

GDT General Posts Archive

post text

Included in this thread is GDT's posts of a general nature, not specific to any topics that currently exist in this Archived Forum.

[b:2kppuamI]GDT's introduction to the TORN forums:[/b:2kppuamI]

I shouldnt have posted so hastily- I noticed many errors in the text- I'm ashamed. I corrected it a touch, but the syntax and perhaps the spelling, elude me at this hour (1 am, London time) so here it ia again, with new errors at least...

Thank you all for a warm welcome.

Allow me to introduce myself quite summarily - I was born 43 years ago in Guadalajara, a large city in Mexico.

Since the age of 4 I became an avid reader and collector of books; manuscripts, pamphlets, first editions, small press or worn-down paperbacks... they all find a home at my library which has grown so cumbersome and obtrusive that I had to move to a separate home from the family one...

For many decades my main area of interest has been horror fiction: Algernon Blackwood, Arthur Machen, MR James, LeFanu, etc and classic Fairy tales and literature about the engines of Myth: unabridged Grimm, Andersen, Wilde, Bettelheim, Tatar, etc

Now and then I indulge in Science Fiction (not hardware oriented but more humanistic things) and thus I count Bradbury, Ellison, Sturgeon and Matheson amongst my favorites.

My area of interest gets much narrower when we deal with another genre... the genre that is shelved under Fantasy.

I have read Moorcock, Clark Ashton Smith, Lord Dunsany, Lloyd Alexander, Fritz Leiber and a few others. At the age of 11 I read THE HOBBIT and it enchanted me as only a classic Fairy Tale can- it had enough darkness and dread and emotion to make a profound impression that lasted me until now. Beorn, Mirkwood, the Wargs, Smaug, the Riddles in the Dark, they all have lived in me for many years...

Nevertheless at that early age, the rest of Tolkien proved to contain Geography and Genealogy too complex for my prepubescent brain...

I was never propelled into an aleatory addiction to sub-genres like Sword & Sorcery or indiscriminate fantasies about magical this or that- Like any other genre or subgenre there's a great abundance that makes it hard to discern when a new "trilogy" or "chronicle" comes from as genuine a place as Tolkien's or derives from genuine fervor -religious or otherwise- like C.S. Lewis' did.

And here I am now: reading like a madman to catch up with a whole new land, a continent of sorts- a Cosmology created by brilliant philologist turned Shaman.

As if he grasped an existing universe outside our Platonic cave, Tolkien channels an entire world, weaving expertly from myth and lore. The outstanding virtue is that all this scholarly erudition doesn't reduce his tales to mere Taxidermy. He achieves an Alchemy all of his own: he writes new life in the freshly sculpted clay of his creatures.

I have, through the years become familiar with the very roots of Tolkien's myths and the roots of Fafhrd or Elric or Hyperborea and many a time I have relished the intricate ways in which demonic wolves, shape-shifter and spindly-limbed pale warriors can be woven into those many tales that become, at the end, the single tale, the single saga- that of what is immortal in us all.

In creating Pan's Labyrinth I drank deep of the most rigid form of Fairy Lore and tried to contextualize the main recurrent motifs in an instinctive rhyme between the world of fantasy and the delusions of War and Politics (the grown man's way of playing make-believe) and in re-reading THE HOBBIT just recently I was quite moved by discovering, through Bilbo's eyes the illusory nature of possession, the sins of hoarding and the banality of war- whether in the Western Front or at a Valley in Middle Earth. Lonely is the mountain indeed.

And now, I'm here- about to live amongst you for many years to come and it is my dearest hope to push and expand the filmic incarnation of these Myths: Emotionally, visually and in their resonance within all of us. Whising me luck won't be enough- therefore I invite you to join us in another beautiful place created by on Parker Lyons, namely-

Deltorofilms.com

-and to become acquainted with my many flaws and the error of my ways, for I am -much like a Hobbit or a foul Dwarf- a mere mortal facing an enormous task ahead.

May the task become lighter by receiving the blessing of your trust .

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Yr Obt Svt.

Guillermo del Toro

I am a huge Lovecraft fan- I've been struggling for years to have a studio finance an adaptation of AT THE MOUNTAINS OF MADNESS (his superb response to Poe's Grodon Pym) and I am a disciple of Ashton Smith, WH Hodgson, Algernon Blackwood, Machen and others loosely associated with his "circle" of interests. Including, of course, Lord Dunsany...

I co-wrote teh script (has been reviewed online several times) co-created a series of 16 inch maquettes and about 30-40 drawings of Soggoth overtakings and transmutations to illustrate the ways in which the film VFX could be achieved, but to no avail... I still await for it to happen.

Just to hear your lists in return- allow me to name some of my very favorites ever: Dickens, Wilde, Capote, Borges, Schwobe, Dinesen, Rulfo, Gombrowicz, McCullers, Henry James (no- not limited to his ghost stories), Tolstoi and Chejov. Always curious - anxious, actually - to read yours.

We'll keep talking- now I post at 2 am London time as I have a bad case of the flu...

Until then-

Yr Obt Svt

GDT

I personally define success quite simply:

"Success is the possibility of failure happening in your own terms"

Simple but true. The very features that make a story relevant to some are the ones that make it detestable to others. That's all I mean. An artist succeeds and fails only in each individual instance of communication. The rest is statistics and polling.

Golden Age to Darkness will become clearer as we move along...

My calculator has been in pretty bad shape since my very first movie. With the exception of DEVIL'S BACKBONE I have always deferred part or the total of my salary when making a film. And after the kidnapping of my father in the late 1990's after being on the brink of bankruptcy I still turned down NARNIA and the third HARRY POTTER film. I don't need to bend to make a living- otherwise i wouldn't do PAN's or DBB in between big movies.

Its inevitable to have the money permeate outer perception. Some people can't see the difference between my "being precious" about these things and then doing HELLBOY or BLADE II- but I can.

Perception comes with the job so I accept the negative and the positive ones with equal fervor and urge you to continue raising any comment you may have.

People may prefer Alan Lee, Howe or the Hildebrandt Brothers while others will always accept only Tolkien's own drawings and visual concepts. Dig deep enough and you will find someone liking Bakshi's film or even the Rankin-Bass films!! Or disliking the existing LOTR films for that matter...

The only "preemptive" part of my statement concerns not only the people that will dislike my work but also the ones that will like it. This disparity is part of every act of communication.

Also- I'm not a sci-fi guy but I would make a film based on Ellison in a second- or on Sturgeon or Bradbury or Matheson. I'm not into Barbarians with swords but i would kill to tackle Fafhrd and Grey Mouse... and so on and so forth... I'm a believer but not a Dogmatic.

All the Best

GDT

[b:3ai17du3]What's the difference between a director and producer? [/b:3ai17du3]

To put it basically-

The producer is the patron of the arts- the director is the artist.

It was an honor to "present" the ORPHANAGE but in EVERY interview I make it clear it was Bayona's movie, not mine. My name

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had a good box office effect- fortunately- but I claim nothing in terms of property.

As a producer I try to act like a glorified bodyguard- a protector of the director's ideas.

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In my mind- the director- often times in Hollywood the producer gets a better deal but it is different in Europe or Mexico. The Director should get the credit or the blame unless the producer was an interfering one... I try never to be that.

Larry Gordon (Producer of both HELLBOY movies) is a loyal, fierce ally and lets me be creatively but never allows me to become indulgent. Pedro Almodovar (ESPINAZO) was more like a friend and a role model and always allowed me to flourish. Bertha Navarro and I have a very close, family-like relationship but she gives me creative carte-blanc. Peter Frankfurt (BLADE II) very respectful, creatively giving me free reign. MIMIC- well, that's another story...

Best

GDT

In the age of computers, the CARDING system for structural purposes may seem like an archaism. I have actually used it most every time I adapt a BOOK. It is a GREAT second exercise in excerpting AFTER the Highlighter pass. I do it alone and with appropriate background music or company if I can (although I also do it in the big kitchen table while my older daughter finishes her daily homework.

So far I've used to construct many adaptations that have not been filmed but that remain my favorite screenplays I've written. Notably and in point:

1) WIND IN THE WILLOWS (which, strangely has some "Hobbitoid" echoes in the Piper at the Gates of Dawn and the underground excursions) which remains at Disney. I refused to "modernize" it as I felt the original work was emotionally and ideologically a charming creature dependant of the idiosyncrasies of its time and that, in fact they were part of what would make it successful and charming as a film. I co-wrote this one with Matthew Robbins, director of DRAGONSLAYER.

2) THE WITCHES. I adapted this tale for WB and I believe it was a very difficult translation in which I tried to preserve Roald Dahl's unique dialogue rhythms and style. I am - to this day- the proudest of having had Licky Dahl praise it for being the FIRST script to capture the book in its first draft. I wrote this Solo and my heart sinks knowing I may never direct it.

I promise to scan and make accesible the entire card set and EVERY available piece of adaptation paperwork we generate and can clear with the DVD department when The Hobbit is finally released in the home video format.

Back to Evening Work-

All the Best

GDT

[b:36xj813e]GDT talks about his notebook art:[/b:36xj813e]

I will not claim the "virtuoso" mantle [on my drawings] but- the sketches are the FIRST form of the idea. You can see them change in later incarnations (Pale Man was a wooden puppet, Cathedral Head had a mouth and nose) in subsequent pages but every drawing in my notebook is a "first draft" so to speak- no process, no consultation, no spitballing- straight out of the head and into the page. Revisions are vital but I find that useful when the idea starts changing hands (WETA, SPECTRAL MOTION, MIGNOLA etc) I don't censor myself or change my mind- if its a bad fit of an idea in retrospect then it stays in the notebook for further use in other movies, books, etc There are NO bad ideas, just ill-fitting ones.

Mexico is said to be "So Far from God but Oh, so close to the USA" as the popular saying goes. So, naturally, I became familiar with the English language at a VERY early age. I did my best to learn it while watching horror movies every Sunday on TV (films were only subtitled back then) and I armed myself with a English / Spanish dictionary to read MAD magazine and FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND.

At age 3 (I think) my family began a ritual trip to Los Angeles every year for the next couple of decades and I remember clearly being my father's translator soon enough, helping at age 5 or 7 with his "checking in" or hotel bills, etc None of us thought much of it.

My father later hired an english tutor but I spent those few lessons preparing elaborate make up effects and staging "accidents" to scare the teacher (I was a very good little stunt man) along with my brother Federico.

Soon I was fluent enough. I read a few books in English (mostly short stories) when I was 9 but I think the first few books I

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bought were about film or film techniques. The first guy I was "cornered" into reading in the English language was Mark Twain and it absolutely floored me how different it was from the "academic" translation that I had read.

Since then, Dickens went through the same process and now I cannot imagine reading a translation. I attempted it with LOTR because after the HOBBIT the text felt dense and not as fluid as my first experience with Tolkien. I didn't find that to change in the translations I read. After my father's kidnapping I moved out of Guadalajara and (being kinda broke) I had to sell a few things and I lost a batch of books of that time including some the old MINOTAURO Press paperbacks where I discovered so many authors (I kept my Bradbury for sentimental reasons) and moved to Texas in 1998. Austin is the Berkley of Texas and UT holds an impressive amount of literary artifacts but I only got to explore its bookstores.

I have been writing in English (mostly scripts) since 1991 or a bit earlier and I feel comfortable enough (as you can see I still use a very confounding syntax) to express ideas but I am far from becoming a Nabokov or Conrad <!-- s;) --><!-- s;) --> (specially because of these darned emoticons) and continue to be fascinated to discover new words (Phil, Fran and Peter have brought a few powerful ones to the script development) and hope to, one day, be able to write in French (a language I can wrestle with enough to read basic stuff) and be able to read Schwob or Hugo.

I am certain they will then change completely for me.

Best

GDT

Translations are a tricky thing- for example the massive difference between the TAO translated by Stephen Mitchell (who also does phenomenal with the book of Job) and ANYONE else's is hard to explain if you are not familiar with the examples. Or BEOWULF translated by Seamus Heaney or some of Borges's translations. When Nabokov "translated" himself he really rewrote himself thoroughly. I have read good translations of Rulfo or Borges from UT or great poets but I still think that their cadence and personality are hard to find there. Borges can easily be translated in a way that makes him more academic and cold and Rulfo's innate feeling for the rough, hardcore language of the rural Estocic is almost unattainable. I am afraid that I have not read enough Amado(except for a few short stories) and I was as daunted by Herbert as I was by LOTR. Rarely do I get "in" in fully formed worlds with rules and sociology. Ashton Smith's ZOTHIQUE or HYPERBOREA etc are perfect for me because like Dunsany's world they are SENSUAL and MAGICAL first and not so well thought out as a cosmology. BUT I may retry Herbert in my future years in NEW ZEALAND. Right now my "To DO" list is enormous and the piles grow ever day...

We shall continue this conversation.

Best

GDT

Its not the number of books you've read-
Its the number of times they've freed you.

GDT

ON VAMPIRE HISTORY

These are GREAT books with factual accounts and folklore-

Pasaport to the supernatural: An Occult Compendium From All Ages and Many Lands, Bernard J Hurwood, (1972)

Hurwood was a strange and kinky man but this collection of vampire lore and fact manages to be scholarly and chilling at the same time.

Natural History of Vampires, Anthony Masters

Not as good as Hurwood but very entertaining

Dissertations sur les Apparitions des Anges des Démons et des Espits, et sur les revenants, et Vampires de Hingrie, de Boheme, de Moravie, et de Silésie. by Dom Agustin Calmet, (1746)

I own the original first printing in English from (1759) but is available in many other printings. This book obsessed me since early childhood when I saw it quoted in a very odd, erudite Mexican comic book.

Any of the books by Montague Summers, The Vampire: His Kith and Kin (1928) or The Vampire in Europe (1929),

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Theres some more here and there, but these are great!! They greatly influenced my life and films- since CRONOS!

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