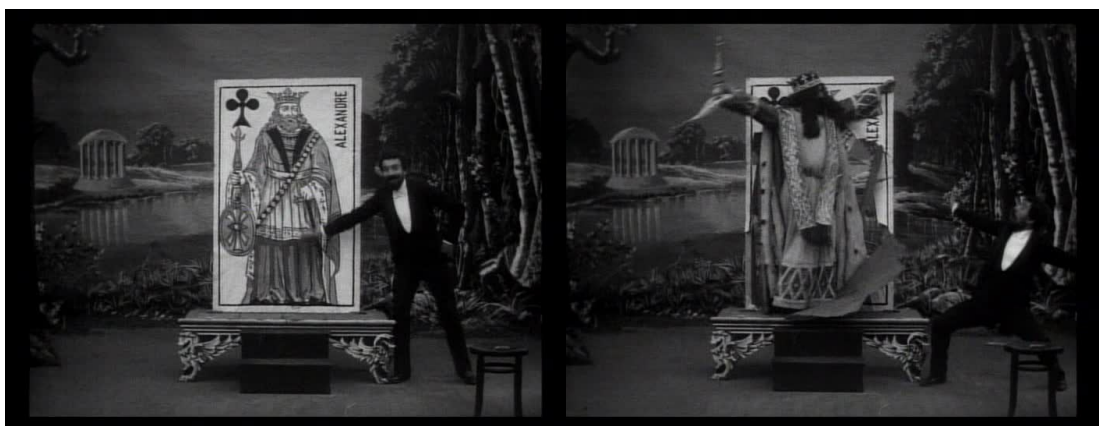
3. Foreign sights in the early cinema: *Niagara [Les Chutes]* (1897) and *Spanish Bullfight* (1900) by Lumière.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup>Gunning 1986/1990/2006, 381–383; Gunning 1993/2004, 41–42; Gunning 2006, 36, 38; see also Strauven 2006b, 11.

<sup>17</sup>*The Movies Begin* (2002).

The term “attraction” comes from film director and theorist Sergei Eisenstein, who used it to define the sensual or psychological impact subjected to a spectator. Although experimentally regulated and mathematically calculated "montage of attractions" demanded by Eisenstein differs enormously from the early films, the avant-garde relation to the spectator—“*that of exhibitionist confrontation rather than diegetic absorption*”—is what Gunning states a confluence. Instead of evolving events, the cinema of attractions is a cinema of moments, willing to rupture a fictional world for a chance to gain the attention of the spectator. The spectator is held aware of the act of looking, and her curiosity is constantly being engaged. In *Living Playing Cards (1904)*<sup>18</sup>, Georges Méliès is shown performing a magic act using cinematic tricks. In contrast to rules of the classical narrative cinema, the performer looks at the camera, gestures towards the spectator, points at things she ought to pay attention to, and trick by trick builds up tension preparing the audience response to the final *clou*<sup>19, 20</sup>. These are all traits of the cinema of attractions, as summed up by Gunning (2006):

*“The drive towards display, rather than creation of a fictional world; a tendency towards punctual temporality, rather than extended development; a lack of interest in character “psychology” or the development of motivation; and a direct, often marked, address to the spectator at the expense of the creation of diegetic coherence, are attributes that define attractions, along with its power of “attraction”, its ability to be attention-grabbing (usually being exotic, unusual, unexpected, novel).”*<sup>21</sup>



4. The cinema of attractions displays its visibility. *The Living Playing Cards (1904)* by Méliès.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup>aka *Les Cartes Vivantes. The Movies Begin (2002)*.

<sup>19</sup>aka the climactic moment. Gunning 1989/2009, 744.

<sup>20</sup>Gunning 1986/1990/2006, 382–385; Gunning 1989/2009, 742–744.

<sup>21</sup>Gunning 2006, 36.

<sup>22</sup>*The Movies Begin (2002)*.

The origins from where Eisenstein selected the term attraction are well-known. Attraction was (and is) a term of the fairground, and was widely used in popular entertainments generally to describe the ability of a novel display to attract spectators. Eisenstein's "attraction" comes from his favorite fairground attraction: the rollercoaster. By knowingly referring to Eisenstein's famous concept, Gunning implies that the early film tradition was closely linked to that of the fairground. He parallels the reaction to the on-rushing train in *Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat (1896)*<sup>23</sup> to the recently appearing amusement park attractions that combined sensations of acceleration and falling with a security guaranteed by modern industrial technology. There were even popular film traditions that clearly more resembled a fairground attraction than legitimate theatre. For example The Hale's Tours (the largest chain of theatres exclusively showing films before 1906) had theatres arranged as a train car. "A conductor" took the tickets and as "passengers" were seated, the film screen, acting as a window, presented views from a moving train, accompanied by appropriate sound effects.<sup>24</sup>



5. Machinists could recut the films and play with them. For example *Demolition of a Wall (1896; Lumières)*<sup>25</sup> was screened again backwards to make the demolished wall bounce back up!

The exhibitionist display of the cinema of attractions belongs most obviously to the period before dominance of editing, when films consisting of a single shot made up the bulk of film production. Gunning proposes that it was in between 1907 and 1913 when cinematic discourse began to serve the purpose of storytelling. Direct address to the spectator started to be seen as a distraction to a self-closed diegetic universe. Playful "tricks" were transformed into "*elements of dramatic expression, entries into psychology of character and the world of fiction*". However, Gunning claims that even with the introduction of editing and more

<sup>23</sup>*The Movies Begin (2002)*.

<sup>24</sup>Gunning 1986/1990/2006, 383–385; Gunning 1989/2009, 742–743; Gunning 2006, 35–36; see also Musser 1994/2006, 391.

<sup>25</sup>aka *Démolition d'un mur. The Movies Begin (2002)*.

complex narratives, the aesthetic of attractions never disappears. Rather, it goes underground, both into certain avant-garde practices and as an essential component of narrative films, more evident in some genres, like musicals and slapstick comedy. According to Gunning's (1986/1990/2006) famous argument: "*in some sense recent spectacle cinema has reaffirmed its roots in stimulus and carnival rides, in what might be called the Spielberg-Lucas-Coppola cinema of effects*".<sup>26</sup>

This statement has raised a lot of discussion, and also critique, in the field of film studies<sup>27</sup>. Charles Musser (2006 & 1994/2006) thinks that by widening the concept's reach from early films to other periods in film history, Gunning made a mistake. Musser argues that only in cinema's initial novelty period (1895—1897) was cinema of attractions dominant, and that storytelling had a more important role in the beginning than Gunning is willing to recognize.<sup>28</sup> Gunning's respond is that his concept has been hastily misread. He (1993/2004) says "*emphasis on display rather than storytelling should not be taken as a monolithic definition of early cinema, a term that forms a binary opposition with the narrative form of classical cinema. (...) The desire to display may interact with the desire to tell a story, and part of the challenge of the early film analysis lies in tracing the interaction of attractions and narrative organization.*" He does admit, however, that Musser's claim of limiting the concept only to the novelty period makes much sense.<sup>29</sup>

In the anthology *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded* (2006; ed. Wanda Strauven), the concept of the cinema of attractions nevertheless proves "*adequate, or at least 'attractive'*", for the definition of contemporary special effects cinema.<sup>30</sup> According to Eivind Røssaak (2006), the power of the concept lies in the way it "*liberates the analysis of film from the hegemony of narratology*" and "*enables us to focus, rather, on the event of appearing as itself a legitimate aesthetic category*". This is important, because "*The deepest pleasure and jouissance of cinema may reside in such attractions, rather than in the way the film is narrated*".<sup>31</sup>

<sup>26</sup>Gunning 1989/2009, 744; Gunning 1986/1990/2006, 382, 385–387; Gunning 1993/2004, 43; see also Gaudreault 2006, 97–98.

<sup>27</sup>See for example Buckland 2006, 51; Tomasovic 2006, 310.

<sup>28</sup>Musser 1994/2006, 412; Musser 2006, 161; see also Gaudreault 2006, 96.

<sup>29</sup>Gunning 1993/2004, 43; Gunning 1986/1990/2006, 387; Gunning 2006, 36–37.

<sup>30</sup>Strauven 2006b, 11, 24; see for example Elsaesser 2006, 208; Tomasovic 2006, 311.

<sup>31</sup>Røssaak 2006, 322; see also Bukatman 2003, 5.



6. *Sandow, No. 1* (1894; William K. L. Dickson).<sup>32</sup>

### 1.3 Empty spectacles?

Spectacular qualities have become increasingly important to Hollywood<sup>33</sup>. Dick Tomasovic (2006) states that while *Jaws* (1975) and *Star Wars* (1977) can still be considered to have marked also a great return of the narrative to Hollywood, today *"the exhibition (...) does no longer help revitalize the narration as it was the case with Spielberg and Lucas, on the contrary it uses the story as a springboard allowing to spring at the right time, strengthening its brilliant power"*.<sup>34</sup> According to Jay David Bolter & Richard Grusin (2002), the spectacular blockbuster today is closer in spirit to the cinema of attractions than it has been in decades. This, they claim, is due to a "weak narrative line": *"In Hollywood blockbusters, the weak narrative line is often simply the thread that ties together a series of car chases, firefights, or encounters with monsters. (...) We go to such films in large part to experience the oscillations between immediacy and hypermediacy<sup>35</sup> produced by the special-effects"*.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>32</sup>*The Movies Begin* (2002).

<sup>33</sup>The increased importance of spectacular to Hollywood has been explained in many ways. One is the manifestation of the qualities of the big screen, in comparison to smaller-screen rival media. The increased importance of overseas market is another explanation, as the spectacle seems to translate the easiest across cultural and language boundaries. In an age in which the big Hollywood studios have grown into giant conglomerates, there is a growing demand for films that can be further exploited in multimedia forms such as computer-games and theme-park rides. King 2000, 1–2; King 2003, 119; McQuire 2000, 56.

<sup>34</sup>Tomasovic 2006, 310; see also King 2000, 2.

<sup>35</sup>See chapter 1.6.

<sup>36</sup>Bolter & Grusin 2002, 15; see also Adamowsky 2003, 6.

The emphasis on spectacle—frequently associated with the digital threshold—has led to dismissal of today's blockbusters as empty spectacles (or attractions), nothing more than special effects. Some have gone so far as to announce the demise of the narrative, or even the death of the cinema itself.<sup>37</sup> But as far as Geoff King (2003) sees it, the case has been considerably overstated: “*Narrative is far from being eclipsed, even in the most spectacular and effects-oriented of today's blockbuster attractions. These films still tell reasonably coherent stories, even if they may sometimes be looser and less well integrated than some classical models*”.<sup>38</sup> As in the study of early cinema, in film studies generally, the relationship between spectacle and narrative should not be conceived in terms of opposition but dialectical tension.

In this thesis, I will examine Guillermo del Toro's (b. 1964) comic book based film *Hellboy* (2004)<sup>39</sup> and its sequel *Hellboy II: The Golden Army* (2008)<sup>40</sup> in order to look into the cinema of attractions in Hollywood's contemporary spectacle film. *The Golden Army* (2008) is examined more thoroughly, because it is newer, and because sequels tend to be even more spectacular than their prequels.<sup>41</sup> Writing my previous Master's thesis<sup>42</sup>, I could not yet find a lot of writings concerning the new cinema of attractions. Since, the material seems to have multiplied, yet, I have not seen a study of an entire film, let alone a film series, that makes use of the concept. I find that this kind of a comprehensive study is needed in order to better understand the dynamics of attractions and narrative in today's Hollywood spectacles, and open up the question of “empty spectacles”.

I chose *Hellboy* series, because I find that it represents a diverse range of the traits of the cinema of attractions, but the story remains important. For del Toro, the story and the visuals are very much a whole. He says: “*I really think there is no such thing as form and content in film. Form is content and content is form*”.<sup>43</sup> Marking this conviction, in 2010, del Toro, along with director Mathew Cullen, cinematographer Guillermo Navarro and executive producer Javier Jimenez, launched the production company Mirada, a facility that supports all facets of the story crafting process to offer more close collaboration between

<sup>37</sup>McQuire 2000, 41–43, 52, 54; King 2003, 115; King 2000, 2; Bukatman 2006, 75; see for example Tomasovic 2006, 312–313.

<sup>38</sup>King 2003, 115, 119–120; King 2000, 2; see also McQuire 2000, 41, 52, 54; Jenkins 2006, 118; McClean 2007, vii.

<sup>39</sup>Columbia Pictures, budget \$66,000,000. Internet Movie Database 2013.

<sup>40</sup>Universal Pictures, budget \$85,000,000. Internet Movie Database 2013.

<sup>41</sup>King 2003, 124.

<sup>42</sup>Suhonen 2008. In my thesis *Birthmyth of Film — A cultural historical approach on film education of young people*, I also discussed the cinema of attractions.

<sup>43</sup>Keleman 2009.

storytellers and visual designers.<sup>44</sup> For years, *The Golden Army* (2008) remained the newest 'del Toro film'<sup>45</sup>, but after several announced or rumored and then cancelled projects<sup>46</sup>, the situation has now changed with the sci-fi-action film *Pacific Rim* (2013). Still, I find that the subject has not dated, and examining films that are a little older may in fact better bring out the ever-altering state of attractions—what seemed attractive then, may seem old-fashioned today.<sup>47</sup>

The title of this thesis comes from del Toro: “*These shots are not eye-candy, they are, to me, eye-protein*”<sup>48</sup>, he comments on *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006), proposing that attractions in his films can be more than just fun to look at; that they can be somehow *nutritive*. I am interpreting this in two ways. First, that attractions can have narrative meaning. And secondly, that attractions may be important *as such*. Spectacular Hollywood blockbuster shares with the early film the fact that they have both been ridiculed because of their spectacularity. I find this a matter worth digging into. Also, to my perception, the discussion on the new cinema of attractions (and spectacular blockbusters) revolves heavily around the (digital) special effects. This may unintendedly lead to an oversimplifying conception that attractions *are* special effects.<sup>49</sup> I think that reevaluation of the actual traits of the cinema of attractions appearing today is in order.

## 1.4 Research questions

In this thesis, I ask:

How the traits of the cinema of attractions reappear in *Hellboy* films and especially the sequel *The Golden Army*?

In process, I will see for myself how the concept of the cinema of attractions works in examining Hollywood's contemporary spectacle film. I start by examining what sort of

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<sup>44</sup>Mirada.com 2013; Fleming 2010.

<sup>45</sup>For more information, see chapter 2.1.

<sup>46</sup>*Hellboy 3, The Hobbit, At the Mountains of Madness, Frankenstein 3D. The Hobbit* (2012) was directed by Peter Jackson instead. Zalewski 2011, 14/27; Keleman 2009; Internet Movie Database 2013.

<sup>47</sup>See for example Gunning 1986/1990/2009, 387; Musser 2006, 168; Manovich 2001, 125.

<sup>48</sup>Internet Movie Database 2013 (Guillermo del Toro quotes); see also Zalewski 2011, 10/27; Jones 2011.

<sup>49</sup>See also McClean 2007, 44; McQuire 2000, 57.



changes Guillermo del Toro chose to make in relation to the original comics series, in order to build an attractive blockbuster. By doing so, I aim for a better understanding of the dynamics of attractions and narrative in *Hellboy* films and spectacular blockbusters in general. I focus on the starting points of Mike Mignola's *Hellboy* comics and the first film of the series (2004). This also works as an introduction to the world of *Hellboy*. During this phase, I will already try to understand in what ways the cinema of attractions is (and is not) applicable to today's Hollywood's spectacle film.

In the third chapter, I will provide a cultural historical examination on the cinematic spectacle and attitudes towards it. I reflect the contemporary spectacular blockbuster to earlier phases in the history of cinema and pre-cinema, concentrating on the legacy of the magic lantern. From this historical context, I also examine the now popular digital techniques and hypermediacy. At the same time, I keep on exploring what is similar about the cinema of attractions and contemporary spectacular films. In the second chapter, a few similarities already came up, such as exhibition of new technology, showcasing things odd, and female as an attraction. As I look into “curiositas”, the driving force behind the desire for attractions, I will also discuss the spectacular linked to the human body. These are all themes I will be keeping in mind while diving into the analysis in the fourth chapter.

In the analysis of *Hellboy II: The Golden Army* (2008), I explore what traits of the cinema of attractions reappear in the film, and how they are in relation to the narrative. I examine the film in a linear order, to reveal the storyline behind the spectacular. The emphasis in this chapter is in description; most of the theoretical information required to understand the analysis have already been provided in the two previous chapters. Some cinematic methods are also discussed, but I will not go too deep into the structuralist film analysis. In the conclusion chapter 5, I summarize the results of the analysis, and answer the main research question. I discuss how the concept of cinema of attractions worked in this thesis, and offer a few future research ideas. Finally, I ponder upon the meaning attractions have on people. The final question I assign for this thesis is: Are attractions mere eye candy, or can they be seen as “eye protein”?

## 1.5 Method, material and media-archaeology

The method used in this thesis is close reading from the frame of reference of the cinema of attractions<sup>50</sup>. I will examine the material, DVDs of *Hellboy* (2004), *Hellboy — Director's Cut* (2005) and *Hellboy 2: The Golden Army* (2008), multiple times paying close attention to traits of the cinema of attractions, as summed up by Gunning<sup>51</sup>. As narrative continues to be an essential part of Hollywood's spectacular cinema, I will examine the attractions in relation to the narrative. The theoretical background of the thesis rises from the work by Jay David Bolter & Richard Grusin, Scott Bukatman, Erkki Huhtamo, Geoff King, and Scott McQuire, among others, and importantly, from the anthology *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded* (2006) that gathers essays about the cinema of attractions from major theorists and historians of the subject, including Tom Gunning, André Gaudreault and Charles Musser. The view is cultural historical, as it is supposed that the single case of *Hellboy* series also tells something in general about Hollywood's contemporary spectacle film.

Philosophical background of this thesis rises from Erkki Huhtamo's cultural historical concept of media-archaeology. According to Huhtamo (1997 & 2000 & 2008), in addition to straight-forward lines, in history there are patterns that repeat in a cyclical manner. From this perspective, history is not just something in the past. Phenomena that existed centuries ago, can reappear, sometimes in a barely recognizable form, and fill up with new meanings according to the current need.<sup>52</sup> A supposition in this thesis is that the traits of the cinema of attractions may repeat in *Hellboy* films and Hollywood's contemporary spectacle film, but the context has changed.<sup>53</sup> Huhtamo (1997) believes that cultural nature of film can only be properly understood if viewed in a wider context of the moving image<sup>54</sup>. I find that this is especially true when talking about the spectacle of the cinema of attractions. Isolating the film from its spectacular roots downplays the role attractions played in the early cinema, and I think, also in other periods in film history<sup>55</sup>. In order to delimit the subject, in this thesis I will concentrate on the legacy of the magic lantern.

In addition to films, the commentary tracks and 'making of' documentaries included on the films' DVDs provide important material. To make the voice of the director Guillermo del

<sup>50</sup>See also Seppälä 2010, 11.

<sup>51</sup>Page 7. Gunning 2006, 36.

<sup>52</sup>Huhtamo 1997, 10–11; Huhtamo 2000, 11–12; Huhtamo 2008, 40–42; see also Elsaesser 2006, 208.

<sup>53</sup>See also Strauven 2006a, 112–113; Gunning 1986/1990/2009, 387.

<sup>54</sup>Huhtamo 1997, 10.

<sup>55</sup>See also Buckland 2006, 50.

Toro properly heard, I have also searched some of his interviews from the internet. Like Scott Bukatman (2003), I admit that *“there is no getting rid of me in the following pages—my initial or ongoing fascination guides my writing”*<sup>56</sup>. I am greatly fond of the spectacular myself, especially the horror genre. I like del Toro's filmmaking, particularly his Spanish-language films, and I am a fan of Mike Mignola's *Hellboy* comics. All of this may mean that I am too “close” to the thesis subject, but it may also be a strength, as from a fan's point of view I may better understand the power attractions bear. Experiencing spectacle is in any case something that is hard to write theoretically about. I will follow Henry Jenkins' (2007) advice: *“write about our own engagement”*<sup>57</sup>. What I find “attractive” and how I find it is or is not connected to the narrative, is based on my own subjective experience as well as my background as a film enthusiast.

## 1.6 Immediacy/hypermediacy

Before going into theory and analysis, two concepts central to this thesis need to be introduced. They are those of immediacy and hypermediacy, as defined by Jay David Bolter & Richard Grusin. According to Bolter & Grusin (2002), our culture has a yearning to erase all traces of mediation to make experiencing media as “natural” as possible. *Immediacy* is, in ideal case, total transparency, which means the absence of mediation or representation, a feel of an authentic experience. At the same time we have a fascination with media and want to multiply them. This acknowledgement-and delight-of the presence of a medium is called *hypermediacy*. These twin logics are dependent on each other, for *“the amazement or wonder requires an awareness of a medium. If the medium really disappeared as is the apparent goal of the logic of transparency, the viewer would not be amazed because she would not know of the medium’s presence. (...) The amazement comes only moment after, when the viewer understands that she has been fooled.”* This discrepancy worked in a more or less subtle way for the filmgoers of the early era, and with the introduction of digital techniques, it has again become an important factor in the cinematic spectacle.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>56</sup>Bukatman 2003, 6, 77–78.

<sup>57</sup>Jenkins 2007, 10.

<sup>58</sup>Bolter & Grusin 2002, 5–6, 30–31, 70–71, 155–158.



7. Hypermediacy in *The Big Swallow* (1901; James Williamson).<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>*The Movies Begin* (2002).

## 2 ATTRACTIONS AND NARRATIVE IN *Hellboy* (2004)

### 2.1 *Hellboy* film adaptations

*In 1944<sup>60</sup>, on an island off the coast of Scotland, a group of Nazi occultists, led by infamous Grigori Rasputin, makes a final attempt to change the tide of war. A summoning is performed, but with no visible result. Yet, a creature appears and ends up in the hands of US armed forces. Paranormal advisor Trevor "Broom" Bruttonholm, the future founding member of Bureau for Paranormal Research and Defence (B.P.R.D.), takes the infant to his care and due to his devilish appearance names him Hellboy. As the boy grows up, he takes the job as the main investigator at B.P.R.D. Alongside a tight group of fellow agents he fights to protect humanity, benighted about his own nature and purpose. Nobody knows why his right rock-hard hand feels no pain, but his cut-off horns are a sinister reminder of his dark origins...*

*Hellboy* (2004) and its sequel are fictional films based on a well-acclaimed<sup>61</sup> Dark Horse Comics series of the same title<sup>62</sup> created by American comics artist and writer Mike Mignola (b. 1960). They are blockbusters, which in short means that they have big budgets, big subjects, and they seek as big an audience as possible.<sup>63</sup> Both films combine digital and non-digital special effects, with emphasis on largely handmade monster design. By genre, *Hellboy* films, like the comic, are a mixture of different genres. They can be defined superhero film, action-adventure or fantasy, but also simply 'del Toro films'. Del Toro is

<sup>60</sup>In the original comic, the precise date is 23rd December, but del Toro has changed it to be his own birthday, 9th of October. Internet Movie Database 2013.

<sup>61</sup>The series has been awarded for example by several Eisner Awards as well as Eagle Awards. Darkhorse.com 2013.

<sup>62</sup>*Hellboy* is a well-acclaimed Dark Horse Comics series created by American comics artist and writer Mike Mignola (b. 1960), revolving around the title character, the demon Hellboy. After a few brief promotional appearances, the series was launched in 1994. Majority of the stories are available today in trade paperback volumes. There are eleven books to date; the newest, *The Storm and The Fury*, was released in March 2012. Early *Hellboy* stories were all conceived and drawn by Mignola with a script written by John Byrne. Since, Mignola has excelled in writing, and there have been other artists contributing to the series, in recent years notably Duncan Fegredo and Richard Corben. By genre, action-paced *Hellboy* can be defined a superhero comic—comics legend Jack Kirby is one of Mignola's great icons. But it is also a weird fiction, for it draws heavily from the 1930s detective stories, vintage adventure, classic ghost stories and cosmic horror. Fantastical elements are mingled with actual historical figures, events and locations, with folklore and legends from all over the world providing a fertile ground for the storyline. Every time the story is in danger of getting too pompous, a witty line or a fight sequence (often both) is thrown in to lighten up the mood. Mignola & Allie 2004; Weiner, Hall, Blake & Mignola 2008; Artofmikemignola.com 2013; Allie 2002; Weiner 2008, 10–12; *Hellboy: The Seeds of Creation* (2004): Mike Mignola 00:40–02:35.

<sup>63</sup>Elsaesser 2001, 16; King 2000, 3; King 2003, 120.

much involved in different parts of the filming process. He writes, directs and produces, and he has a past in the make-up department. He has often been called “a visionary director”, as he takes great emphasis on the visuals of his films. He has a distinguishable artistic style, and can be defined an auteur.<sup>64</sup>



8. The title character Hellboy in a shot very much influenced by Mike Mignola's art.

In his “*unapologetically subjective introduction*” to *Hellboy 5: Conqueror Worm*<sup>65</sup>, del Toro (2003) announces to have been a groveling fan of Mike Mignola since youth. He does not spare emotions in praising Mignola’s art, and humbly admits that many a time he has attempted to imitate the style in the design of his own films, especially the “*cold velvet-drop of darkness*” (the bold use of shadows) that has become Mignola’s signature (picture 8).<sup>66</sup> Developing *Hellboy* screenplay, del Toro wished to honor and expand upon the universe created by Mignola: “*I didn’t wanna do a carbon copy of anything. The movie is its own creature*”. He got to work with Mignola himself for both *Hellboy* (2004)<sup>67</sup> and *The Golden Army* (2008)<sup>68</sup>, but it was clear from the start that these were to be 'del Toro films', and they presented a type of an alternative reality for Mignola's comics. Even though the basic setting is pretty much the same—and Mignola himself says he feels the adaptations are true to the

<sup>64</sup>Zalewski 2011, page 5/27; see also page 7/27.

<sup>65</sup>Mignola 2003c.

<sup>66</sup>Del Toro 2003.

<sup>67</sup>In which Mignola worked as a co-executive producer and design consultant. Internet Movie Database 2013.

<sup>68</sup>With Mignola in addition contributing to writing the story. Internet Movie Database 2013.

spirit of his work—there are major changes del Toro decided to make.<sup>69</sup> These changes, I believe, are a window into understanding the cinema of attractions in *Hellboy* films and more broadly in Hollywood's contemporary spectacle cinema, and are therefore discussed here further.

## 2.2 Spectacular narratives

Both the comics and the film series begin with a central scene: the summoning of Hellboy. In Mignola's original story, a group of paranormal investigators, enforced by Allied troops, are camped outside a ruined church in East Bromwich, England. According to Professor Broom's investigations, something had happened there a long time ago, something so horrible that the locals entirely refuse to even discuss the matter. A medium, accompanying the group, has sensed a disturbance in the ether, and informs that it is centered there. But she also senses another center, far north, just off the Scottish coast... The story then leaps to the very island, where the Nazi troops are currently witnessing some sort of an occult ritual... Rasputin is attempting a summoning. As it is performed, nothing seems to happen. Rasputin knows, however, that something *did* happen—a baby demon appears in a fireball before the eyes of Broom and his company.<sup>70</sup>

The film is much more straight-forward, as *Hellboy (2004)* begins with the Allied forces *raiding* the occult ritual. Clearly, del Toro found it more dynamic to have both sides in the same location. This way, the threat feels more immediate, and the audience is offered a special effects loaded fight sequence right in the beginning of the film. Grenades are unleashed, a Nazi is sucked through the portal leaving only a trace of a skeleton, someone is crushed by a stone pillar, guns fire in heavy rain and thunder. In the end of the fight Rasputin too is sucked through the portal, in a rather brutal manner. Dick Tomasovic (2006) talks about *Spider-Man*, but his words are valid to *Hellboy* and any similar blockbuster: “*Spider-Man, following the example of other recent big Hollywood successes, appropriates a series of elements enlightened by the concept of cinema of attractions. It builds itself in an effective perceptive trap and tries by all possible means to suspend the gaze, and maintain it in the perpetual state of fascination and subjugation*”.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup>*Hellboy: The Seeds of Creation (2004)*: Mike Mignola & Guillermo del Toro 05:28–05:40; Mike Mignola & Guillermo Del Toro 07:18–07:53.

<sup>70</sup>Mignola & Byrne 2003.

<sup>71</sup>Tomasovic 2006, 317.

The first *Hellboy* film is based on the first comic book of the series, *Seed of Destruction*<sup>72</sup>, but it has elements from other stories del Toro found attractive<sup>73</sup>. For example, the body of a hanged man Hellboy animates to life for his assistance is an attraction applied to the storyline directly from *The Corpse*, and the final battle combines dramatic high points from both *Wake the Devil*<sup>74</sup> and *Seed of Destruction* to assure an impressive “final clou”. Changes del Toro made in the character of Karl Ruprecht Kroenen are also informative. In the comic, Kroenen is not much of a fighter but a scientist, but in the film, he has an obvious role as a special effects machine.<sup>75</sup> During the opening battle, the viewer is lavishly exhibited his superhuman physique and weapon prowess (picture 9).



9. When Broom throws a grenade in order to destroy the portal, Kroenen jumps in to reach for the grenade, neverminding he is losing fingers in the process. It is too late however; an explosion throws him towards a stone pillar, and an iron bar hurtles through the pillar and his body. After a fair amount of screen time offered to the character, the viewer is not too surprised to witness the body having disappeared in the end of the scene. The disappearance urges to further marvel at Kroenen as an attraction—and anticipate seeing him again.

According to Geoff King (2003), *"A substantial part of the appeal of many blockbusters lies precisely in the scale of spectacular audio-visual experience that is offered, in contrast*

<sup>72</sup>Mignola & Byrne 2003.

<sup>73</sup>Such as *Wake the Devil*, *Almost Colossus* and *The Corpse*. *Almost Colossus* and *The Corpse* are included in the trade paperback collection *The Chained Coffin and Others* (Mignola 2003b); see also *Hellboy: The Seeds of Creation* (2004): Stephen Scott 1:01:31–1:01:48.

<sup>74</sup>Mignola 2003a.

<sup>75</sup>*Hellboy: The Seeds of Creation* (2004): Guillermo del Toro & Mike Mignola 06:52–07:18; *Hellboy – Director's Cut* (2005) DVD commentary: Guillermo del Toro 1:23:19–1:23:27; *Hellboy* (2004) DVD commentary: Mike Mignola 03:07–03:21; Weiner, Hall, Blake & Mignola 2008, 85–87. See chapter 2.3 for more information concerning Kroenen.



to the smaller-scale resources of rival films or media"<sup>76</sup>. People go to see them in large part to experience the greater-than-life intensity achieved by expensive special effects. King argues, however, that the emphasis on the spectacular does not necessarily mean that it is at the expense of the narrative—that it is in some way absent or displaced. He suggests that although the spectacle *may* interrupt the story for a moment of display (picture 10), the two can work well together, and sometimes, the spectacle can even move the story significantly forward.<sup>77</sup>



10. A screaming skeleton. An attraction interrupts the narrative flow for a moment of display.

King (2003) proposes that most blockbusters offer a *combination* of narrative and spectacular appeals, and that in both *Hellboy* (2004) and *Terminator 2* (1991, analyzed by King) this is a quality clearly marked from the outset. Both films begin with a large-scale spectacle accompanied by narrative exposition. While in *Terminator 2* a voice-over from Sarah Connor establishes the narrative context, in *Hellboy*, Professor Broom acts as a storyteller, and sharpens the viewer's curiosity towards the events about to happen. In both cases, “*Outbursts of spectacle are narratively situated; they serve narrative purposes*”. Mutually, spectacular elements often gain their full power through their narratively heightened moments of tension. In *Terminator 2*, the ability of T-1000 to emerge seamlessly from a checkerboard floor or walk through the metal bars in a hospital hallway directly places the sympathetic characters in danger.<sup>78</sup> In a same manner Kroenen's impressive fighting skills make him seem like a worthy opponent for the hero.

<sup>76</sup>King 2003, 114.

<sup>77</sup>King 2003, 114, 119–120, 123; King 2000, 2, 4; see also Gaudreault 2006, 96–97.

<sup>78</sup>King 2003, 121–122; see also McClean 2007, 90–91, 102.



11. Liz's pyrotechnic tendencies cause a fire at the mental hospital she occupies. The spectacular set-piece works as an introduction to Liz's character, gives a reason for her to join the B.P.R.D., and links her to Rasputin's sinister plans—while serving digital special effects and pyrotechnics to marvel at.

Del Toro reminds that in films like *Hellboy*, it is not always necessary to stop for a character moment, because *“Characters are defined by what they do, and how they interact with each other, not by monologues in a coffee shop where they confess to each other what their life is”*.<sup>79</sup> Although the screenplay is the basis of it all, *“50 percent of the narrative is in the audio/visual storytelling”*.<sup>80</sup> He explains his decision of joining both Allies and the villains in a single geographical place to *“make the first exposure of Broom to Rasputin and Ilsa and Kroenen sort of a big origin story”*. The scene introduces all three of Hellboy's fathers: the summoner Rasputin, the foster father Broom, and perhaps surprisingly, Sergeant Whitman, who, like Hellboy, is characterized by straight-forward action, witty one-liners and good cigars. Visual details add to the story. A cat statue in a tomb the baby Hellboy is found from represents Hellboy's love for cats. Broom's successful trick of luring the boy with candy bars speaks of Hellboy's taste for junk food, and is a demonstration of his stone hand that he uses whenever he wants to get away with something. Catholic symbols signal Broom's religious views<sup>81</sup>, and in contrast, the viewer is also given a glimpse of the dark

<sup>79</sup>*Hellboy – Director's Cut (2005) DVD commentary: Guillermo del Toro 1:25:19-1:25:41; Hellboy 2: The Golden Army (2008) DVD commentary: Guillermo Del Toro 42:15–42:30.*

<sup>80</sup>According to del Toro *“50 percent of the narrative is in the audio/visual storytelling. (...) the screenplay is the basis of it all, but definitely doesn't tell (...) the whole movie. A lot of the narrative is in the details”*. Keleman 2009.

<sup>81</sup>Simultaneously referring to the director's Catholic upbringing. See for example Applebaum 2008.

place in outer space from where the hero originates. In del Toro's words, the scene is “*a very graphic way of representing Hellboy's conflict*”.<sup>82</sup>

Nevertheless, I find there are things, like Rasputin's eyes getting torn out from their sockets, that are not too important for the story (although del Toro might like to think it is). King refers to Kristin Thompson when he says that: “*spectacular elements that seem to exist purely for their own sake (...) may take on the character of 'cinematic excess'*”.<sup>83</sup> This theme will be further discussed in Chapter 3.

### 2.3 John in a curiosity cabinet

The first film introduces a central character not appearing in the original comic. He is a young agent named John Myers (Rupert Evans), a newcomer to B.P.R.D., assigned to watch over recklessly behaving Hellboy. John—as his common name implies—is a normal, likeable guy, someone easily relatable to the viewer. He is equally unaware of what is going to happen next, for in the film version B.P.R.D. is a secret organization, and he does not know what exactly he has signed for. Del Toro explains the function of this character by saying that usually “*these types of films*” are done through a character who is new to the organization, because it provides “*a high quotient of exposition moments seen through eyes that are very fresh*”.<sup>84</sup> As Rupert Evans was an unknown actor in Hollywood productions, *Hellboy* being his first studio film, his star power does not distract attention from other attractions about to be seen.

Although a commentator is no longer used and actors by rule won't take direct contact with the viewer, the actors' facial expressions and gestures—in addition other things such as sound, color and composition—still direct the audience to things worthy of notice<sup>85</sup>. When John enters the B.P.R.D. headquarters, he encounters many astonishing things, and his reactions to things he sees encourages similar reactions in the viewer. First, the surprised John is lowered into a secret section of the building (impressive elevator shaft leads him to a hallway). Music playing lures him into a large room, later turning out to be Professor Broom's quarters. He hears a voice speaking and as he steps closer to an aquarium it is

<sup>82</sup>*Hellboy – Director's Cut (2005)* DVD commentary: Guillermo del Toro 08:04–14:23; *Hellboy (2004)* DVD commentary: Mike Mignola & Guillermo del Toro 11:29–12:16.

<sup>83</sup>King 2000, 3; see also Bukatman 2003, 115.

<sup>84</sup>*Hellboy: The Seeds of Creation (2004)*: Guillermo del Toro 05:48–06:11.

<sup>85</sup>McQuire 2000, 52.

coming from, he is startled by something he sees: a strangely human-like blue creature is reading literature and enjoying classical music. Broom steps in and introduces the creature in the tank as Abraham “Abe” Sapien (Doug Jones/David Hyde Pierce), and, to John's disgust, serves the creature foetid, rotten eggs for dinner (pictures 12).



12. John's encounter with Abe. Character's reactions encourage similar emotions in the viewer.

It is worth a notion that in the comic, Abe does not live in a fish-tank, and he is never seen eating rotten eggs—these alterations are especially made to enhance the spectacular function of the character. Like the filmmakers of the early era, del Toro is well aware that an element of repulsion or a controlled threat or danger is required for a successful thrill<sup>86</sup>. Later on in the film, there is a scene where Kroenen (who was playing dead) wakes up in a B.P.R.D. lab, stripped off his costume. He rises up and starts walking, and we see hints of his ghastly figure appearing behind the plastic curtains. When he steps in to insert his removed mechanical hand, we finally see his horrible, cut up face in close-up. His mechanical fingers move, pulling further attention to the grotesque attraction (pictures 13). This has nothing to

<sup>86</sup>See Chapter 3.5.

do with the original comic. Del Toro has a fascination with the horror film as well as mechanical gizmos and automatons (a fascination evident also in his film *Cronos* (1993)), and this, as Mike Mignola says, is “a true del Toro moment”, “every del Toro element in a one shot”.<sup>87</sup>



13. Kroenen showcasing del Toro's fascination with monsters and mechanical gizmos.

After introducing Abe, Broom then guides John deeper to the headquarters. During the following "sightseeing tour" (pictures 14), John sees curious objects placed in showcases along the corridor—a del Toro fan might recognize a jar with a fetus in it originating from his film *The Devil's Backbone* (2001)—and learns some secret truths behind public historical knowledge. Although the scene has narrative purpose in introducing characters and telling something about B.P.R.D. and the story world, it has an important task of making the audience awe. Rich details make sure there is more to see than the viewer can possibly manage to see. As a commentator steered the audience attention from attraction to attraction

<sup>87</sup>*Hellboy* (2004) DVD commentary: Guillermo del Toro & Mike Mignola 1:12:00–1:12:49; *Hellboy – Director's Cut* (2005) DVD commentary: Guillermo del Toro 1:19:29–1:22:08.

and finally to "the final clou", so does John's tour at the secret base build up for an attraction of a greater importance. He is introduced to agent Clay, who is to take him to his destination.



14. John's sightseeing tour feeds curiosity.

*"Okay, you saw the fish guy, right?"* Clay asks from John (and the spectator).

*"Oh yeah. That was weird!"* John replies (from his and the audience's behalf).

*"Yeah, right..."* Clay answers... as if John has seen nothing yet.

This is, of course, because John and the spectator are about to meet the main attraction of the film: the grown-up Hellboy.



15. To make the revelation more spectacular, Hellboy is at first shown in the shadows, and only John's gestures speak of his splendor.

## 2.4 Hellboy as an oddity

As John follows agent Clay's steps, he is curious to know to whom he is about to be introduced to. Clay offers him a comic magazine titled "Hellboy" (a little inside joke for those who know from where the film originates). John takes a look at the cover, and as he lifts his gaze from the magazine, he witnesses Hellboy himself, alive and breathing. John's expression speaks of amazement and thrill, a feeling del Toro wishes the audience to share with him (pictures 15). What we see here is not only John Myers seeing that the mythical creature is real after all, but also Mignola's 2D comic book character coming to life, and

actor Ron Perlman in a monster costume<sup>88</sup>. What might strike many viewers the most, however, is the infernal nature of the hero; a paradox which is a driving force in both films and the original comic series.

Del Toro says he had the script for *Hellboy* (2004) more or less ready already in 1998, but he could not get Hollywood studios interested in a superhero film at the time—especially one with associations to “hell”: *I find it really puzzling that we are not prudish about the deforestation of the Earth, bombing other countries, killing children, raping entire continents, but we are prudish about one word. (...) It's almost like good manners at Hitler's table in today's politics. (...) Of course, Hollywood is Hollywood, and all anyone is really worried about, ultimately, is the bottom line: When the studios invest, they want to invest in a sure thing, or what they think is a sure thing, and this movie doesn't play that safe*".<sup>89</sup>



16. The demonic hero, Hellboy.

Finally, after the success of many other superhero films, the idea got through and the prequel was released in 2004. Although well-known amongst comics enthusiasts, *Hellboy* was a relatively new<sup>90</sup> comic series, and not as familiar to the large audience as classic Marvel heroes. Amongst iconic characters like Spider-Man and Wolverine, Hellboy—a red-in-color demonic creature, with a long tail and weird cut-off horns coming out of his forehead—stood

<sup>88</sup>See chapter 2.5 for more information.

<sup>89</sup>*Hellboy – Director's Cut* (2005) DVD commentary: Guillermo del Toro 23:45–24:45, 28:26–29:04; 1:04:38–1:07:51; Applebaum 2008.

<sup>90</sup>1994.



out as an oddity. As I see it, Del Toro turned the situation to his advantage by further enhancing Hellboy's and his fellow monsters' role as a curiosity. This underlining already shows in a tagline chosen for *The Golden Army* poster (picture 17): "*Believe it or not, these are the good guys*".



17. "*Believe it or not, these are the good guys*". Poster for *Hellboy II: The Golden Army* (2008).<sup>91</sup>

On the contrary to Mignola's original story, in which Hellboy is boldly presented as "the world's greatest paranormal investigator"<sup>92</sup> and works amongst humans, in the film Hellboy works in secrecy, and his whole existence is a carefully kept government secret. Del Toro says he made this change, because he wanted the film to include an aspect of conspiracy theory<sup>93</sup>. However, this also clearly enhances the spectacular nature of the main character, as it gives countless of opportunities in having other characters awe at his looks. Especially Tom Manning's (Jeffrey Tambor) attitude towards Hellboy constantly reminds the viewer of

<sup>91</sup>Screenweek.it. <http://static.screenweek.it/2008/7/10/Hellboy---The-Golden-Army-Poster-USA.jpg>

<sup>92</sup>Mignola & Byrne 2003: the early *Hellboy* story first published in San Diego Comic-Con Comics #2.

<sup>93</sup>*Hellboy – Director's Cut* (2005) DVD commentary: Guillermo del Toro 14:34–14:57.

Hellboy's oddity<sup>94</sup>. In the comic, Hellboy travels in various attractive locations from grim cemeteries to foreign countries, as well as other dimensions in time and space. Such locations are included in the film also<sup>95</sup>, but in contrast to the comic, a great deal of the events take place in the present time city in the United States. Amongst a crowd of people, Hellboy seems to pop out even more.

Showcasing the monsters is in contradiction to the comic, in which they are treated in a very low-key fashion. According to Mignola's original vision, Hellboy sees himself as an ordinary man just doing his job.<sup>96</sup> His human co-workers and clients never wonder about his monstrous appearance, as they are already familiar by it. This lets Mignola skip the part of discussing Hellboy's looks and go straight to the story. In the film, the whole storyline is centered on Hellboy's otherness. Hellboy has a great urge to come out to the public—in which he eventually succeeds in *The Golden Army*—and to be accepted. He even files his horns to "fit in".<sup>97</sup> The change is partly due to the differences in the medium<sup>98</sup>. To really emphasize the monsters, however, is still a clear choice.



18. The demon even gets the girl in the end—something that the studios were not too fond of.

<sup>94</sup>*Hellboy (2004)* DVD commentary: Guillermo del Toro 1:04:37–1:05:02.

<sup>95</sup>According to Natascha Adamowsky (2003): “Action cinema prefers to take place in foreign countries, sightseeing surroundings, landmarks known world-wide or exotic settings”. Adamowsky 2003, 5.

<sup>96</sup>*Hellboy: The Seeds of Creation (2004)*: Guillermo del Toro & Mike Mignola 02:36–03:37; Weiner 2008, 10.

<sup>97</sup>*Hellboy (2004)* DVD: 24:41–24:53.

<sup>98</sup>See Chapter 2.5.

## 2.5 Monster effects

According to Katherine Fowkes (2010), a part of appreciation for fantastical films comes from enjoying the modern filmmaking and learning how illusions are created<sup>99</sup>. *Hellboy* films are monster films, and probably the greatest attraction included are the many different creature designs. In contrast to popular use of computer generated characters, del Toro invests in non-digital special effects. Creatures are created by using real actors, prosthetics, make-up effects and animatronics. CGI<sup>100</sup> is used on characters only when completely necessary (for example in creating the baby version of Hellboy), and to enhance the non-digital special effects. This traces back to del Toro's fondness for classical monster film, and his own background in the make-up department<sup>101</sup>. Del Toro takes great pride in his films' creatures and makes sure they are properly displayed. Exhibiting “hand-made” special effects is a definite part of the appeal of *Hellboy* films.

Showcasing the monster characters is a difference from the comic, in which Hellboy and his fellow monsters are portrayed as “average joes”<sup>102</sup>. The change, however, is also inevitable, for as del Toro (2003) points out in a different context, he and Mignola work in “*parallel but separate arenas*”<sup>103</sup>. While in a comic, pretty much everything can be “real”, in a film, there is always some level of hypermediacy at work. A creature looking like Hellboy obviously does not exist, and has to be created by cinematic means. This makes the character automatically draw attention to itself, and raises questions on how it was made. Special effects are often accused of weakening the narrative, but according to *Encyclopedia of Movie Special Effects (2000)* by Patricia D. Netzley, “*Special effects are techniques employed to make the staged events of a movie seem real*”. In post-production phase traces of film-making such as wires are removed and green-screens are filled with complex mise-en-scène to make the viewer immerse to the story.<sup>104</sup> In a fantastic film like *Hellboy (2004)*, more prominent effects are needed, but even the most fantastical of films do try to be realistic *in their own context*.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>99</sup>Fowkes 2010, 18.

<sup>100</sup>Computer generated imagery. Enticknap 2005, 202.

<sup>101</sup>Internet Movie Database 2013.

<sup>102</sup>Chapter 2.4.

<sup>103</sup>Del Toro 2003.

<sup>104</sup>Netzley 2000, v.

<sup>105</sup>Fowkes 2010, 4, 35–36; McClean 2007, 5–8, 36; see also Bolter & Grusin 2002, 153; Bukatman 2003, 130.

As director of photography Guillermo Navarro (2004) says, a lot of trouble has been gone through to make sure Hellboy is “*just another character*”, and to seem like he belongs in the story world. This starts from the right casting. One could say Ron Perlman looks, moves and talks like Hellboy as he is, which is of great advantage in making the character seem plausible. After covering Perlman with standard make-up, foam-latex muscle suit and full face appliance, skull cap, and a wig, the resemblance is striking. In addition to make-up and prosthetics, Navarro says that there are other techniques such as proper lighting procedures that help in making the character better blend to the picture.<sup>106</sup> Effects must be both remarkable *and* credible.



19. Part of our appreciation for fantastical films comes from seeing how illusions were created. Still, the effects need to be realistic in their own context.

It is important to realize that for del Toro, monsters also have a symbolical dimension. They are a metaphor for the struggle every man has to face: “*There are truths about oneself that are really bad and hard to admit. But when you finally have the courage and say them, you liberate yourself. And monsters are a personification of that*”.<sup>107</sup> He also sees a monster as a representation of the “*last, ultimate minority*”, and thinks that people's reactions towards monsters are “*perfect reflections of other little hangs that people have, be it racial or social or sexual*”<sup>108</sup>. *Hellboy (2004)* represents other themes also, such as growing up, father-son relationship, love and friendship, good vs. evil. According to Geoff King (2003),

<sup>106</sup>*Hellboy: The Seeds of Creation (2004)*: Guillermo Navarro 20:50–22:00; Matt Rose & Jake Garber 48:11–50:23; Ron Perlman 45:45–45:58; Jake Garber 46:08–46:30.

<sup>107</sup>Applebaum 2008.

spectacular blockbusters are structured around various thematic oppositions but “*such qualities are often lost from sight during discussion of spectacle and special effects*”.<sup>109</sup>

## 2.6 Feeling and relating

After the opening scene, the story in the original comic then leaps some decades to grown-up Hellboy witnessing Professor Broom murdered. This does not happen early in the film, as del Toro saw the dramatical possibilities in taking Hellboy's father-son relationship with Broom into much closer examination. John Hurt's abilities on screen bring a lot of emotional depth to Broom's character, and as the audience is offered more screen time to connect with him, losing him is much more dramatic an impact. At the same time, Hellboy's character becomes a more tragic figure after losing his only parent. The death scene portrays an inevitable death, and the pace is slow “*to make it really painful to lose him*” when it finally happens. As Hellboy kneels down to hold the body of his dead father (pictures 20), an emotional response from the audience is quite assured. As everyone familiar with del Toro film knows, del Toro is very much into “*pure unadulterated melodrama*” and does not try to hide it. He states “*shameless is good in these days where everything has to be calculated, politically correct and lacking of any edges*”.<sup>110</sup>

Unlike a comic series that can continue and develop during a long period of time, a film may not get continuation via sequels. Del Toro says that although he is fascinated by the “*comforting immutability*” of Mignola's characters, he felt the nature of a screen drama demanded yielding to a more three-dimensional dramatic approach. Also, the storyline should tie things up a bit more in the end.<sup>111</sup> *Hellboy (2004)* is very much a growing up story of Hellboy becoming a man. In the beginning, he is acting very irresponsibly, but as his father dies, he is forced to take responsibility.<sup>112</sup> Departing from the cinema of attractions, the viewer is supposed to immerse to the story and relate to the characters. Hellboy, who seems to age slower than humans, is going through the same problems as an average young

<sup>108</sup>*Hellboy – Director's Cut (2005)* DVD commentary: Guillermo del Toro 23:45–24:45; 1:06:19–1:07:55; see also Zalewski 2011, page 6/27.

<sup>109</sup>King 2003, 122.

<sup>110</sup>*Hellboy: The Seeds of Creation (2004)*: Mike Mignola 06:34–06:47; Guillermo del Toro 24:20–24:35; Mike Mignola & Guillermo del Toro 25:07–26:26; *Hellboy – Director's Cut (2005)* DVD commentary: Guillermo del Toro 1:23:27–1:24:13; *Hellboy (2004)* DVD commentary: Guillermo del Toro 44:41–44:50; Guillermo del Toro & Mike Mignola 01:55:40–01:55:56.

<sup>111</sup>Del Toro 2003.

<sup>112</sup>*Hellboy – Director's Cut (2005)* DVD commentary: Guillermo del Toro 1:24:14–1:26:43.

viewer<sup>113</sup>. He has a crush on his fellow agent, he is jealous, and even troubled by his looks (picture 21). He is portrayed with a taste for junk food, beer and TV. This way, he becomes more relatable to the film's target audience, but also, his normal urges in comparison to his odd appearance provide a curious contrast.<sup>114</sup>



20. Broom's melodramatic death scene. Visual details add to the mood.

The main storyline deals with a classic fight between good and evil. It is a story you have heard many times before, which is why blockbusters like *Hellboy* (2004) are often accused of making the viewer passive. Henry Jenkins (2007) states, however, that *“The only time we are truly brain-dead in our response to popular culture is when it becomes so formulaic*

<sup>113</sup>Del Toro liberally turned the main character into an emotionally clumsy nerd: *“I am Hellboy”*, he confesses. Zaleski 2011, 13/27.

<sup>114</sup>*Hellboy – Director's Cut* (2005) DVD commentary: Guillermo del Toro 34:35–34:55; see also Zaleski 2011, 13/27.

that it no longer provokes an emotional reaction". He says most popular culture is shaped by a logic of emotional intensification: "It is less interested in making us think than making us feel. Yet that distinction is too simple: popular culture, at its best, makes us think by making us feel".<sup>115</sup> In order to appeal to as wide an audience as possible, blockbusters must evoke broadly shared feelings. This is why, according to Thomas Elsaesser (2001), they draw from traditional stories. He calls them *technologically more evolved extension of fairytales*.<sup>116</sup> To del Toro, fairytales are "the highest form of storytelling, the rest is just gossip"<sup>117</sup>.



21. "I wish I could do something about this." —Hellboy to Liz concerning his appearance. The viewer acknowledges she is looking at a prosthetics covered actor, but also relates to the character's feelings.

The love story between Hellboy and his fellow agent presented in the film series is something Mignola says he never saw there<sup>118</sup>. Moreover, Mignola was unsure what to make of Liz in the first place, and was even considering of killing the character early in the series<sup>119</sup>. Del Toro, on the contrary, saw the possibilities of Liz's character for building up drama. Liz has a tragic past, as she accidentally killed her entire family when her pyrotechnic abilities first showed themselves. Beside the impressive background story, her special

<sup>115</sup>Jenkins 2007, 3–4; see also Bolter & Grusin 2002, 53.

<sup>116</sup>Elsaesser 2001, 17; see also Jenkins 2007, 4.

<sup>117</sup>Lawrence 2006.

<sup>118</sup>*Hellboy: The Seeds of Creation (2004)*: Mike Mignola 06:34–06:47; Mike Mignola 32:31–32:55.

<sup>119</sup>Mignola 2003b: the introduction to *Almost Colossus*.

abilities give a lot of opportunities to use special effects, and are in nice contrast to her lover's fire-proof skin.<sup>120</sup>

Liz is the only central female character in the film to relate to<sup>121</sup>. There is another woman, Ilsa Haupstein, but she is a villain, and does not get a lot of screen-time. Kate Corrigan, a central character in the comic series, is not included in the film at all. As she has no tragic past or special abilities excluding her great knowledge in folklore, she apparently was not an interesting character enough to bring on screen. Liz, on the other hand, has her pyrotechnic abilities, and in addition, she is young (younger than in the comic) and easy on the eyes. Her being the only important female in the film automatically draws more attention to her body as an attraction, even though she is fully clothed most of the time, excluding the final clou—which is hardly a coincidence.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>120</sup>*Hellboy – Director's Cut (2005)*: Guillermo del Toro 1:26:43–1:27:53.

<sup>121</sup>Also in *Pacific Rim (2013)* there is only one female main character.

<sup>122</sup>See chapter 3.5 for more discussion on the (female) body as an attraction.



## 3 "CINEMATIC EXCESS"

### 3.1 Introduction

The drive towards spectacular is evident in *Hellboy (2004)*. Comparison to the comic reveals that del Toro has attempted to make fight sequences more massive, monsters more striking, and characters more exciting (for example Kroenen's transformation into a completely different character, and using the full potential of Liz's pyrotechnic abilities). However, he has also increased the importance of character relationships and development, and added his signature touch of melodrama. It is evident, what Geoff King (2003) says, that spectacular Hollywood blockbusters "*continue to invest strongly in narrative dynamics, and at more than one level. They tell carefully organized, more or less linear cause / effect stories organized around central characters*". Also, "*They manifest what a structuralist analysis would term 'underlying' narrative structural patterns*". There are themes running underneath, and the audio/visual plays a great part in storytelling. Special effects, continually accused of weakening the narrative, are often used in favor of the story.<sup>123</sup>

Like most spectacular blockbusters, *Hellboy (2004)* strives for both spectacular and narrative ends, and these tendencies are not necessarily in contradiction with each other. King (2000) says "*The industry's promotional discourses actively seek to play up such multiple appeals and distractions, to encourage 'diverse positions of viewing' and maximize potential audiences*"<sup>124</sup>. Researching for the previous chapter, I got an impression, however, that both filmmakers and some scholars find it necessary to justify the spectacular by its narrative purposes, as if being spectacular is not enough as such. Shilo McClean (2007), for example, stresses that virtually every effects artist she interviewed for her book *Digital Storytelling* state that effects "*always derive from story*"<sup>125</sup>. Things that do not fit into the narrative model are labeled as "cinematic excess"<sup>126</sup>. Considering the extent the spectacular plays in *Hellboy (2004)*, to me, this seems dismissive. To give perspective on the cinematic spectacle and attitudes towards it, I will next provide a cultural historical examination on the matter.

<sup>123</sup>King 2003, 119–120, 123; see also King 2000, 2.

<sup>124</sup>King 2000, 3; see also Musser 1994/2006, 411.

<sup>125</sup>McClean 2007, 5.

<sup>126</sup>King 2000, 3; see also Bukatman 2003, 115.



22. Cinematic excess? Rasputin's flesh and eyes get pulled into the portal.

### 3.2 Spectacular core

In classical Hollywood, the dominant strain has been the attempt to establish an 'invisible' style that does not draw attention to its own process. The ideal is that in the film there is nothing that does not help the story forward<sup>127</sup>.<sup>128</sup> Spectacle, according to Scott Bukatman (2006), has traditionally been seen as “*an unnecessary supplement to narrative*”. Sometimes, it has even been perceived a disruptive intrusion that comes from “beyond” to *threaten* the stability of the narrative system<sup>129</sup>. Looking into the concept of the cinema of attractions it becomes evident, however, that spectacle has been a part of film ever since the beginning, and although the narrative did become established as a primary basis of organization by the 1910s, it never truly vanished<sup>130</sup>. Geoff King (2003 & 2000) argues that not even the Hollywood production in the studio era was as “classical” as sometimes implied. There has always been a counter-tendency to exhibit and celebrate stars, sets and the sheer spectacle, and King believes that it is often just as core aspect of Hollywood cinema than a coherent narrative is.<sup>131</sup>

<sup>127</sup>According to Bolter & Grusin (2002), in classical Hollywood film, hypermediacy was saved for portrayal of dreams, mental disorder, and insanity. Bolter & Grusin 2002, 152.

<sup>128</sup>King 2000, 51.

<sup>129</sup>Bukatman 2006, 75.

<sup>130</sup>Gaudreault 2006, 87, 99; Gunning 1989/2009, 744; Gunning 1986/1990/2006, 382, 385–387; Gunning 1993/2004, 43; Paci 2006, 123; Bolter & Grusin 2002, 156.

<sup>131</sup>King 2003, 125; King 2000, 4.

The spectacular core of film may be easier to understand in the context of the long tradition of spectacular representation preceding it. In traditional film histories the film itself began when Lumière brothers first screened their films for a paying audience or when Edison Company released the kinetoscope. Pre-cinematic forms, such as the magic lantern, the diorama, and the (roll) panorama, as well as all the philosophical toys, are passed with a quick notion, and instead, attention is given to great men who invented the film seemingly out of thin air. From this perspective, the early film and its viewer have been misinterpreted as primitive, in a negative sense of the word.<sup>132</sup> The myth of a naive spectator is based on a misbelief that the early viewer had no tradition by which to understand what she saw; that the absolute novelty of the moving image made her flee in terror<sup>133</sup>. André Gaudreault (2006) states that:

*"By establishing, probably mistakenly, a point of rupture in the final decade of the nineteenth century, between the so-called pre-cinema and that of so-called early cinema, historians have literally cut cinema off its deepest roots".*

He thinks *"moments of rupture and changes in paradigm are not necessarily in synch with the invention of new procedures (...), nor with the refinement of new techniques"*. The fundamental point of rupture in film history was not any specific moment of birth, but constitution of the institution "cinema" by the 1910s. Before this, the film was still very much linked to earlier traditions of pre-cinema.<sup>134</sup> In order to delimit the subject, I will here concentrate on the single medium that, according to Leo Enticknap (2005), directly affected both the production and the exhibition of film: the magic lantern.<sup>135</sup>

### 3.3 Legacy of the magic lantern

The magic lantern, in its simplest form, is a wooden or tinned box including a light source, mirror and a lens tube used to project painted glass slides. According to Erkki Huhtamo (1997 & 2000), the earliest information on the device dates back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and points to Christiaan Huygens. Like many renaissance scholars, Huygens was interested in the "natural magic" which covered optical phenomena. It is known that he attempted to hide his

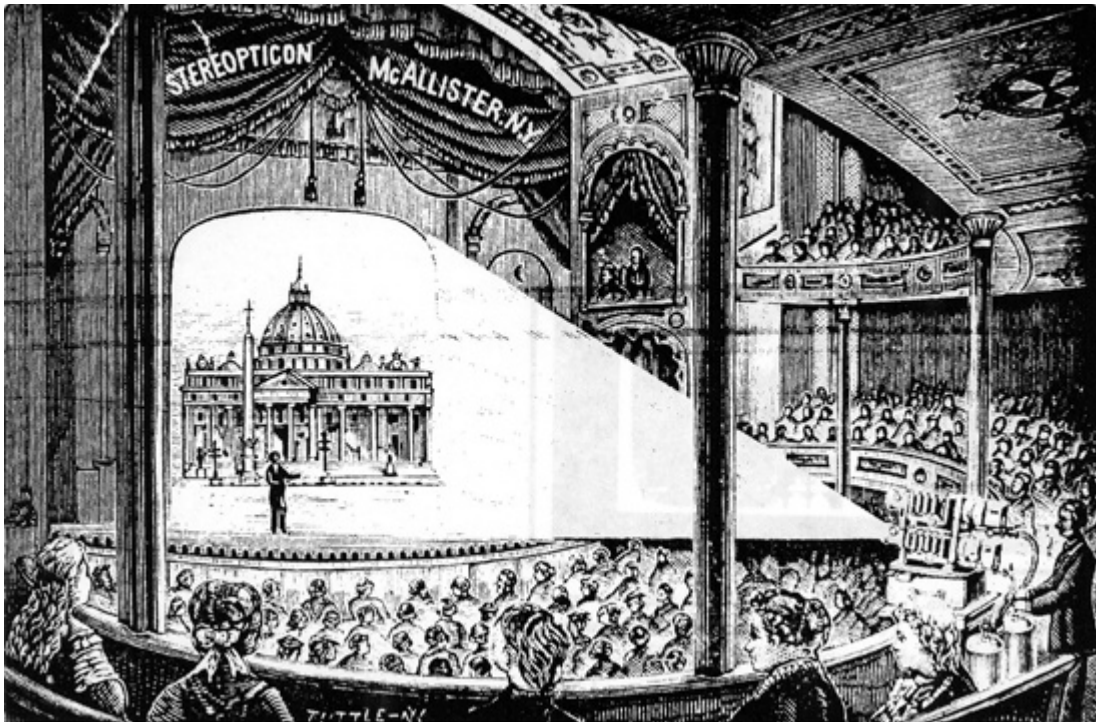
<sup>132</sup>Huhtamo 2000, 9; see also Suhonen 2008.

<sup>133</sup>Gunning 1989/2009, 737; see also Suhonen 2008.

<sup>134</sup>Gaudreault 2006, 87, 99; see also Buckland 2006, 50.

<sup>135</sup>Enticknap 2005, 11.

implication in its invention, because the lantern was too fun to be taken seriously as a scientific apparatus. It is no wonder that the device was later adopted by travelling showmen. By the time the film saw daylight, the magic lantern tradition had recently reached its highest peak in both quality and popularity, and had an established position as a form of entertainment. In comparison to colorful, hand-made magic lantern slides, the trembling, monochrome film appeared rather petty to many at first, and some believed the film would turn out short-lived.<sup>136</sup>



23. At an established magic lantern show.<sup>137</sup>

The film did eventually inherit the cultural space of the magic lantern, but Huhtamo stresses that the superseding was not sudden or contradictory. At first, the magic lantern was even needed to project the films, for the original film projector only consisted of the roll mechanism<sup>138</sup>. As films were short, they were originally screened in between longer magic lantern shows, and in process, the spectacular way of watching (moving<sup>139</sup>) images in a

<sup>136</sup>Huhtamo 1997 14–20; 30–31, 90–93; Huhtamo 2000, 14, 17, 20–21, 52.

<sup>137</sup>Thequietus.com. <http://thequietus.com/articles/04980-branchage-festival-2010-robin-rimbaud-scanner-interview-magic-lantern/>

<sup>138</sup>Huhtamo 1997, 58; Enticknap 2005, 136; Robinson 1996, 70.

<sup>139</sup>Although most magic lantern slides were static, some were equipped with mechanisms that could accomplish different kinds of motion effects, such as a change of weather in a landscape or a rapid shape-shifting of a character. The movement, however, was often momentary or cyclical. In this light, Huhtamo (1997) says that the becoming of film was merely about replacing a movement with another kind of movement. Huhtamo 2000, 103; Huhtamo 1997, 32, 54–55.

darkened room, accompanied by commentator, live music and sound effects, was transferred to film screenings. Although recently developed into more realistic direction, the magic lantern had a long past in the fantastical, and these contents continued in film.<sup>140</sup> David Robinson (1996) points out that films were at first advertised, rented and sold exactly in the same way as lantern slides.<sup>141</sup> According to Huhtamo (2000), the magic lantern still concretely exists in forms of slide and video projectors<sup>142</sup>. I suggest, that through the concept of the cinema of attractions, the impact of the magic lantern can be distinguished in the overall history of the cinematic spectacle.



24. As blockbusters today, both the magic lantern shows and the early cinema intrigued the spectator's imagination by offering sights of exotic, faraway lands.<sup>143</sup>

The play of immediacy and hypermediacy had a central place already in the magic lantern culture, phantasmagoria providing an intriguing example (picture 25). A popular form of entertainment, originating in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century Paris, phantasmagoria used improved magic lanterns (fantoscopes) to summon spirits, as the showmen made believe. To sustain the illusion, technology was kept safely hidden behind a curtain. An aura of mystery was built around each show, and actual locations such as old chapel grounds were made use of.<sup>144</sup> Eric Barnouw (1981) says “*some spectators sank to their knees, convinced they were in the presence of the supernatural*”<sup>145</sup>. Huhtamo (1997) reminds, however, that most spectators were nevertheless aware of the presence of some kind of a medium<sup>146</sup>.

<sup>140</sup>Huhtamo 1997, 54–58; Huhtamo 2000, 20, 22; see also Huhtamo 2008, 24–25.

<sup>141</sup>Robinson 1996, 70–71.

<sup>142</sup>Huhtamo 2000, 12, 22.

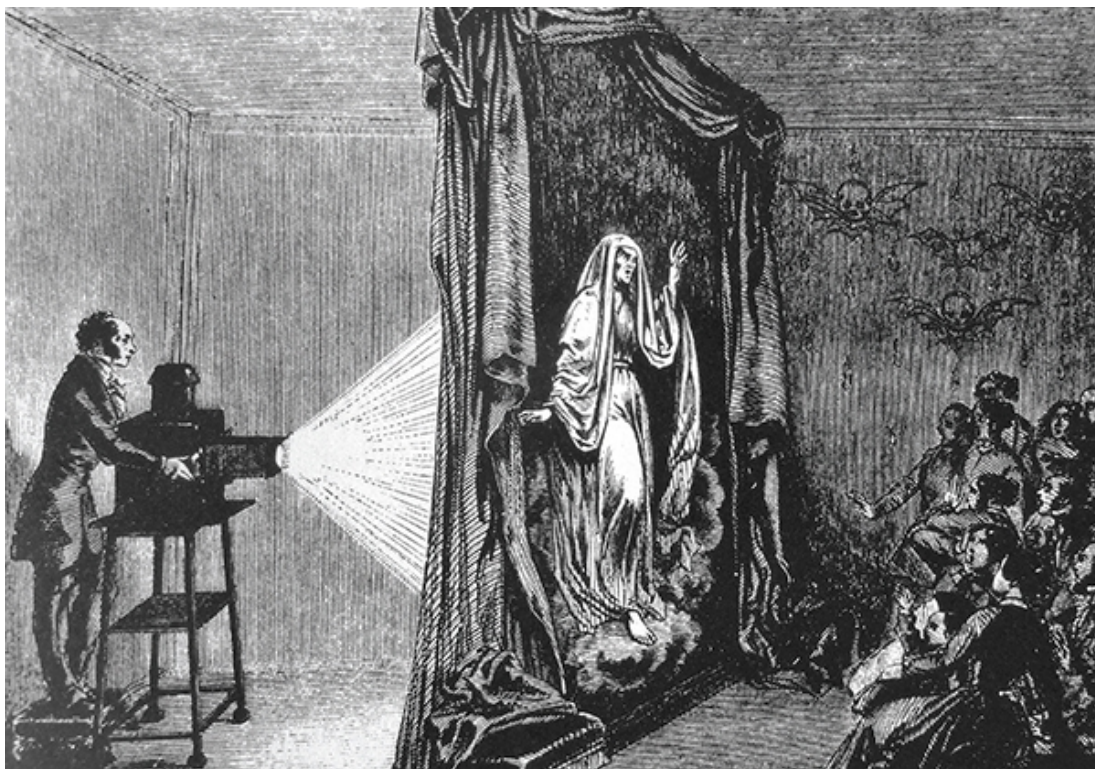
<sup>143</sup>Adamowsky 2003, 5.

<sup>144</sup>Huhtamo 1997, 30, 35–42; Huhtamo 2000, 2.

<sup>145</sup>Barnouw 1981, 19.

<sup>146</sup>Huhtamo 1997, 40–41.

Phantasmagoria provided a great idea bank for magicians, who used a concealed magic lantern to create many of their legendary illusions, such as vanishing acts. Together with other showmen of the era, these magicians later used their know-how in developing one of the first film genres, the trick film.<sup>147</sup> According to Shilo McClean (2007), "*Pyrotechnic effects, mechanical effects, matte paintings, glass mattes, rear projection, miniatures, models, prosthetics, make-up, specialized props*", in addition to "*the optical "trickery" of special lenses and optical printing*", still integral to special effects practice, were well within the scope of these early filmmakers.<sup>148</sup>



25. "*Audiences entered through cavernous corridors, marked with strange symbols, and came on a dimly lit chamber decorated with skulls; effects of thunder, sepulchral music and tolling bells helped set the mood. Coal burned in braziers. (...) He tossed some chemicals on the braziers, causing columns of smoke to rise. The single lamp flickered out*", Eric Barnouw (1981) depicts Robertson's famous phantasmagoria.<sup>149</sup>

<sup>147</sup>Barnouw 1981, 5–6, 88, 103–104; Huhtamo 1997, 41–42, 55–56.

<sup>148</sup>McClean 2007, 6.

<sup>149</sup>Barnouw 1981, 19; Full-stop.net. <http://www.full-stop.net/2013/11/19/features/essays/amanda/awakening-the-dead-film-and-the-technologies-of-wonder/>

### 3.4 Digital attractions

Spectacle tends to be foregrounded whenever the film needs to strengthen its position. Geoff King (2003) says that in the 1950s and 1960s, the film industry faced the combined threats of the divorcement of exhibition from production and distribution, the decline in cinemagoing, and the rival attractions of television and other leisure pursuits. The threat was answered by emphasizing the sheer scale of imagery. Widescreen formats, such as Cinerama and CinemaScope, and the 3D film<sup>150</sup>, were all attempts to promote the big-screen spectacle<sup>151</sup>. On top of visual attractions, the “smellies” (Smell-O-Vision, AromaRama) introduced the attraction of scents to the cinema<sup>152</sup>. In the 1980s the spectacle returned in its full power, when the film needed to compete against home-based viewing (video). Films such as the *Star Wars* trilogy, were especially designed to play strongly to the audio-visual qualities of the theatrical experience.<sup>153</sup>

Jay David Bolter & Richard Grusin (2002) state that today, at least in part to hold off the threat that digital media might pose for the traditional, linear film, Hollywood has incorporated popular computer graphics. In process, “*the Hollywood style has expanded its representational palette from old-fashioned and still popular transparency to at least a moderate degree of hypermediacy and self-acknowledgment*”.<sup>154</sup> In order to appeal to its target audience, the spectacular blockbuster applies techniques it seems to have absorbed from other popular media, such as videogames and advertising (including the music video). Geoff King (2003) says that in addition to traditional, broader spectacular shots one can sit back and marvel at, these films include “*rapid montage-effect editing combined with “unstable” camera movement designed to give an impression of subjective immersion in the action*”. This “impact aesthetic” is often increased by the practice of propelling debris and other objects out toward the viewer.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>150</sup>Leo Enticknap (2005) says that although most innovations did not stand the test of time, their short-term success taught the industry that the public enthusiasm for new moving image technologies would be worth capitalizing. Some of these innovations have made successful returns in updated forms. As we know, the 3D film, and even smell movies, are again of popular interest. Enticknap 2005, 42, 58.

<sup>151</sup>Gomery 1992, 238–245; Lev 2003, 112–120.

<sup>152</sup>Gomery 1992, 230–231.

<sup>153</sup>King 2003, 115–116; see also King 2000, 31; Enticknap 2005, 56; Gomery 1992, 230–245; Huhtamo 2000, 9; Lev 2003, 107.

<sup>154</sup>Bolter & Grusin 2002, 48, 154.

<sup>155</sup>King 2003, 116–118; see also Adamowsky 2003, 4; Elsaesser 2001, 11; Jenkins 2007, 35.

These changes have led to concern of the Hollywood's spectacle film soon no longer resembling its narrative self, but more like a videogame or a theme-park ride. King (2003) says, however, the fact that these films are sometimes converted to such formats does not make them alike: so different are the requirements of those of game or ride.<sup>156</sup> According to Scott McQuire (2000), new technological innovations tend to rise opposition at first. Such was the case with sound and color. He suggests that after experimentation with the new “toolbox”, new digital techniques will be gradually used for more narrative ends.<sup>157</sup> This propensity shows in *Hellboy (2004)*. For example, rocks falling towards the viewer (picture 26) is not only a thrilling display, but it also makes the viewer relate to the dangerous situation the characters are in.



26. Hypermediacy at work: stones falling towards the viewer.

Bolter & Grusin (2002) point out that “*New digital media are not external agents that come to disrupt an unsuspecting culture. They emerge from within cultural contexts, and they refashion other media*”. Despite its embracing technology never before seen in films, the spectacular blockbuster shares many features with earlier phases in the history of cinema.<sup>158</sup> Many techniques linked to the digital-visual-effects practice were common features already in the early film and beyond. Things rushing towards the viewer (picture 26), point-of-view shots (picture 27), or an actor taking direct contact to the viewer (picture 28) takes you back to the cinema of attractions and even further in the traditions of magic lantern<sup>159</sup>. Shilo McClean (2007) stresses that it is also important to realize that “*What is*

<sup>156</sup>King 2003, 119.

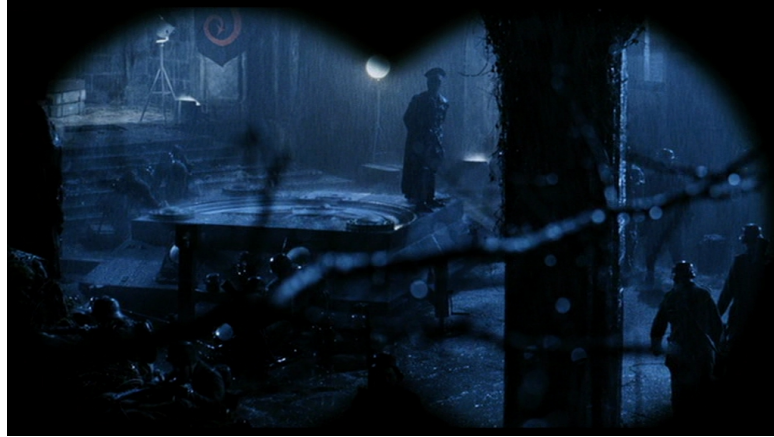
<sup>157</sup>McQuire 2000, 47; see also McClean 2007, 12.

<sup>158</sup>Bolter & Grusin 2002, 19; see also Ndalians 2004, 181; Adamowsky, 2–3; Jenkins 2006, 14; Huhtamo 2000, 126.

<sup>159</sup>See Huhtamo 1997, photo attachment page 3, for an example of the famous rushing heads of Robertson's phantasmagoria.



identifiably “spectacular” is not the full measure of special-effects usage, let alone digital-visual-effects practice”.<sup>160</sup>



27. A classic point-of-view shot.



28. Tom Manning looking at the camera.

### 3.5 Curiositas

According to Tom Gunning (1989/2009), the early film draws upon what Augustine, at the beginning of the fifth century, called “curiositas” in his catalogue of “the lust of the eyes”. For Augustine, curiositas meant not only a fascination of seeing, but desire for knowledge for its own sake. Desire to see repulsive things was frequently rationalized by appealing to intellectual curiosity. Like freak shows and other displays of curiosities, the early film exhibitions were described as instructive and informing. This made it acceptable to show things like a brutal execution of an elephant (*Electrocuting an elephant (1903), Edison*), or

<sup>160</sup>McClellan 2007, 44; see also McQuire 2000, 57.

humiliating a criminal (*Photographing a Female Crook (1904), Biograph*).<sup>161</sup> Erkki Huhtamo (1997 & 2000) says this combination of pure exploitative entertainment and educational make-believe was evident in the tradition of phantasmagoria, and later, a basic setting in Hollywood filmmaking.<sup>162</sup>

In *Hellboy (2004)*, the moral story also works as a validation for violent sensations, such as the death scene of agent Clay (pictures 29). Mike Mignola says he was surprised that del Toro even got the scene through to the studio, because it is so brutal. Although framing the image to Clay's face ensures that a lot of blood is not shown, the sounds of him being rapidly stabbed in the stomach by the sadist Kroenen are rather graphic. Poor Clay's facial gestures, in addition to sounds and flashes of him firing his gun uncontrollably to a wrong direction, add to the shocking impact of the scene. It is interesting to know that Del Toro attempted to get the infamous visual effects creator Ray Harryhausen (1920—2013) to aid in designing the film, but he refused. The reason was: too much violence.<sup>163</sup>

In addition to injury, death and decay of the body, people also have a lasting fascination with sex<sup>164</sup>. As Constance Balides' (1993) analysis on women in the cinema of attractions reveals, the woman as a sexual spectacle is an evident attraction in the early film<sup>165</sup>. In many films of the era, a woman is shown undressing, or her body is otherwise exposed (for example the lifting of the skirt in *The Gay Shoe Clerk (1903; Edison)*).<sup>166</sup> Needless to say, the attraction of the female form continues to play a part in the cinematic spectacle, and in *Hellboy (2004)* the part falls for Liz. The spectacle of the *male* body is more rarely discussed, yet displays of strong muscles and handsome features are attractions where the beauty of the female figure. As Scott Bukatman (2006) notes, a great part of the appeal of the superhero film is in fact the fetishism of the hypermasculine spectacle.<sup>167</sup>

<sup>161</sup>Gunning 1989/2009, 744–746.

<sup>162</sup>Huhtamo 1997, 36; Huhtamo 2000, 4–5, 21.

<sup>163</sup>*Hellboy – Director's Cut (2005)* DVD commentary: Guillermo del Toro 58:29–59:45; *Hellboy (2004)* DVD commentary: Guillermo del Toro & Mike Mignola 35:40–36:19.

<sup>164</sup>Gunning 1993/2004, 44.

<sup>165</sup>The display even becomes literal in the series of erotic films that played an important role already in the early film production. Gunning 1986/1990/2009, 382–383; Balides 1993, 20.

<sup>166</sup>Balides 1993, 20, 23, 25; see also Bolter & Grusin 2002, 80.

<sup>167</sup>Bukatman 2003, 59; see also Fowkes 2010, 141.

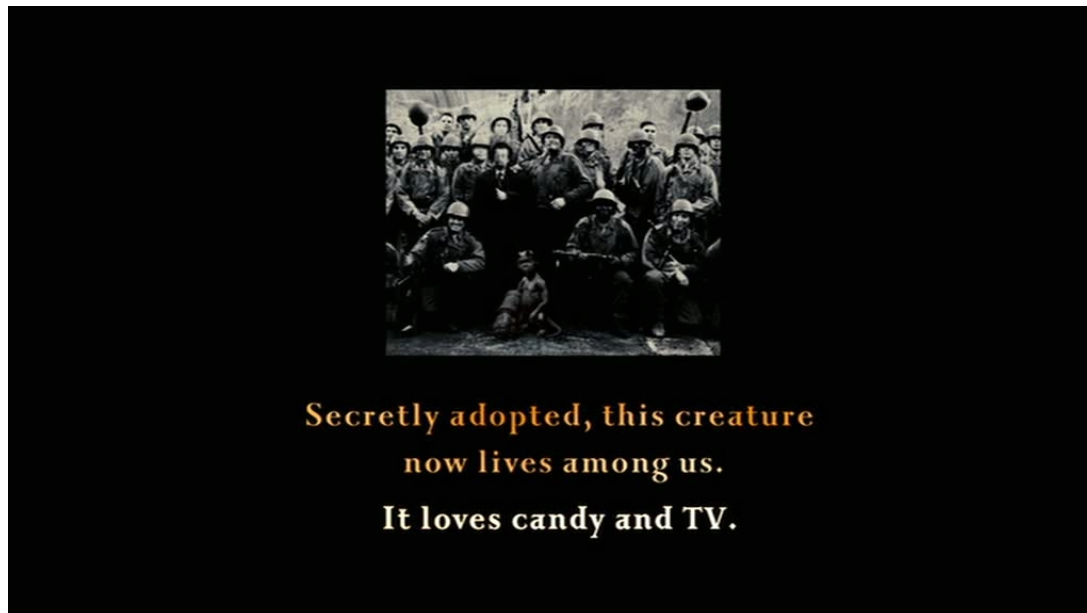


29. Agent Clay dies a violent death by being stabbed in the stomach multiple times. The killer Kroenen later meets his own death by being pierced by iron bars and finally crushed by a huge gear.

## 4 *Hellboy II: The Golden Army* (2008) — ANALYSIS

### *Christmas Eve*

Like its prequel, *Hellboy II: The Golden Army* begins with a flash-back. The audience is taken to the year 1955 and the home of young Hellboy. It is Christmas Eve, the Christmas tree is lit and off-screen song “Santa Claus is coming to town” is playing. Hellboy is waiting for Santa Claus, just like any other boy—except that his home is located at a secret army base and he happens to look like a demon. Again, del Toro plays with the contradiction of what is normal and what is not, to enhance the strangeness of the character of Hellboy and other things out of this world. By placing Hellboy in a seemingly normal setting, the boy pops out as an oddity. By this time, most viewers are already familiar with Ron Perlman in a Hellboy suit, and del Toro needs a new attraction to impress the audience. A child version of the demon (as well as younger version of Professor Broom) does the trick (picture 31). Although the scene tells something about Hellboy's past, and the boy's broken horn is a visual detail that informs the viewer Hellboy was “*quite a rascal*” already in youth<sup>168</sup>, showcasing the boy devil seems more an important task in this scene than deepening of the character.



30. Also the sequel plays with the discrepancy between things normal and abnormal.

<sup>168</sup>*Hellboy 2: The Golden Army* (2008) DVD commentary: Guillermo Del Toro 1:40–1:54.



31. Young version of Hellboy.

As a funny detail, young Hellboy is watching Howdy Doody on television and is offended by his father's implies that Howdy Doody might be a puppet, and not a real person. This can be seen as Hellboy's normal childish belief that it is common that in the world there are other creatures weird just like him. But also it provokes hypermediacy, as the viewer understands that she also is actually looking at a prosthetic covered actor (actually, actress, make-up artist Montse Ribé) and not a real being. Father asks Hellboy to close the TV and brush his teeth. Hellboy wants to stay awake like children usually do, but as he is ordered to go to bed, he insists to hear a bedtime story at least. So, Professor Broom tells him a tale from the ancient times....:

*"It is said, that at the dawn of time, man, beast and all magical creatures lived together in harmony under Aiglin the Father Tree. But man had been created with a hole in his heart, a hole that no possession, power or knowledge could fill. And in his infinite greed, man dreamt of expanding his dominion over the entire Earth. The blood of many an elf, ogre and goblin was spilled in their war with man. And King Balor, the one-armed king of Elfland, watched the slaughter in dread and despair. But one day, the master of the goblin blacksmiths offered to build the king a golden, mechanical army, seventy times seventy soldiers, that would never know hunger and could not be stopped. Prince Nuada begged his father to agree. 'Build me this army', the king said. So a magical crown was forged that would allow those of royal blood to command the Golden Army if unchallenged." —Broom*

Hellboy interrupts the story by asking if someone challenges the ruler, would there be a fight. By conventions of Hollywood filmmaking, it is easy to guess that Hellboy himself would be the one challenging the Prince in the end, and that there would definitely be a flashy end battle to anticipate. The story continues:

*"So the world was changed, and the next time the humans marched, they felt the earth tremble beneath their feet and saw the sky darken with monstrous shapes. The Golden Army had no remorse, felt no loyalty or pain. And King Balor's heart grew heavy with regret. So he called a truce and divided the crown in three pieces, one for the humans, and two for himself. In exchange, man would keep to the cities and the magical beings would own the forests. This truce would be honored by their sons and the sons of their sons until the end of time. But Prince Nuada did not believe in the promises of man. And it is said that he went into exile, vowing to return the day his people needed him most. So the Golden Army lay dormant, locked inside the Earth, waiting. And there it is to this day, awaiting the day the crown is made whole again. Silent, still and indestructible."* —Broom

"But it's just a story, right, Pops?", Hellboy asks.

"Is it now?"

"Yeah, come on. Those guys, they can't be real."

"Well, my son, I'm sure you'll find out."

Broom's answer assures the viewer that the story is going to turn out real, and implies that the bedtime story was in fact an introduction to the plot, which, again, points to a rather simple and traditional fairytale. The story is illustrated by using puppets and digital special effects (pictures 32). When you watch the film a second time, you recognize the characters: a puppet version of King Balor, Prince Nuada and Princess Nuala, as well as the goblin blacksmith. Del Toro says he decided to use puppets and not actual actors, not only to save money, but to not having to give away too much in the beginning—to save the attraction of revealing the actual golden army to the very end of the film.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>169</sup>*Hellboy 2: The Golden Army* (2008) DVD commentary: Guillermo Del Toro 02:30–5:30.



32. Using puppets instead of real actors saves the attraction of revealing characters and the title army for later, while providing something out of ordinary to look at.

## *Manhattan*

(See: *Hellboy II: The Golden Army DVD 06:50–08:10*)

Right after the opening credits of *The Golden Army*, there is a cut to a strange-looking pale man, who has a shirtless muscular upper body and a long white hair. He is training with a spear—which curiously lengthens and shortens according to the wielders will and mastery—and doing impressive acrobatic leaps. It is taken care of that his face is not yet revealed, and the background is kept blurry so that the viewer has no clue where the event is taking place. Water splashes from the ponds—a water drop is shown in close-up, and in slow-motion, the blade cleanly splits the drop. Finally, the man’s strangely handsome white face is revealed, but yet another surprise follows: a subway train speeds past in the background and gives the viewer a sign that the event is happening somewhat in this time and in a hideaway somewhere under a larger city. “*How long have you been there, my*

*friend?*”, the man asks, and Mr. Wink's gruesome shadow can be seen in the darkness. As the spear shortens, the man points it at a direction that camera follows. There, one can see a couple of shaking crates. *”I haven't fed them, at all”*, he says in a menacing manner. Something is about to happen. The camera moves from underground to the surface, to rainy Manhattan, where traffic is busy and an auction is taking place in a nearby building...

The scene described includes many traits of the cinema of attractions. It exhibits an impressive performance of physical skill and weapon-mastery, enhanced further by clever camera work and editing. It plays with the spectator's curiosity by revealing, slowly, and not too much. It demonstrates male beauty, and of course, the know-how of modern filmmaking. Yet, the narrative purpose of the scene remains strong. It introduces the main villain, Prince Nuada (Luke Goss), and gives hints about what he is up to. Portrayal of his skills makes him look like a considerable opponent to Hellboy. Not revealing the actual setting immediately gives a timeless feel to the scene. It raises curiosity, but at the same time it can be interpreted as a narrative element, as it metaphorically reminds the viewer of Nuada's ancient origins and this magical creature's ageless grace. As the subway train rushes by, the viewer is offered a lot of information. Event-time is not in the ancient times, not in the 1950s, but more like in the present. This works also as a visual way of comparing the ancient prince and the contemporary world, as he is not quite in place in our time. Pointing at the crates, Nuada acts as an exhibitor who guides audience attention to a next marvel. But the act has a narrative purpose as it gives an aura of menace to the crates used in the following scene.



3. Revealing, slowly and not too much, raises curiosity towards both the story and the spectacle.



The viewer is taken to the auction. She is offered a glimpse of a golden item—that an active viewer recognizes as one of the pieces of the crown required to command the Golden Army—right before it is closed inside a box and taken away to the auction parlor. As an employee walks to close an open balcony door, lighting flashes ominously. He thinks he heard something strange, and the spectator knows he did, as she sees Nuada appearing right behind him, giving a killing strike.<sup>170</sup>



34. Glimpses of information.

As the auctioneer presents the golden item as the Royal Crown of Bethmoora, lights go out in the parlor. Prince appears and introduces himself, and lowers a crate on the floor. It starts to slowly open. Something is about to happen. Based on the pieces of information given, and the grim atmosphere created by traits familiar from suspense films, the viewer is ensured it is not anything good. Simultaneously, the following spectacle is now loaded with narrative significance. Many sequences in *Hellboy* films are built just like this one (see, for example, The Crime Scene, and Broom's death scene in the first film).

The auctioneer calls the guards—and they come flying through the glass doors. On the ground, there is a metallic fist in a chain responsible for the blow. Curiously, it starts "walking" back towards the doors, and ends up in Mr. Wink's hand. Accompanied by flashes of lightning, Mr. Wink (Brian Steele, picture 35) walks from the shadows, and is shown to the spectator for the first time in all his glory. To mark this occasion, he makes a big growl. The exhibition of the creature's strength and menacing presence signals the viewer that he is a tough opponent, but it is also meant to give attention to the creature as a tour de force of monster design. Mr. Wink is a full body prosthetic creature and, to del Toro, marks a great in monster design.<sup>171</sup> During the film's running, he is shown multiple times growling like this.

<sup>170</sup>Geoff King (2000) says this sort of maneuver boosts the spectator's feeling of superiority in comparison to the characters' on screen. King 2000, 43.

<sup>171</sup>*Hellboy 2: The Golden Army* (2008) DVD commentary: Guillermo Del Toro 12:13–12:23 & 50:35–51:24.



35. Mr. Wink, Del Toro's pride in monster design.

Nuada pulls out a strange tentacle creature, examines it for a moment to let the viewer see it too, and releases it on the auctioneer's face (see pictures 36). To make a really effective impact, the auctioneer is shown turning towards the camera as the tentacle monster is suffocating him—and even *blinking*—before the man falls down. The auction audience is shown looking startled to further enhance the impact. Prince picks up the crown piece and looks at it for a second with hand extended so that the viewer can again clearly see what he is holding; only this time this is done with a less spectacular and a more narrative intention. In the end of the scene, the crates are opened and flying little monsters come rushing towards the viewer, perhaps relating the spectator to the auction audience, but also just to play with hypermediacy achieved by the digital special effects. As the monsters are only shown for a quick moment, the story does not get slowed down, but curiosity towards seeing more of the monsters may have been developed in the viewer.



36. Dangers of the auction.

**B.P.R.D.**

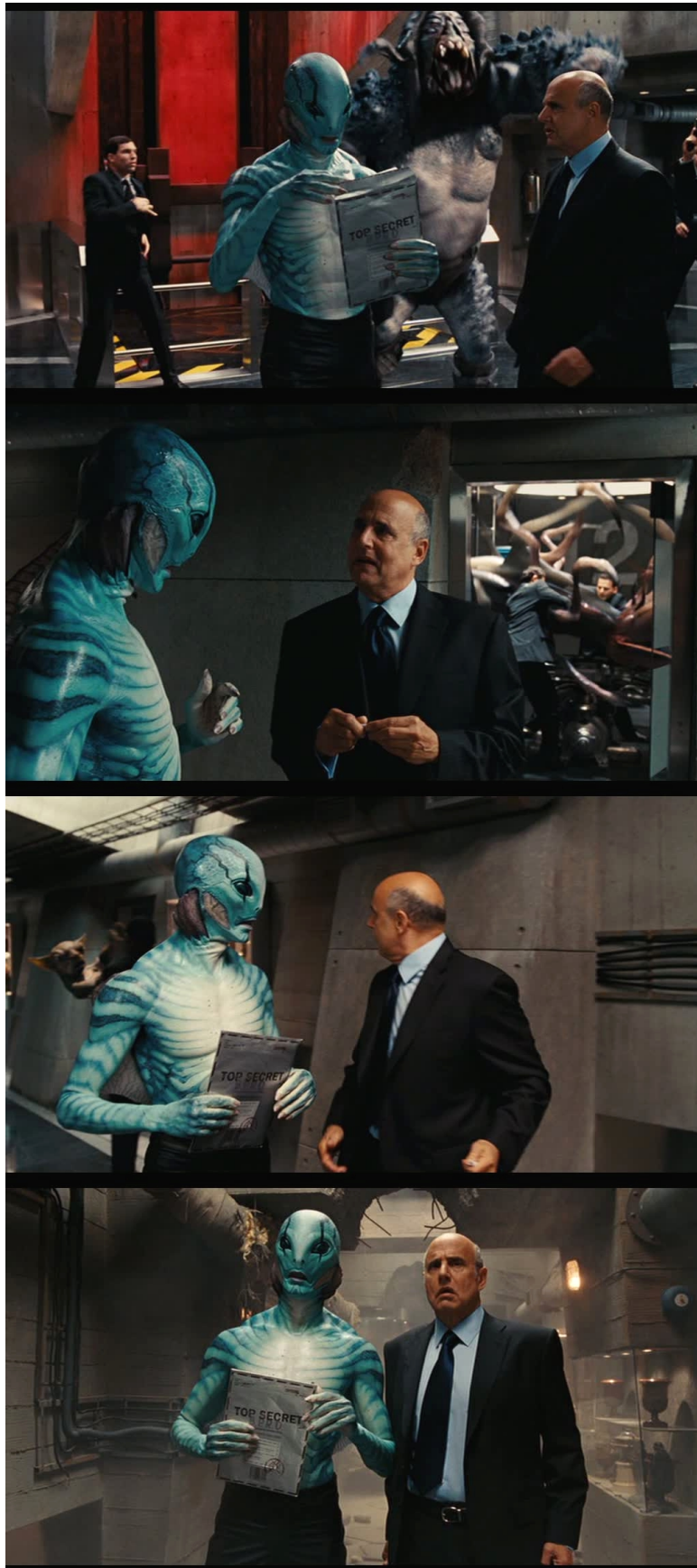
(See: *Hellboy II: The Golden Army* DVD 13:55–15:51)

The scene that follows takes the viewer to the B.P.R.D. headquarters familiar from the first film. Agent Manning meets Abe Sapien to complain about Hellboy's urge to appear in public. The scene cuts to a monster roaring at the camera (Mr. Wink is not the only one doing this). And as Manning and Abe walk down the corridor—Manning still complaining—all sorts of strange things happen in the background. A man is hit by the raving monster and flies through the air. In a room behind Manning, the viewer is offered a good glimpse of personnel trying to hold down another wildly behaving monster. A weird creature is carried past Manning and Abe—Manning following its course in order to remark that the viewer just saw something odd. *"What's going on?"*, he asks. *"Oh it's Friday!"*, Abe answers examining the file he was handed, as if this is nothing out of ordinary. As in Myers' "sightseeing tour" in the first film, the viewer more keen to details gets to eye strange-looking objects placed by the hallway; notably Kroenen's mask in a glass cabinet.

Once again del Toro plays with the contrast of normal and abnormal. It continues by Abe explaining Manning about Hellboy's relationship problems, giving an impression that it is something every new couple goes through. However, as the sound of Hellboy and Liz arguing gets louder, and finally a large metal door hurtles by and crashes everything it touches, it becomes clear to the viewer that this by all means is not a normal couple. Manning's amazed facial gestures give the same impression. Accompanied by heroic music, Hellboy rises midst the crumbled wall and dust, and says *"Hey, Abe"*, in a very common manner. The hero Hellboy is just a normal guy, and yet, not normal at all. In Hellboy's room, Liz is literally on fire, as she complains about the state of their relationship. She gets interrupted though, as the alarms go off and the couple is off to work (their job not being very usual either).<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>172</sup>*Hellboy 2: The Golden Army* (2008) DVD commentary: Guillermo Del Toro 14:05–15:04.



37. (Not) reacting to oddities at the B.P.R.D.

### *Crime scene*

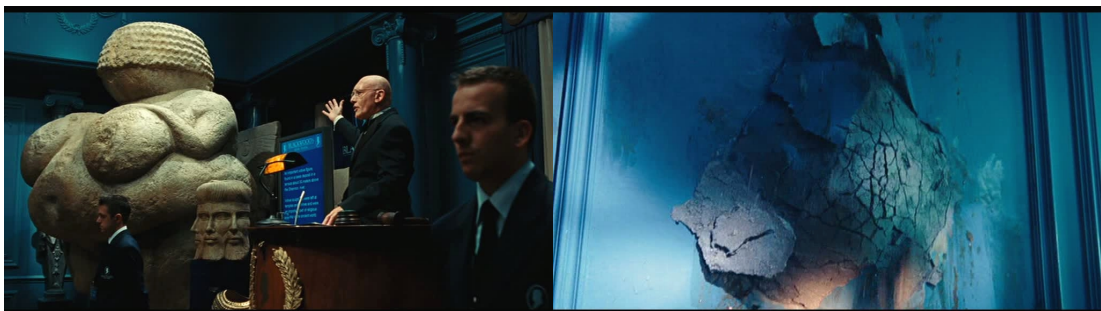
Agents go to the crime scene to investigate. At first it seems the hostile event has already passed, but then they start to feel something is wrong. As agents look around the room in dim lighting, suspense thickens with menacing off-screen music adding to the mood. Before the characters have a clue of what is going on, the viewer can already see the same winged little creatures from the previous scene—Tooth Fairies—lurking around in wall structures. (Again, the viewer curiosity is triggered towards the events *and* the spectacle about to happen.) Compared to the prequel, the character of Liz is now a much more active character. She has grown from a sad, introverted girl into a strong woman. She is comfortable handling a gun, and works as one of the leading agents. Scott Bukatman (2003) implies that this does not make her any less an attraction, however: *“the halo of power just adds a further level of exoticism to the spectacle of female form. Overall the trend has been toward masculinized, even phallic, women armed to the teeth and just one of the boys”*<sup>173</sup>.



38. Building up a suspenseful mood.

<sup>173</sup>Bukatman 2003, 66.

While scanning the room with his special hand<sup>174</sup> and equipment, Abe finds out that Liz is pregnant (the equipment is shown detecting motion around Liz's stomach). The fact that she is carrying the demon Hellboy's baby is a curious thing to think about; for some, possibly even disturbing. Liz's pregnancy is a central theme in the film, taken account of also in the visual design of the film. Del Toro reveals there are hints like the fertility goddess statue in the auction parlor, the monster with a baby-shaped tumor, and Hellboy saving a baby later on in the film that imply to this theme. In this scene, a part of the wall bursts out reminding a pregnant belly (pictures 39).<sup>175</sup> Del Toro says the first *Hellboy* film was criticized for being hard to follow. Designing *The Golden Army*, he decided to make the story as simple as possible, and to add layers on a visual level instead. In addition to visual details such as these, color codes have precise meanings in the film. Cold colors are used to portray the human world, while exciting, colorful shades are saved for the magical world. The contrast between the two color codes symbolically speak of the main theme of the film series, which is Hellboy's search for his place in the world. Additional color codes used in the film are blue and golden for the Princess, and red and golden for the golden army.<sup>176</sup>



39. The theme of *Hellboy II*: pregnancy and parenthood.

It turns out that the slime on the floor is what is left of the auction people. It informs both agents and the viewer that these little creatures are not to be taken lightly, simultaneously adding an element of repulsion to the scene. Gross details, graphic violence and brutal deaths are not spared in the scene (pictures 40). Agent Marble finds a fairy. It looks cute at first, but then, by contrast, reveals its deadly teeth and savagely attacks the agent. Hellboy comes to rescue and squeezes the fairy in his fist until its head pops. When thousands of fairies fill the room, the result is a big fight sequence including lots of gun shots, biting and ripping. In one

<sup>174</sup>A spectacular trait that Abe does not have in the comic series.

<sup>175</sup>*Hellboy 2: The Golden Army* (2008) DVD commentary: Guillermo Del Toro 21:36–22:46.

<sup>176</sup>*Hellboy 2: The Golden Army* (2008) DVD commentary: Guillermo Del Toro 08:16–13:53 & 00:11:39–00:11:54.

point Hellboy discovers that fairies have eaten one of the agents and you can already see his skeleton showing. "Damn!", Hellboy comments in disbelief, and the viewer is urged to be equally baffled by the horrible sight.



40. Grottesque attractions.

Hellboy shoots a fairy towards the camera and it spreads right on “lens”, leaving a trail of slime on “the screen” for a little while (in reality, there is no lens or screen smothered; the effect is created in post-production by using digital techniques). The effect invites subjective immersion to the action, but also provokes hypermediacy. The presence of the medium is felt



even more, when Hellboy pushes the large fertility figure on a mass of fairies, and they come running and screaming towards “the camera” (picture 41). The statue smashes the wall, as Liz is preparing to fire the place up—indicating that the battle is nearing the grand finale. Once more the viewer is offered a violent death as the fairies attack one of the agents, roughly spread his lips and eyelids (pictures 40), before finally dragging him down the stairs.



41. Tooth fairies rushing towards the viewer shortly remind the viewer of the presence of a medium.

Liz bursts into massive flames. Hellboy, who saw his moment and intentionally stayed by the window during the explosion, flies through the glass. In slow-motion, mellow music contributing to the comical feel, he falls down...and lands on a NYPD car in front of a large group of reporters and other witnesses. The fall is shown two times in a row to make a really definite impact. A couple of fairy survivors try to attack people, but the viewer sees them bursting. The savior Hellboy is posing on the car with a smoking gun in his hand. Music builds up the special moment—Hellboy is finally out to the public. As a result of this one very spectacular scene, the viewer (along with Abe and Liz) is now equipped with the knowledge of Liz's pregnancy. The heroes themselves receive information about the enemy. And, a new chapter begins for Hellboy's character.

[In this point the viewer is offered a glimpse of what Nuada is doing in the meanwhile: see the next paragraph]. After the fight, Hellboy, Abe and Manning are seen in Hellboy's room, watching TV programs of Hellboy's revelation. Hellboy's hilarious laughter contributes to the light mood of the scene, which gives the viewer a moment to revert from all the suspense

of the previous scenes. The troubled Liz is shown scantily clad—rather curiously—through a pretty much see-through door in the bathroom, running a pregnancy test. The test shows positive, which gives the event more heavy importance. No words are needed, as Liz's extended hand “shows” the result to the viewer (picture 42). Until the end of the film, Liz tries to find a proper moment to tell Hellboy that they are having children. Her uncertainty in Hellboy's ability of taking care of others continues the growing up theme of the first film. In the end of the scene, Manning, seemingly horrified by Hellboy's stunt, adds to the theme by informing that the B.P.R.D. is about to have a new agent to look after Hellboy. Curiosity towards seeing this new character is now developed.



42. Positive. Hypermediacy in service of the story.

### ***The Throne Room***

Nuada is shown walking to an old abandoned building with Mr. Wink. He is greeted by an odd looking creature, Chamberlain, who has long, bony fingers that make a strange creaking noise as he moves them (picture 43). There's also a group of weird looking guards. Princess Nuala makes an entrance. Like her brother, she is beautiful, but in a little strange way. Guillermo del Toro says that designing the creatures for the film, he did not want creatures that the viewer feels she has already seen. They had to be “beautiful and *attractive*”.<sup>177</sup> [Here, we see the TV watching scene, and then return to the throne room scene.]

<sup>177</sup>*Hellboy: In Service of the Demon (2008)*: Guillermo del Toro 06:52–08:08 & 23:58–24:18.



43. Del Toro films' creature designs need to stand out as different.

Chamberline points the way to the throne room by bowing, and the camera follows the gesture, simultaneously pulling the viewer along to the situation and presenting a marvellous sight. The throne room looks impressive, with golden leaves falling in a poetic way, and the ancient elf king sitting on the throne. This is one of the many scenes in the film that encourages the viewer to take time and really marvel at the beauty of what she sees (picture 44; for more examples, see: The Troll Market scene and The Forest God scene). It pulls into the world of fantasy, and also makes the viewer awe at the aesthetics of the setting. In comparison to its prequel, the sets in *The Golden Army* are more grandiose. Del Toro says that while the first film was mostly miniatures, the sequel is almost entirely set-design.<sup>178</sup> This particular set was difficult, because the air in the space was cold and tough to breathe. Del Toro thought it was perfect for the look of the scene, however, for it contributes to the idea of a dying race having court in an abandoned industrial space. To make it just the way he wanted, he personally contributed to financing the set.<sup>179</sup>

Nuada makes a speech, revealing the motives behind his actions: "*The humans have forgotten the gods, destroyed the Earth. And for what? Parking lots. Shopping malls. Greed has burnt a hole in their heart that will never be filled. They will never have enough!*". The king's stagnant presence speaks of giving up, and makes the viewer wonder if the Prince might be right with his revolutionary plans of taking over the Earth after all. The king, of course, does not accept, and reluctantly sentences the prince to death. A fight sequence follows as Nuada (this time wielding two swords instead of a spear) and Mr. Wink slay the guards. Black blood spills, heads are decapitated, acrobatic leaps are performed, a sword is

<sup>178</sup>*Hellboy: In Service of the Demon (2008)*: Guillermo del Toro 03:12–03:22 & 23:47–24:02; Mike Mignola 03:56–04:07.

<sup>179</sup>*Hellboy 2: The Golden Army (2008)* DVD commentary: Guillermo Del Toro 30:56–32:10 & 34:21–34:47.

shoved deep in one guard's stomach. Del Toro thinks that this fight scene differs from any other fight sequences in the film, and informs that it draws from anime (among other influences).<sup>180</sup>



44. Attractions of a beautifully built set are enjoyed in a slow pace.

During the battle Nuada gets a nose bleed. The viewer finds out that his fate is linked with that of her twin sister's as Nuala's nose starts to bleed too. Words are not needed as action carries the whole message (pictures 45). The death of the king is saved for the last. The battle pauses for a moment, the eyes of father and son meet, and as the guards stand up to protect the king, Nuada runs and glides under them, slaying them, and finally stabbing the king. Curiously, the body of the deceased king is turned into some kind of a fine stone material, which probably symbolizes the elves' close relationship to nature. As Nuada picks up the second crown piece from his father, the body surprisingly disintegrates from the touch, adding a tragical flair to the regime change. The viewer is offered a good look at the two crown pieces magically coming to one, signaling that the story has just taken another step closer to the final clou. Princess Nuala, who holds the missing piece, manages to flee. She stops her escape to catch a breath, but mostly just to unveil to the audience that the missing piece of the crown is attached to her belt. As many times before, acts of display have narrative meaning.

<sup>180</sup>*Hellboy 2: The Golden Army (2008) DVD commentary: Guillermo Del Toro 33:32–33:50.*



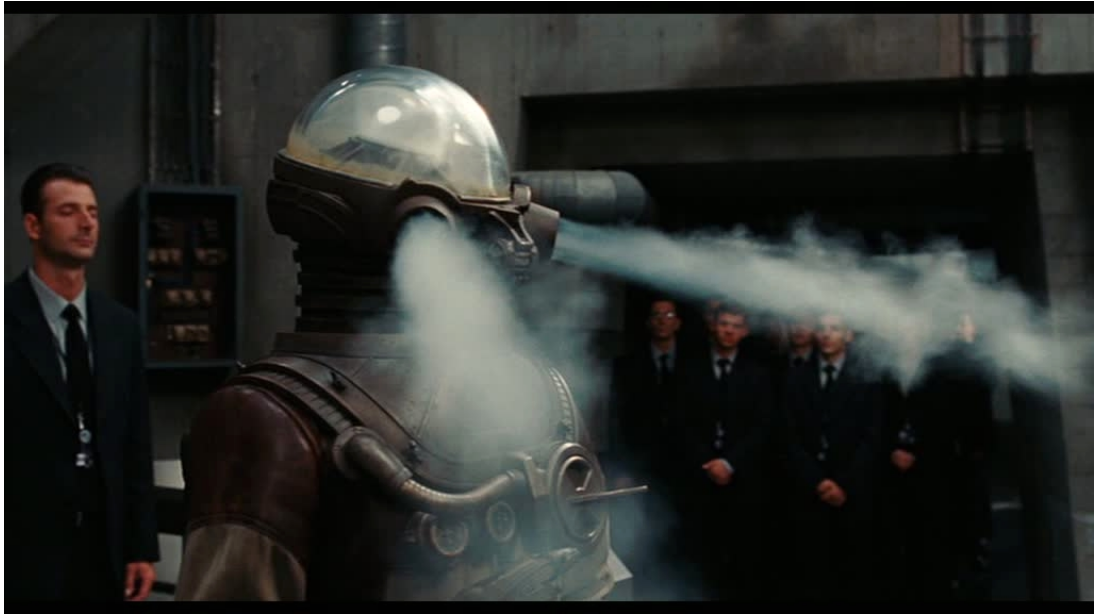
45. Visual storytelling.

## *Krauss*

Next, the viewer is introduced to the new agent Manning was hinting about. As Hellboy, Liz and Abe—and their special powers—are already familiar to the viewer, a new agent is required as an attraction. All the agents have gathered to the elevator hall to wait for the newcomer to arrive. Manning is reading his file to further build up the mood of curiosity. As elevator lowers, Manning's voice slows in anticipation. The new agent is blocked by a few agents so that the viewer does not immediately see him. First, his feet are shown, and finally, exhaling steam, Johann Krauss stands up and introduces himself. *"Oh, my God"*, Manning says to really emphasize that what we are seeing here is really strange (picture 46).



46. Moments of anticipation...



47. ...and revelation: Johann Krauss.

As a viewer, I would say, that Krauss does not really pop out from the many creatures appearing in the film. Nevertheless, he is exhibited like he does, to contribute to “the event” of *Hellboy II*. As Geoff King (2003) says, a blockbuster needs to present itself as “an event”, something that stands out from the cinematic routine. It is sold this way even if the formation of the event itself get routinized.<sup>181</sup> As a new medium has to pretend to be utterly new in order to promote its claim of immediacy<sup>182</sup>, so do films. Among other things, pompous music helps to build the feel of the spectacular. In the scene that follows, Krauss' expertise in ectoplasmic research is showcased, as he brings back to life one of the tooth fairies. The display of special effects has a narrative purpose of providing the agents hints concerning the case: based on the fairy's recent memories, Krauss finds out that the next place to investigate should be “the legendary, hidden Troll Market”. Giving a mythical aura to the place builds anticipation to the scene that is about to begin. Having filled his purpose, the fairy dies theatrically.<sup>183</sup>

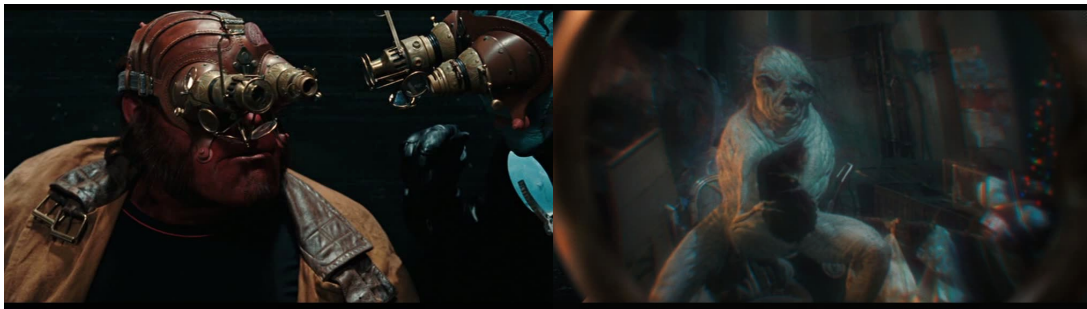
<sup>181</sup>King 2003, 114; see also Elsaesser 2001, 16.

<sup>182</sup>Bolter & Grusin 2002, 270.

<sup>183</sup>*Hellboy 2: The Golden Army (2008) DVD commentary: Guillermo Del Toro 38:20–39:00.*

## ***Troll Market***

Agents are off to investigate. To Abe's enthusiasm, they are equipped with the three surviving pairs of “Schufftein glasses” that help see past the cloaking aura used by trolls. The glasses are a yet another manifestation of del Toro's fascination with mechanical gizmos, and Abe's interest in them is supposed to trigger enthusiasm also in the viewer. To demonstrate the glasses, a couple of hypermediated attractions are included. Abe looks at Hellboy while wearing the glasses, and as he looks, Abe's viewpoint becomes the spectator's viewpoint, and she can see the true nature of Hellboy: with big horns and a fire burning on the top of his demonic head. The second time has less a comical and more a narrative purpose, as the viewer gets a good hypermediated look “via” the glasses past the cloaking aura of the suspect: an ugly troll disguised as an old lady (picture 48).



48. Attractions of Schufftein glasses.

Del Toro plays with the sweet impression people usually have of old ladies, as the lady is shown trying to take a bite of an innocent little cat (picture 49). Preparing to bite, her mouth and eyes widen inhumanly—a transformation that offers a grotesque attraction. The cat-lover Hellboy comes to rescue, and then threatens the granny for information on the location of The Troll Market. To do this, he uses a mere canary (trolls hate canaries). Startled by the small bird, the granny consents, and shows the door, but yet refuses unlock it. Here, we see a rather surprising act in all its violence: Hellboy, suffering from short temper, hits the granny, who flies yelling through the air and lands on a pile of junk. Eventually, it is Krauss who opens the lock using his special powers. An aura of anticipation builds, as the door slowly opens with the sound of its clattering accelerating, Abe and Hellboy observing the event with curiosity. *"Gentlemen, welcome to the Troll Market"*, Krauss says, and waves his hand to present the marvels of the place to both his companions and the audience (the camera follows the gesture as it did in the Throne Room scene).





49. A troll disguised as an old lady provides a curious attraction.

(See: *Hellboy II: The Golden Army* DVD 44:38–49:07)

Del Toro says the challenge in creating *The Golden Army* was to try to make the film as big if not bigger than the gigantic summer movies at the time, even with a more limited budget<sup>184</sup>. In a typical Hollywood manner, it also needed to better its prequel in terms of spectacularity<sup>185</sup>. Del Toro's answer is investing in monster design. Compared to the first film of the series, and many other monster movies, *The Golden Army* includes a massive amount of different kinds of creatures. The Troll Market scene really showcases their amount and diversity, and I would encourage the reader of this thesis to examine the scene in motion. The scene is also filled with additional visual details, so rich that it is impossible to notice everything. The camera moves amongst the crowd to make the viewer immerse to the scene; sounds, shouts and mechanical music add to the strange market atmosphere. Despite it all, the spectacle of the Troll Market does not lack of narrative meaning. Important plot twists will take place there, and the place also gives something more to the theme of Hellboy's search for his place in the world: “*Nobody is looking at us! We blend right in!*” Hellboy says to Liz, relieved that for once he is not been treated as a freak.

<sup>184</sup>*Hellboy: In Service of the Demon* (2008): Guillermo del Toro 01:32–01:44; *Hellboy 2: The Golden Army* (2008) DVD commentary: Guillermo Del Toro 13:00–13:10; Applebaum 2008.

<sup>185</sup>King 2003, 120, 124.



50. Krauss invites his fellow agents—and the viewer—to the creature exhibition of The Troll Market.

By again resorting to senseless violence (including whacking and throwing somebody in a boiling pot), Hellboy finds out about Prince Nuada and the upcoming war between magical creatures and the human world. A glimpse of Mr. Wink is given to the viewer, to add a sense of danger, before attention is transferred to Princess Nuala, who also is visiting The Troll Market (picture 51). With Abe on her heels, Nuala steps into a beautifully decorated shop (with the color code blue-golden pointing to the princess) and meets a yet one more strange-looking creature. From him, she attains what she had come for: a metallic cylinder

containing the map to the golden army. Abe arrives, and as soon as he makes acquaintance with the lovely Princess (which is the beginning of their love story), Mr. Wink appears. He is after the map and the crown-piece, and is most definitely ready for a fight to get them.



51. Strange beauty of creatures and sets.

During the following fight sequence, the viewer is pulled into the action. At first, she witnesses how Abe gets beaten up by Mr. Wink as if she would be standing beside the Princess. As Hellboy comes to Abe's aid, more hypermediacy follows: water splashes on "the camera's lens", and Hellboy gets lifted up by Mr. Wink straight towards the camera. In one point, the fighters' massive fists meet each other in slow motion, celebrating the sheer spectacle—but also signaling the equal powers of the two fighters (picture 52). Finally, Hellboy knocks his opponent down, but conventionally, the monster rises up one last time. The battle ends with a final clou: Mr. Wink getting squeezed to death by a machinery. This is not shown clearly, but Hellboy's gesture implies that the sight must be really awful indeed. In the end of The Troll Market scene, weird little creatures run and bring a word to Nuada that Mr. Wink is dead. Nuada is touched by the news, and the viewer is encouraged to be equally so. Most affected must be the director himself, for whom this means the end of

exhibiting the creature he feels is one of the greatest monster designs ever existed. He is proud that Mr. Wink's suit performs so well in a demanding fight sequence like this, and that a great deal of the fight was accomplished without having to use a computer.<sup>186</sup>



52. Equal powers.

### ***The Forest God***

In *The Golden Army*, the viewer is often offered a glimpse of a prop just a few moments before its purpose is explained. This is the case with the crates in Manhattan scene, and for example, in The Troll Market scene, where the machinery that finishes off Mr. Wink is shown in the background already when the heroes arrive to the market. When the little creatures bring the sad news to Nuada, he is shown building something. In this scene, the purpose of that object is revealed. Nuada appears to Hellboy and his fellowship (which now includes Princess Nuala). After a short taunting speech, he extends his hand and reveals the golden, egg-shaped object, her sister shouting "*No brother, no!*" and backing away in fright, to mark the danger of the situation. Hellboy observes with a puzzled face (prompting curiosity in the viewer) as the object starts to open itself and reveals a glowing green bean. Nuada picks it up and throws towards the camera (picture 53).

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<sup>186</sup>*Hellboy 2: The Golden Army* (2008) DVD commentary: Guillermo Del Toro 50:35–51:24.



53. Prince Nuada presents his secret weapon.

The bean is shown jumping away in the direction of the sewer, while the heroes just stand and watch in awe. Finally, the marveling gives a speech turn to Nuala, who informs that the bean should not get touched with water. To prevent it, is now too late of course. Unrealism of characters' behavior is necessary for the spectacle to begin. At first nothing seems to happen, but then the earth starts to shake, pavement breaks and cars crash as something is about to come through. Another still moment as cars stop and people wonder what just happened—and then the revelation! Something big comes through the pavement as people scream, cars fly through the air and land on each other; explosions and breaking glass. As Hellboy turns around to see what it is that came through, a great elemental—a forest god, as Nuala states—is presented to the viewer in all its glory. *"I'm gonna get me Big Baby"*, Hellboy says, and the viewer is offered a moment to enjoy the fetish exhibition of Hellboy's huge handgun.



54. Carrying a baby through the battle makes the spectacle more surprising, and also adds to the main theme of the film.

While Hellboy is busy saving a baby, the forest god is causing chaos (roars towards the camera, and throws a helicopter with a car causing an explosion). Hellboy must be really out of options, as he takes the baby with him to the battle. This has something to do with the pregnancy/parenthood theme of the film, but it also gives something surprising to look at—especially when Hellboy climbs up on top of a block and throws the baby high in the air towards the camera, while using his both hands to load the gun.

After a short moment of reflecting the situation with Nuada, Hellboy makes the decision of finishing off the elemental, even though it is last of its kind. As it dies, its "blood" starts to grow vegetation, and finally its head bursts into a huge flower. There is a silent moment as everybody stops to wonder the beauty of the sight (picture 55). Although filled with special effects, this scene has a narrative meaning of discussing Hellboy's conflict: does he belong amongst the magical creatures after all? The question is boosted by the people being freaked out and hostile towards their savior, although he just killed a monster not unlike himself to protect them.<sup>187</sup> Liz becomes infuriated and bursts into flames to stand up for her loved one. By doing so, she finally reveals her own special powers to the people, although previously having an urge to be seen as a normal human. The scene could be interpreted as also contributing to the theme of nature conservation (as Nuada's speech in the Throne Room

<sup>187</sup>*Hellboy 2: The Golden Army* (2008) DVD commentary: Guillermo Del Toro 59:13–1:00:05. See also *Hellboy* (2004) DVD commentary: Guillermo del Toro 1:04:37–1:04:55.

scene could), but del Toro himself says he drew from nature only “*To keep the camera very fresh, to keep the construction, the language, the images very risky, very edgy, very 'not-your-regular-summermovie'*”<sup>188</sup>. In other words, to keep the film attractive.



55. Stopping for a poetic moment to reflect what just happened, and to give a pause from the spectacle.

### *The musical/gags*

The next two sequences in the film are dedicated to character relationships, but they have obvious comical purposes. They could be perceived as gags. According to Tom Gunning (2006), a gag's temporal structure of anticipation and eventual pay-off has a lot in common with attractions: “*Although it sounds perhaps too much like a mechanical compromise, I tend to class gags as a midpoint, even a relay, between attractions and narrative*”<sup>189</sup>. As Geoff King (2000) notes, gags also convey story information and drive the narrative forward.<sup>190</sup>

<sup>188</sup>Hellboy 2: The Golden Army (2008) DVD commentary: Guillermo Del Toro 1:00:45–1:00:55.

<sup>189</sup>Gunning 2006, 37; see also Musser 1994/2006, 397.

<sup>190</sup>King 2000, 32.

In Hellboy's room, Hellboy and Liz have a caring moment, and Liz informs that she is going away for a while, to think. (In the background Hellboy's multiple TVs give something to glance at. As an apt detail, *The Bride of Frankenstein* is showing.) As a result, Hellboy starts drinking (like a “normal” man). He meets Krauss at his locker, and the two have a discussion. Turns out Krauss knew Hellboy's father, which immediately gives more emphasis on the character. The discussion ends in Hellboy losing his temper. He hits Krauss so hard that his glass hood gets broken. Steam escapes from the body, surprisingly indicating the death of Krauss. The viewer might see, however, that the steam gathers under the lockers. As Hellboy gets ready to taste his beer, the locker doors attack him in a comical manner. Krauss' voice sounding makes it clear that he has taken control over the lockers. As the final door hits Hellboy, a picture of his face is pressed to the door; the steam-formed Krauss walks away whistling.

In the library, Abe is trying on contact lenses to impress the Princess he has fallen in love with. (As a curious detail, Abe blinks “sideways”.) After a shy conversation with her, Abe begins listening to love songs. Hellboy catches him unaware, and the two of them start drinking together and talking about relationships (again, like “normal” men). The talk ends up in the two suddenly bursting into a song “Can't smile without you” (*See: Hellboy 2: The Golden Army DVD 1:13:30–1:15:10*), which is something the viewer probably was not expecting to see in a superhero film (picture 56). Del Toro says that making this scene raised a lot of opposition in the studio, but he insisted on keeping it. For him, this is actually one of the most important scenes in the whole film, exactly because it is so unexpected and, again, against the rules of a summer blockbuster (see also the Forest God scene).<sup>191</sup> In the end of the scene, Hellboy and Abe are really drunk, by Liz's bedside. As Abe is about to reveal that Liz is pregnant, Liz wakes up and interrupts him (again, she has fairly little clothes on). Suddenly the alarms go off—Princess Nuala had pressed the emergency button.

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<sup>191</sup>*Hellboy 2: The Golden Army* (2008) DVD commentary: Guillermo Del Toro 1:13:33–1:14:33.





56. Hellboy and Abe suddenly burst in to a song—something that the viewer was probably not expecting to see in a superhero film.

### ***Battle and injury***

Before the bedside scene, Nuala senses her brother approaching. The viewer can already see him at the B.P.R.D. headquarters' gates, with dead guards in his feet, and to make his approach even more menacing, he even is portrayed feeding a guard's blood to a dog. Nuala quickly burns the map to the golden army, throws the cylinder into the fireplace, and hides the crown piece. [Here we see the bedside scene.] As the siblings are linked to each other, Nuada has no effort in finding his sister. He immediately discovers the cylinder, and picks it up from the fire—curiously, not affected by the heat. It turns out the cylinder *was* the map. Nuada cannot find the crown piece though. As the alarms go off, we see B.P.R.D. agents, along with Abe, rushing into the room. Hellboy steps up to take control of the situation, but due to his drunken state, the attempt seems futile from the start. Abe reminds Hellboy that he must not hurt the Prince, for that would also mean hurting the Princess. Knowing this, as well as Hellboy's condition, makes the fight seem extraordinary tough—and more entertaining.

Nuada lengthens his spear towards the camera (the kind of hypermediacy that seems to repeat a lot in the film; see for example the ending of Manhattan scene or the beginning of The Forest God scene). He spins it skillfully, giving an impression of a dangerous opponent. During the fight, he could often easily end Hellboy's life, but does not do this because he still

needs to blackmail the crown piece from his sister. This narrative twist conveniently saves the final battle for later. As Liz walks into the room, Hellboy gets distracted and is hit by the spear. A tip of the spear is cut into Hellboy's chest. Nuada invokes Abe, saying that his friend will die and he will never see the Princess again, if he will not bring him the crown piece. Wounded Hellboy witnesses the event from the ground, and the viewer sees it as if through his closing eyes. The method both relates the viewer to Hellboy, and draws attention to an uncommon cinematic method (picture 57).



57. An uncommon camera angle draws attention to itself.

The following few moments are filled with emotion. Abe tries to get the spearhead out of Hellboy's chest, but with no success—Hellboy really is dying (although the viewer guesses that he most likely will not end up dead, as this is a scenario seen countless times before in this types of Hollywood films). Lying on his sickbed, Hellboy finally expresses his feelings to Liz, who swears to help him by taking him to Nuada. Abe finds the missing crown piece in between a book Nuada was reading before. As the agents have orders not to take it to Nuada, even if it means Hellboy's death, Abe and Liz decide to steal an airplane and take it by force. Krauss appears as if to stop them, but then he reveals a little brown bag that the viewer was given a glimpse just before... The bag holds wedding rings. Krauss confesses that he once had a woman he loved and lost, and that is why he is going to help the agents. All this drama has narrative importance, but importantly, it also gives more meaning to the final battle that is now about to begin.

## *Bethmoora*

The group reaches the Giant's Causeway, from where, according to the map, they are to reach the golden army in the ancient city of Bethmoora. They meet the goblin blacksmith—yet another strange-looking creature design—and make a deal to trade the shiny spearhead for an access to Bethmoora and aid for Hellboy. As the goblin blows a whistle, the earth starts to crumble, and a spectacular stone giant rises up from the ground and then sets still. The passageway opens from his stomach. The group enters the ruined city, Liz sighing "Oh, my God", giving an impression that we are once again seeing something remarkable (pictures 58). Tom Gunning (1989/2009) says that "*The succession of thrills is potentially limited only by viewer exhaustion*"<sup>192</sup>. In this point, at latest, the viewer might be reaching the limits of experiencing attractions without exhaustion. The dark and stale Bethmoora may not be able to impress as much as the director would like it to, even though it now draws fresh imagery and traits of from his favorite film genre, the horror film (pictures 59).



58. Wonders of Bethmoora. Too much attractions can cause exhaustion.

<sup>192</sup>Gunning 1989/2009, 744.

As the heroes follow the goblin through a rather gloomy scenery, they encounter a grim angel. He/she curiously speaks with several voices simultaneously, and as it examines the visitors, multiple eyes open in its dark wings. The viewer cannot see his/her face well, until a cloth drops from its face, revealing its horrific features. (The angel's performer, the very theatrical Doug Jones, also plays Abe, which, at least for me, is somewhat distracting hypermediacy, despite the heavy prosthetics.) Hellboy falls down in agony. The angel promises to save him, but says that Liz must know that Hellboy is to bring destruction to Earth, for it is his destiny. Wind blows dust from the floor and reveals a prophetic painting of the demon Hellboy. Liz sinks into her thoughts, and as she raises her eyes to meet the angel's, the creature suddenly moves right in front of her, startling her a bit, and maybe the viewer too. What is not surprising, however, is that eventually Liz ends up choosing Hellboy's life. The spear part magically transfers on the angel's palm, and as the creature makes a flashy vanishing act, the blade drops down and is taken by the happy goblin blacksmith. In a melodramatic del Toro style, the scene culminates in Liz having to present Hellboy a reason to live. This is when she finally reveals to her lover that he is going to be a father. Hellboy wakes up.



59. Attractions of horror film.

### *The Golden Army*

By rule, a blockbuster ends with a final clou, which in this case, of course, is meeting the legendary golden army. The heroes walk past a massive amount of “eggs”—sleeping soldiers of the golden army—and rise monumental stairs up to a lavishly decorated room, where the royal siblings are already waiting (picture 60). Color code is red-golden pointing to the golden army. Without wasting time, and in Hellboy's great dismay, Abe throws the last crown piece to Nuada, to save his beloved Princess. Again, the viewer is offered a good look at the crown as it magically organizes itself. Nuada then presses it on his white locks, and immediately, the gears underneath the floor start turning, signifying the awakening of the golden army. To del Toro's delight, the gears and the construction of the mechanical soldiers are really exhibited to the viewer.



60. A pompous setting for the final clou, with red-golden color scheme signaling the presence of the golden army.

Golden soldiers stomp up the stairs. The leading soldier reveals his weapon making a big yell towards the camera, to really mark their status as an attraction (picture 61). The battle begins. At first it seems the heroes are gaining an easy victory. Gears fly through the air as robot heads and limbs are decapitated. To make things more interesting, Hellboy is shown using a robot arm as a weapon, and the steam-formed Krauss takes control of one of the robots. The battle seems to end almost as soon as it began—but then the robots start to repair themselves. In close-up, missing pieces find their way back to fallen soldiers, and soon, the indestructible golden army is up again. This comes as no surprise: this sort of scenarios are conventional to the genre, and have happened in this film for many times already (see for example: *The Troll Market: Mr Wink vs. Hellboy*).



61. Spectacle of gears and mechanical monsters traces back to del Toro's personal interest in them.

Fortunately, Hellboy has an ace in his sleeve: he remembers the story his father told him when he was a child, and disputes his right to the crown. The viewer also recalls the scene from where the film started, and it is now reinforced with more narrative importance. Nuada has no options but to accept, and throws Hellboy a sword—so hard that Hellboy's rock hand starts to steam; a funny detail that once again indicates the toughness of the opponent. The final battle between Hellboy and the Prince involves a lot of acrobatics as well as hypermediated hits towards the camera. The fight takes place on moving gears to make it more challenging and dangerous, as there is a threat of falling all the way down to the furnaces, or being smashed by the machinery. In one point it seems Hellboy *is* gone for, and Liz starts to get worried (encouraging similar feelings in the viewer), but this is only to pause the fighting for a moment—to not get the viewer too exhausted.

The fight continues, and finally Hellboy gets a chance to surprise the Prince from behind, ending up the winner of the fight. In order to not to harm Nuala, Hellboy consents to spare Nuada's life. Nuada is not happy with the situation though, and pulls out a dagger. But suddenly his chest starts to bleed: dramatically enough, Nuala has stabbed herself to stop her twin and end the dispute. Emotional feel builds as Abe kneels down to her dying love to confess his feelings. Melodramatic non-diegetic music plays, and characters walk in slow-motion. The sorrowful Prince falls down on his knees and breaks into dust. In the meanwhile, the Princess has turned into a sand statue on Abe's loving arms. Special effects are now used not only for spectacular but emotional purposes.

As a final lightening, Hellboy looks at the crown, thinking for a second about all the power the object possesses... But Liz takes the matter in her hands and melts the crown with her pyrotechnic abilities. The viewer is offered a spectacular “camera-ride” of the massive hall and the expiring of the golden army, before the heroes return outside. There are Manning and some agents already searching for them. As a conclusion to the story, heroes suddenly give away their equipment, quitting their jobs at the B.P.R.D. (Hellboy chooses to keep his gun though). One more surprise is saved to the end, as Liz reveals to Hellboy that they are going to have twins.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

### 5.1 Summary

As a conclusion, I will one by one go through the traits of the cinema of attractions as summed up by Tom Gunning, and discuss how these traits are present in *Hellboy II: The Golden Army* (2008), in relation to the story.

#### 1) the drive towards display, rather than creation of a fictional world

To make *The Golden Army* look as big, if not bigger, than the gigantic summer movies at the time, del Toro invests in non-digital special effects. While in the first film, there are a few monsters, here, the amount and diversity is multiplied; in fact, he makes it so over-the-top, that there is no doubt that it is going to make an impression. To really exhibit the creature designs, they are often shown growling towards the viewer (for example the appearance of Mr. Wink, or the Golden Army soldier). The whole scene at The Troll Market is a massive monster exhibition. Also the storyline adds to the monsters' status as an attraction. As in the prequel, the hero Hellboy and other monsters at the B.P.R.D. are treated as oddities, and playing with the discrepancy between what is normal and what is odd further underlines this. In addition to non-digital special effects, the scale of computer generated imagery seems to have increased, and along with it, the use of hypermediacy. The 20 million dollars increase in budget from to the prequel shows also in grander set-designs. Nevertheless, the story world is internally consistent and characters realistic in their own context. The display of amazing locations, special-effects-loaded fight sequences and curious monsters are not just attractive—they build the fantasy of the story world.

#### 2) a tendency towards punctual temporality, rather than extended development

It is difficult to find a scene or even a moment in *The Golden Army* that absolutely does not take the story forward. Even the smallest of details are usually meant to have some sort of narrative meaning. The display of curious props is not there just for the spectacle; their purpose is soon revealed (for example: the crates, the golden egg). Spectacular action scenes



always have a narrative purpose, and when it is filled, the story takes a leap forward. Portrayal of physical skill and weapon prowess also makes a character a prominent opponent. The storyline follows a classical arch of suspense, with a clear beginning, middle and an end. In addition to the main plot, that is the fight between the Prince and the good guys, there are additional plots such as the one concerning Liz's pregnancy. There are also underlying narrative structural patterns: themes run along the narrative line (the main theme being growing up to become a parent) and audio/visual plays a great part in the storytelling (visual hints referring to fertility, pregnancy, babies, and color codes for different subthemes). The narrative is not very complex, however, and the fact that it in many ways follows the conventions of Hollywood filmmaking makes the viewer often guess what is going to happen next. The somewhat forced closure of the film, with agents quitting their jobs without a clear reason, to me, gives an impression that the story also works as a frame for the spectacular.

3) a lack of interest in character "psychology" or the development of motivation

On the contrary, the development of characters' emotions and attitudes are a driving force in the film. The main characters are not exactly multi-dimensional, but each one of them is on a mission of his/her own. Hellboy is still searching for his place in the world, and—although he does not know it—to become a responsible father. Liz is struggling with her relationship to Hellboy and the fact that they are going to have children. Abe has fallen in love for the first time. The viewer is supposed to relate to the characters, and even sympathize the villains, Nuada and Mr. Wink. Spectacular set-pieces are often driven by character development and relationships (for example revelations in the Crime Scene), occasionally in a metaphorical manner (as is the case with the slaying of the forest god). It should be noted, however, that emotional weight is also added for spectacular purposes, to make spectacular set-pieces seem more important, and therefore, more exciting.

4) a direct, often marked, address to the spectator at the expense of the creation of diegetic coherence.

The viewer becomes aware of the medium whenever debris spreads on "the camera's lens", creatures dash towards the screen, or the viewer is allowed to see something via technology a

character is using. These hypermediated shots are very rapid, however, and although they interrupt the narrative for a moment of display, they are not meant to interfere the coherence of the overall story. Moreover, they themselves often carry narrative meaning (The Troll via Schufftein glasses), or at least make the viewer relate to the situation the characters are in. Hypermediacy is also used for comical purposes (Hellboy via Schufftein glasses).

Although characters do not directly look at the camera, there are other, more subtle modes of addressing the spectator. A character may, for example, wave his hand to the direction of something awesome—and the camera follows, underlining the gesture (Krauss presenting The Troll Market). Often, a character is shown extending his hand towards the camera to give a good look at what he is holding. Also characters' surprised facial expressions and comments guide the attention towards the spectacular. The viewer gets an impression that these things are not meant directly to her, but to the characters in the diegetic world. This means that the address to the spectator is not really at the expense of the diegetic coherence, although a level of hypermediacy is certainly provoked.

5) ability to be attention-grabbing (usually being exotic, unusual, unexpected, novel).

In order to keep the audience attention triggered for the full 2-hour length of the film, del Toro strives to keep things fresh. Not one fight sequence is alike, but there is always something new going on: Nuada uses two swords instead of his spear, Hellboy faces a battle in a drunken state of mind, a fight is fought on moving gears on the top of a burning furnace. The battle in the Throne Room draws traits from anime, and the fight against the forest god is inspired by nature. To differentiate *The Golden Army* from other summer blockbusters, del Toro sometimes goes against conventions. The superhero slaying one of his own kind, tossing a baby in the air, or bursting into a love song, may not be something one expects to see in a this type of film. What really stands out as different, are the monster designs: they look peculiar—even ugly. As the audience has already seen Hellboy, the sequel presents his child version, and introduces a new special agent, Krauss.

Del Toro's fascination with old mechanical gizmos is exhibited in the film (gears, Schufftein glasses), as is his love for horror film. Grim details such as slime, blood, corpses, skeletons, darkness, flashes of lightning, startling effects, and threatening music, also help create a suspenseful mood. Attractions of the human body—whether it is graphic violence, death and

decay, or aesthetics of good-looking people—are also there. Exotic sceneries are not forgotten either; the viewer is often encouraged to stop and marvel at curious locations (elves' secret lair, The Troll Market, Giant's Causeway). Finally, the film celebrates the modern filmmaking: inventive use of cinematic methods, impressive stuntwork, as well as popular film stars. Looking back at this listing, it is obvious that “attractions” are definitely not the same thing as “special effects”.

## 5.2 Tamed attractions?

Tom Gunning (1993/2004) states that “*Attractions’ fundamental hold on spectators depends on arousing and satisfying visual curiosity through a direct and acknowledged act of display, rather than following a narrative enigma within a diegetic site into which the spectator peers invisibly*”<sup>193</sup>. From this perspective, *The Golden Army* is in contradiction with the concept of the cinema of attractions. Although the drive towards the spectacular is evident, and hypermediacy frequently applied, attractions of any kind are not to disturb the coherence of the overall story. Moreover, the spectacular often works for narrative purposes. This is the case with most spectacular blockbusters. Charles Musser (1994/2006) says that while in film trailers attractions are presented in full scale, in films themselves they tend to be fully integrated to the story<sup>194</sup>. According to André Gaudreault (2006): “*Indeed this is one of the institution’s principles: to dissolve the attractions scattered throughout the film’s discourse into a narrative structure, to integrate them in the most organic manner possible*”.<sup>195</sup> Attractions today are often said to be *tamed* by the narrative.<sup>196</sup>

However, although in most cases the acts of display are not direct, but conveyed through characters' experiences (excluding the rare moments when something spreads on the “camera's lens”), they are still acknowledged by the viewer. Moreover, there is no saying that the narrative dimension makes the spectacle any less spectacular. I agree with Scott Bukatman (2006), who states that “*narrative does not completely (or simply) contain (or tame) the energies characteristic of the attraction*”<sup>197</sup>. What is also important to realize is that narrative purposes do not necessarily mean that the story was there first. Listening to del Toro's commentary for *Hellboy II: The Golden Army* DVD (2008), it becomes clear that part

<sup>193</sup>Gunning 1993/2004, 44.

<sup>194</sup>Musser 1994/2006, 411.

<sup>195</sup>Gaudreault 2006, 96.

<sup>196</sup>Gunning 1986/1990/2009, 387; Musser 1994/2006, 411; see also Sobchack 2006, 343.

<sup>197</sup>Bukatman 2003, 120; Bukatman 2006, 76, 80.

of the story was designed around the spectacular set-pieces and not just the other way around. By naming the “musical” sequence as one of the most important scenes in the whole film, del Toro implies that the story may not even have been his main objective.

Attractions do get tamed by habit though<sup>198</sup>. Charles Musser (2006) says that early viewers quickly learned to integrate new cinematic effects into their response system, forcing filmmakers to quickly adjust to meet their needs<sup>199</sup>. Today, this is increasingly difficult, for the modern viewer has already “seen it all”. Things that made *Hellboy* films seem novel at their time of release, might now appear as disturbing hypermediacy; in other words, old-fashioned. I am personally weary of the noticeable and often unilateral manipulation of the color scheme, which has been a popular feature in spectacular blockbusters throughout the 2000s. The blue and orange color combination presented especially in the prequel, has even become a joke in the internet, because it has been so frequently applied. I personally think that too heavy color manipulation reduces the tangible feel of non-digital special effects, and thus wastes a part of the effort put in them.

In order to stand out as novel, the most recent of spectacular blockbusters seem to draw even more heavily from the realm of the digital, demonstrating popular touch screen technology (*Oblivion* (2013)), adding lighting effects (*Star Trek* (2009) and *Star Trek: Into the Darkness* (2013)), and, generally, demonstrating the newest achievements in film technology by using expensive special effects. It is no coincidence that many new blockbusters are science fiction, for it has traditionally been the genre to promote new technology<sup>200</sup>. Also Guillermo del Toro's newest film, *Pacific Rim* (2013), is a sci-fi film that celebrates modern technology with its massive funding, topping *The Golden Army* (2008) budget as over twice as big<sup>201</sup>. But while technology and trendy gimmicks may soon become outdated, and special effects tamed as mere effects, some attractions never lose their edge. The human curiosity towards sex, violence, and the strange will undoubtedly never cease.

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<sup>198</sup>Gunning 1986/1990/2009, 387; Musser 1994/2006, 411; see also Sobchack 2006, 343.

<sup>199</sup>Musser 2006, 168; see also Lev 2003, 125.

<sup>200</sup>See for example Ndalians 2004 186.

<sup>201</sup>\$190 000 000. Internet Movie Database 2013.

### 5.3 An attractive concept

Based on the information gathered in this thesis, I conclude that the cinema of attractions does return in Hollywood's contemporary spectacle cinema, or at least in Guillermo del Toro's *Hellboy* films. However, the attractions are very much intertwined with the narrative. It is difficult to say where the other one begins and the other ends, and this is probably unnecessary anyway. In the context of the spectacular blockbuster, both spectacular and narrative appeals are considered important. One might argue that because of this, the cinema of attractions is not applicable to the contemporary blockbuster. I will stress, however, that the narrative does not automatically “tame” the spectacular. Also, as Charles Musser (1994/2006) points out, the narrative did play a part already in the cinema of attractions. For example, the direct gunshot towards the camera in *The Great Train Robbery* (1903; Edwin S. Porter), was not only a startling attraction, but it made the viewer relate to the situation the characters were in. Even if the filmmakers themselves might not have been too interested in the storyline, *the audience* might have been. The story has such a profound place in the human culture that it is hard to be dismissed.<sup>202</sup>



62. *The Great Train Robbery* (1903; Edwin S. Porter)<sup>203</sup>

Because the narrative did quickly become an important factor in the early cinema, the concept of the cinema of attractions may be most efficient in examining the novelty period of

<sup>202</sup>Musser 1994/2006, 393–411; see also Jenkins 2006, 118; Seppälä 2010, 14.

<sup>203</sup>*The Movies Begin* (2002).

film<sup>204</sup>. However, I did find it an enlightening tool also in examining Hollywood's contemporary spectacle cinema<sup>205</sup>. Exploring the traits of the cinema of attractions helped see past the (digital) special effects and distinguish other traits of the spectacular, some of which date back all the way to the Renaissance. It revealed the spectacular core of film underneath the narrative line, and examining the spectacle in relation to the narrative helped see how these two tendencies can coexist. Examining this dialectical relation was not an easy task, however, and required a lot of concentration (especially because I also needed to take in account the legacy of the early film and pre-cinema). This is probably a reason why it is so easy for many journalists and some scholars to concentrate only on the narrative (or its weakness) or the spectacle (or its emptiness). I believe, however, that the understanding of this relation is required in order to get the whole picture, and see the film as it is.

Getting deeper into the analysis, I found myself spotting attractions in any films I was watching on my free time. I realized the potential the concept has in opening up cinematic spectacles of *any* era. Musser says that *"If we think of "attractions" as non-narrative aspects of cinema that create curiosity or supply pleasure, attractions of some kind can be found in virtually all narrative films (in fact all cinema)"*<sup>206</sup>. It also occurred to me that learning about past and present attractions could prove worthwhile for film students and filmmakers searching new ways of attracting audiences. In future, to further open up the question of empty spectacles and the demise of the narrative, I believe it would be useful to look into the so-called classical Hollywood film from the frame of reference of the cinema of attractions. Geoff King (2003) suggests that differences in spectacularity compared to the contemporary spectacular blockbuster might prove relative rather than absolute.<sup>207</sup>

In this thesis I concentrated mainly on visual content. Another area of study worth investigating would be the film sound that, according to Scott McQuire (2000), has been even more important factor in the development of the cinematic spectacle than the CGI.<sup>208</sup> What also requires attention is the question of viewer activeness. Spectacular blockbusters today are often accused of making the viewer passive, neglecting the fact that blockbuster expands across books, games, toys, amusement park rides, web sites, etc., and that it is up to

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<sup>204</sup>See also Musser 1994/2006, 412.

<sup>205</sup>See also Strauven 2006b, 11, 24; Tomasovic 2006, 311; Røssaak 2006, 322.

<sup>206</sup>Musser 1994/2006, 411; see also Paci 2006, 123.

<sup>207</sup>King 2003, 125.

<sup>208</sup>McQuire 2000, 44–48.

the viewer to decide how actively she is willing to participate<sup>209,210</sup>. According to Musser (2006), early films were also meant to be watched in relation to other films, other images, other artifacts, and to the scene it actually represented<sup>211</sup>. Dick Tomasovic (2006) believes that being in the center of complex phenomena of intermediality and intertextuality is how the contemporary spectacular blockbusters really re-encounters and renews the cinema of attractions.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>209</sup>*Hellboy* comic series has also spin-offed novels, video games, a role-playing game, and an animated series. Weiner, Hall, Blake & Mignola 2008, 14.

<sup>210</sup>See for example Jenkins 2006, 3, 18, 130.

<sup>211</sup>Musser 2006, 171–172.

<sup>212</sup>Tomasovic 2006, 318; see also Elsaesser 2006, 208; Røssaak 2006, 334; Seppälä 2010, 30.

## EPILOGUE: Eye protein

Writing this thesis it became clear to me that the “eye candy” of attractions in a contemporary spectacular blockbuster (or at least in del Toro film) can be seen as eye protein, because of its narrative purposes. But can attractions be important as such? Scott Bukatman (2003) says historians tend to agree that underlying the fascination with the cinema of attractions were anxieties regarding urban growth, technological development, and social change. People came to the cinema to have a better sense of the rapidly changing world, and search for relief for what Tom Gunning (1989/2009) describes as “*a modern loss of fulfilling experience*”<sup>213</sup>. People wanted to experience attractions to reaffirm their ability to feel intensely, and thus strengthen their sense of self as individuals and not just parts of the machinery. At a time of increasing concentration of power and control, attractions offered oceans of irrational pleasures.<sup>214</sup>

Considering the fact that spectacular qualities are again prevalent in Hollywood, these things are very thought-provoking. According to Scott McQuire (2000) “*The repetition of awe and astonishment repeatedly evoked by ‘impossible’ images as the currency of today’s ‘cutting edge’ cinema undoubtedly functions to prepare us for the uncertain pleasures of living in a world we suspect we will soon no longer recognize*”<sup>215</sup>. A popular fallacy is that this makes it outright escapism, but I think most viewers are still critically active. Furthermore, Bukatman suggests that experiencing attractions is also an experience as itself, and not just the idea of one. Joys of delirium, kinesis and immersion provided by the new technology are sensations one cannot really get from anywhere else.<sup>216</sup>

It is also important to realize that the early viewer not only came to see the new technology but the wonders it could present. Actuality films, shots from exotic faraway countries, worlds of fantasy, and other things curious, appealed to the viewer's desire towards seeing and knowing. Much has changed since then, and through globalization the world has become “smaller”. Yet, there is always more to know. And, as Bukatman says, extending the boundaries of the known keeps reminding us of all that remains unknowable. We live in an awareness that we are surrounded by “*the unseen, the immaterial, the phantasmatic*”<sup>217</sup>. Curiosity towards things new and strange, to me, signals curiosity towards life itself.

<sup>213</sup>Gunning 1989/2009, 749; see also Ndalians 2004, 256.

<sup>214</sup>Bukatman 2003, 115.

<sup>215</sup> Mcquire56-57

<sup>216</sup>Bukatman 2003, 4, 81; see also Bolter & Grusin 2002, 71.

<sup>217</sup> Bukatman 2003, 115.



Guillermo del Toro thinks the problem with "empty spectacles" of Hollywood is that they are playing too safe: *"I think that a lot of people approach screenplay-writing in the post-1980s as an exercise in logic. And I despise this"*<sup>218</sup>. To be attractive, an attraction must provoke emotions, and emotions are not always rational. Del Toro implies that in order to create attractive films, a filmmaker needs to be in touch with his own sense of curiosity: *"When we lose curiosity, I think we lose entirely inventingness, and we start becoming old"*. To stimulate his own creative team, he has built "a man cave" named Bleak House in Los Angeles. It is modeled after the curiosity cabinets in old Europe that were meant to entertain, thrill and educate. It holds all sorts of things from biology specimens such as skulls and skeletons, dead birds, animal parts and fetuses, to pulp fiction, mechanical models, replicas, and fine art. All of them provoke curiosity, which makes them equally important. He says *"All these things feed you back"*.<sup>219</sup>



63. Guillermo del Toro at Bleak House.<sup>220</sup>

<sup>218</sup>*Hellboy – Director's Cut (2005) DVD commentary: Guillermo del Toro 00:42:23–00:42:36.*

<sup>219</sup>Zalewski, 2011 4/27; *"Guillermo del Toro – Welcome to Bleak House" (2012).*

<sup>220</sup>From Zalewski 2011.

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