

087. In between Classicism and Romanticism: A study on "The Outside" of Guillermo Del Toro's *Cabinet of Curiosities*

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Abstract

Created by Guillermo del Toro, *Cabinet of Curiosities* is an episodic horror series released during the Halloween season of 2022. The series consists of eight stories, directed by eight different directors, that can be regarded as following the gothic tradition; the image of cabinet of curiosities is utilised as an instrument of storytelling in each episode. Furthermore, it is also a convenient for connecting the mysterious and horrific nature of classical gothic themes with that of contemporary; each time del Toro opens up the drawer, a different story is introduced to the audience. In the series, the visual regale through the display of different monsters with various features and appearances makes the audience ponder the relationship between these avant-garde monsters and the classical monster images they are already familiar with. This article will focus on the fourth episode, American director Ana Lily Amirpour's "The Outside" which was adapted from a webcomic entitled *Out of Skin*, written by Emily Carroll. "The Outside" features the story of the bank worker, Stacey who is gifted with a new revolutionary cream during the Christmas party she is invited by her colleagues. Stacey's experience with the cream, Alo Glo appears as a representation of the attempt for transgressing the limits of classic beauty in an era where this romantic crave leads the individual to chase after the artificial and illusionary standards of beauty resulting in a communal catastrophe. In that sense, "The Outside" becomes a 21st century interpretation of a classical tragedy, which this time, demonstrates the fall of an eccentric anti-hero. Such an interpretation will pave the way for analysing the relation between Classicism and Romanticism within the frame of neogothic fiction with respect to J. J. Winckelmann's interpretation of Classicism.

Key words: *Cabinet of Curiosities*, "The Outside", Gothic fiction, Classicism, J. J. Winckelmann, Romanticism

Klasisizm ve Romantizm arasında: Guillermo Del Toro'nun *Tuhafliklar Dolabi*'ndan "Dış Güzellik" üzerine bir çalışma

Öz

Guillermo del Toro'nun prodüksiyonunu yaptığı epizodik korku dizisi *Cabinet of Curiosities* (*Tuhafliklar Dolabi*) 2022'nin Cadılar Bayramı sezonunda gösterime girmiştir. Dizi, sekiz farklı yönetmen tarafından çekilmiş, gotik geleneği izlediğini düşünebileceğimiz bölümlerden oluşmaktadır; tuhafliklar dolabı imgesi, her bölümde farklı bir hikâye anlatıcılığı aracı olarak kullanılmıştır. Aynı zamanda, klasik ve çağdaş gotik temaların gizemli ve korkunç noktalarını bir araya getirmek için de uygun bir bağlam oluşturmaktadır; del Toro her çekmeceyi açışında izleyiciyi farklı bir hikâye ile tanıştırır. Dizide, farklı özellik ve görünümlere sahip canavar görüntüleri,

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izleyiciye aşına oldukları klasik ve onlar için yepyeni olan avangart canavarlar arasındaki ilişkiyi sorgulatarak görsel bir şölen yaratmaktadır. Bu makale, Amerikalı yönetmen Ana Lily Amirpour tarafından çekilmiş, Emily Carroll'ın yazdığı internet çizgi romanı "Out of Skin"den uyarlanmış olan dördüncü bölüm "Dış Güzellik" üzerine yoğunlaşacaktır. Bu bölüm, banka çalışanı Stacey'nin iş arkadaşları tarafından davet edildiği Noel partisinde kendisine hediye edilen çığır açmış krem ile yaşadığı deneyimleri anlatır. Alo Glo kremi Stacey için klasik güzellik anlayışının sınırlarını aşma çabasının bir temsili olarak karşımıza çıkar. Bu romantik arzu, bireyi güzelliğin yapay ve yanıltıcı standartlarının ardından koştuktan toplumsal bir felaketin ortasına doğru sürüklemektedir. Bu anlamda, "Dış Güzellik," bu sefer uçuk bir anti kahramanın düşüşünü anlatan klasik bir tragedya dönüşmektedir. Bu yorum, neogotik kurgu bağlamında, J. J. Winckelmann'ın Klasisizm anlayışı çerçevesinde Klasisizm ve Romantizm arasındaki ilişkiyi analiz etmeye olanak tanyacaktır.

Anahtar kelimeler: *Cabinet of Curiosities*, "Dış Güzellik," Gotik kurgu, Klasisizm, J. J. Winckelmann, Romantizm

1. The cabinet of curiosities

Created by Guillermo del Toro, *Cabinet of Curiosities* is an episodic horror series released during the Halloween season of 2022. The series consists of eight stories, directed by eight different directors; the episodes can be regarded as following the gothic tradition in the sense that most of them are adapted from the works of famous gothic fiction writers. In order to grasp the rationale behind the creation of the series, the meaning of the term cabinet of curiosities should be identified in the first place. Cabinets of curiosities, in other words "wonder rooms," signify small collections of unusual objects that were kept in order to tell the stories of the extraordinary incidents and issues of the natural world. ("Cabinet of Curiosities" 1710, n.d.). However, a more vivid description gets into action in the mouth of Del Toro himself at the beginning of the first episode, "Lot 36":

In centuries past, when the world was full of mystery, and travelling was reserved for the very few, a new form of collection was born. The cabinet of curiosities. Now this collection could be lodged in a building, a chamber, or a piece of furniture. In these private collections, one would find books, paintings, or specimens of natural and unnatural history. A dragon's tooth, a Fiji mermaid. A unicorn's horn. And behind each of these, a story. One could encounter something as large as a suit of armor, or as small as a set of keys. The keys to a storage room. That old place where one keeps the past... alive. The things that remind us of our deeds, our darkness, our sins. (Navarro, 2022)

Keeping this statement in mind, one can say that the image of cabinet of curiosities is utilised as an instrument of storytelling in each episode. Furthermore, this image is also a convenient one in the sense that it connects the mysterious and horrific nature of classical gothic themes with that of contemporary; each time del Toro opens up the drawer, a different story is introduced to the audience. As a production that sets out in the direction of storytelling reveals its very engagement with literature as well; however, as the audience is also face to face with a visual regale, the most significant common point of these stories is that they come up with different monsters with various features and appearances. In that sense, this variety of monsters makes literary critics ponder the relationship between these brilliant displays and the classic monsters they are acquainted with. Amongst the most noteworthy aspects of the series is that every episode is a work of a different director and different writer, ranging from Vincenzo Natali, the prominent director of *Cube* to H. P. Lovecraft, the master of weird fiction, which renders the whole production a carnivalesque playground where noteworthy artists come together. The information in the below table is gathered from IMDB (International Movie Database):

Episode	Title	Directed by	Written by
1	“Lot 36”	Guillermo Navarro	Teleplay by: Regina Corrado and Guillermo del Toro Based on the short story by: Guillermo del Toro
2	“Graveyard Rats”	Vincenzo Natali	Teleplay by: Vincenzo Natali Based on the short story by: Henry Kuttner
3	“The Autopsy”	David Prior	Teleplay by: David S. Goyer Based on the short story by: Michael Shea
4	“The Outside”	Ana Lily Amirpour	Teleplay by: Haley Z. Boston Based on a webcomic by: Emily Carroll
5	“The Pickman’s Model”	Keith Thomas	Teleplay by: Lee Patterson Based on the short story by: H. P. Lovecraft
6	“The Dreams in the Witch House”	Catherine Hardwicke	Teleplay by: Mika Watkins Based on the short story by: H. P. Lovecraft
7	“The Viewing”	Panos Cosmatos	Panos Cosmatos & Aaron Stewart-Ahn
8	“The Murmuring”	Jennifer Kent	Teleplay by: Jennifer Kent Based on the short story by: Guillermo del Toro

(IMDB International Movie Database, 2022)

This article will focus on the fourth episode, Ana Lily Amirpour’s “The Outside” which was adapted from a webcomic entitled *Out of Skin*, written by Emily Carroll. “The Outside” features Stacey who works at a bank and is married to a police officer, Keith. It is Christmas time and Stacey is invited to a party where she comes together with her colleagues; the party turns out to be one that gather women who are obsessed with their beauty. Stacey, along with the other guests, is given a new revolutionary cream, Alo Glo, which seems to trigger her inferiority complex, as the one that does not fit in that community. My analysis of the episode primarily focuses on the struggle and reconciliation between the classic and romantic quest and reflections of beauty in a postmodern universe. In accordance with many definitions and analyses of postmodernism in textual context, my argument is that postmodernism, as an eclectic and plural paradigm, basically resonates the variety of dialogues between the past and the present. In the case of “The Outside,” the postmodern appearance of the subject matter of the text depends on the bond between Classic and Romantic ideals; therefore, Johann Joachim Winckelmann’s literary attitude towards art history while interpreting Classicism in the period of Neo-Classicism will be my basis to discuss the insight in the episode.

2. Eternal dilemma: Classicism and romanticism

The tendency towards classical and romantic ideals remains at the core of the problematic of cultural history; that is to say, cultural history is founded upon these two main movements. Classicism represents notions such as the ideal, mainstream, centre, culture, and order; whereas romanticism focuses on the unideal, margin, nature, and chaos. The reason why I tend to indicate the dialogue between two phenomena as the main wind sail that directs the mind of humanity, is that all other literary and artistic movements and periods could be thought as related with them.

The term classicism signifies the artistic production of the ancient Greece and Rome. Along with its primary meaning, it refers to concepts such as symmetry, proportion, lucidity, perfection, restrained emotion and sophistication which are said to be the legacy of ancient Greece and Rome. It is no coincidence that these concepts more or less become the ideals of the Enlightenment as well for the fact that Classicism, or the era of Ancient Greece and Rome, with its myriad of connotations, could be taken as the first Enlightenment period as far as Western cultural history is concerned. The influence of Classicism on the later periods could be grasped thoroughly through the meditations of German archaeologist and art historian, Johann Joachim Winckelmann's prominent work, *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums* (1764) (*History of the Art of Antiquity*). His work calls for the idea of Philhellenism in that he points out the connections and differences between the ancient and modern traditions on art, along with contributing to the interpretations of Neoclassicism that "helped spur the radical rethinking of artistic and cultural norms initiated by later German writers of the *Sturm und Drang* and Romantic periods such as Johann Gottfried von Herder, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, and G.W. F. Hegel." (Potts, 2006: 1).

It is common knowledge that the finest examples of ancient Greek and Roman art stands for the universal ideals of perfection and beauty. What Winckelmann endeavours to accomplish is to build up associations between chronological data and artistic products of ancient Greece and Rome and the cultural environment of his time, along with the time these works were born into. As Alex Potts further claims:

Winckelmann's historical reconstruction of the Greek ideal in art was particularly valued because he was seen as having recovered it in its integrity, uncontaminated by modern revivals and appropriations. In so doing, it appears, he for the first time made obvious how alien, if still transfixing and significant, this ideal was to modern culture. (Potts, 2006: 30).

Hence, the way Winckelmann deals with the influences of Antiquity on Neoclassicism and even Romanticism builds up ultimate relationship between Classicism and Romanticism and their influences on modernism and postmodernism.

As classical beauty is predominantly engaged with proportion, balance and measurement, which call for perfection, the artworks of the Antiquity is founded upon reflecting these ideals. In that sense, one can state that beginning from these times, the definition of beauty has become the problem not only of the artist, but also the philosopher. Winckelmann argues that the concept of universal beauty depends on the individual's personal experience; therefore, a precise elucidation of the term is rather impossible to put forward. Therefore, for him, Godly aspect of beauty renders it much more possible to define as he admits that

According to this conception, beauty should be like the purest water drawn from the source of a spring: the less taste it has, the healthier it is seen to be, because it is clear of all foreign particles. Just as the state of happiness, that is the absence of pain and the enjoyment of contentment, is the easiest one in nature, and the path to it is the straightest and can be maintained without trouble or cost, so also the idea of the highest beauty seems the simplest and the easiest, and it requires no philosophical knowledge of man, no investigation of the passions of the soul and their expression. (Winckelmann, 2006: 196).

Also cited by Alex Potts in his book *Flesh and the Ideal: Winckelmann and the Origins of Art History*, Winckelmann argues the difficulty of coming up with a thorough definition of beauty as such:

The wise, who have pondered the origins (or causes) of beauty, exploring its occurrence in the objects of creation, and seeking to reach the source of the highest beauty, have located it in the perfect

harmony of a being with its purposes, and of its parts among one another, and with its entirety. But as this is synonymous with perfection, of which humanity is not capable of being the vessel, so our conception of beauty in general remains indefinite, and is built up by us through individual bits of knowledge, which, when they are correct, and collected and brought together, give us the highest idea of human beauty, which we can make the more elevated as we raise ourselves above the material world (*Materie*). What is more, as this perfection was given by the creator to all creatures in the degree appropriate to each, and because every concept derives from a cause that must be located outside this concept in something else, this means that the cause of beauty cannot be found outside itself, existing as it does in all created things. It is for this reason, and because the knowledge we have of things is comparative, and beauty cannot be compared with anything higher than itself, that there is difficulty in producing an explanation of beauty that is both general and clear.⁸ (as cited in Potts, 1994: 156).²

Potts, talking about the two key points suggested by Winckelmann, first asserts the definition of beauty is somehow bound to remain indefinite; then emphasises its “distinctive status as an entity mediating between the physical and the ideal.” (Potts, 1994, 156). And as can be inferred, Winckelmann remains on the traditional side to consider beauty as “something partly idea-like or conceptual.” (Potts, 1994, 156). In a similar vein, Potts particularly avoids to place Winckelmann’s attempt to describe beauty as a part of “new empiricist tendency in eighteenth-century aesthetics” that looked for the explanation “in psychological terms, [...] customary practice, or with reference to some empirically definable average or generic type of human form.” (Potts, 1994: 156-157). Even from such an interpretation, it would be only an unjustifiable effort to posit Winckelmann’s presence merely in terms of Neoclassicism as the figure to be the founder of Philhellenism. Though *History of the Art of Antiquity* has survived as a landmark in European cultural history reviving Classicism largely by distinguishing between the Egyptian, Etruscan, and the Greek, what makes Winckelmann unique is the way he reverses standard Enlightenment mindset as Alex Potts indicates:

[h]e saw history as providing the basis for a theoretical ordering of things. His schema defining the evolution of ancient Greek art supplied the conceptual basis for defining generic differences between the art of the different peoples of the ancient world. According to him, Etruscan and Egyptian art differed from developed Greek art in that they had been arrested in their historical development at a moment when art was still marked by archaic stylization. Egyptian art was thus typologically an early archaic art, Etruscan a late archaic or at best transitional art, which had been caught short before it reached the fully developed beauty of classic Greek work. (Potts, 1994, 34).

While Gibbon’s and Montesquieu’s works³ handle the subject matter in a more empirical manner which lacks theoretical output, Winckelmann postulates a certain system and theory in History. In other words, it can be well argued that his analyses of Classicism bring about almost a literary style which works as casting an analytical perspective with a certain extent of subjectivity dealing with the stages of the traditions by making connections.

Even this comprehensive mode of Winckelmann’s, with its extraordinary outlook, is adequate to consider him beyond his time. Correspondingly, one can say that even in a chronological sense this “beyondness” drags him to the limits of Romanticism. It is no coincidence that in his 1953 article “Winckelmann: The Romantic Element” Henry Hatfield positions Winckelmann in the frame of Romanticism. Emphasising the fact that *History* has almost become the emblem of Classicism, Hatfield regards particularly his narrative style a romantic attitude and indeed carrying a utopian stance:

After all, however second-rate and second-hand the archaeological evidence he depended on, he did have a profound knowledge of Greek literature. When he applied his formula of noble simplicity and

² I used a “quoted in” citation intentionally since Alex Potts is a significant name as far as Winckelmann interpretations are concerned.

³ See *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* and *Considerations sur les causes de la grandeur des Romains et de leur decadence (Thoughts on the Causes of the Greatness of the Romans and their Decadence)*

quiet grandeur to Sophocles and Plato, we can hardly deny that he hit on a significant aspect of Greek culture. [...] His Greeks combine Stoic heroism with Epicurean joy in living. Their lives were simpler and, despite their high degree of cultivation, more "natural" than ours. They were humane, even soft-hearted. Freedom, friendship, and beauty dominated their lives, lives and of course their bodies were more beautiful than ours. [...] Winckelmann's ideal Greece is of course a pagan land – he seems to me the great beginner of the aesthetic revolt against Christianity in modern German literature [...]. (Hatfield, 1953, 286).

Alex Potts furthers this argument in his introduction by laying emphasis on the Greek ideal as combining the "sensuous and graceful" with the "austere and pure," (Potts, 1994: 7) which also reminds the Nietzschean idea of the Apollonian and Dionysian "perfect" amalgamation of ancient Greek tragedy.⁴ Potts asserts that this distinction cannot merely be thought in terms of form and style. "It articulated a series of ideologically loaded dualities between the bodily or erotic and the immaterial or idea-like, between the sensuously pleasurable and the grand or manly, between a cultural ideal of refined hedonism on one hand and one of austere heroics and virtue on the other." (Potts, 1994: 8). What Winckelmann achieved when pondering this duality, according to Potts, is that he "incorporated the sexual and the political into the very foundations of the new history of art he was creating." (Potts, 1994: 8).

Under these circumstances, reading a 21st century artistic text in the light of Winckelmann would serve for a comprehensive analysis of the connections and discrepancies of Classicism and Romanticism. Such a consideration would also help to identify the nature of that text in the cultural climate of a transition period.

3. Stacey as the Romantic antihero on stage

The title of the fourth episode, "The Outside" not only expresses the limits of beauty, but also connotes a reference to the antihero, Stacey's lasting place in the community she is part of. Del Toro's introductory remarks on the gist of the episode are as follows:

Late-night TV, images and voices in the dark, in our head. An electronic cabinet of curiosities, blurring the line between what is outside and what is inside. What we are, and what we are told we should be. Perfection is but a toll-free number away, and this cabinet is controlled by a magic wand made of cheap plastic and numbers. It fits right in your hand, and it is hard to let go. (Amirpour, 2022, 0:45:00)

Starting from this point, the episode reveals modern individuals' conflict between the concepts of "inside" and "outside," meaning the real self and the outside imposition. What is more, the self, constructed by the individual and imposed by the society becomes a hazardous possession that "fits the hand" and is "hard to let go."

Beginning from the introduction, Stacey is drawn as a "grotesque" character due to several reasons; she is engaged with the "art" of taxidermy, she has a very ordinary and happy marriage and she is disinterested in the subjects that her colleagues are involved in. Despite the fact that her life seems very familiar in the beginning, regarding the scenes she is with her colleagues in the bank, their immense obsession of talking about other people's and their own beauty, along with how these instances catch Stacey's attention is noticed. Stacey's feeling of estrangement seems to feed her strive and curiosity for change; this curiosity is at peak when she is invited to the Christmas party thrown by one of her colleagues, Gina. Getting the chance of being a member of that group, most probably for the first time, she enthusiastically decides to weave her magic regarding taxidermy and present her artwork, the stuffed

⁴ See Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*.

duck as a present to Gina, who is the one she picks from Santa's hat. In spite of her meticulous effort, evidently her present is not appreciated in the way she expected. Having seen the rest of her collection, one cannot help but reminisce Norman Bates of Hitchcock's *Psycho* which functions as a foreshadowing for the potentials of Stacey's character. The two protagonists display a similar psychopathology in terms of sociopathy, which also becomes the expression of an eccentric character who experiences difficulties in fitting the community she is part of and perceived as odd by others. Besides, taxidermy is also associated with frozen beauty which is a recurring theme reflecting the excessive fascination with the classical artwork as Stacey says "You can love him forever," while giving the duck to Gina. In that sense, this moment becomes a foreshadowing of the ending of the episode. Besides, she becomes a rather distorted, thus postmodern revival of Dorian Gray, the painter in Poe's "The Oval Portrait" and the physician in Hawthorne's "The Birthmark" in the persona of a female character. Gina's gift for all of his guests is a tube of the very expensive and popular Alo Glo cream. One of the most crucial moments of the episode is when everyone is completely preoccupied with the cream, Stacey's disappointment and so-called grotesqueness is highlighted through the camera angles as well; she is zoomed as she is standing behind and is reflected smaller than the rest of the women. This visual and verbal exclusion of Stacey renders her closer to the realm of Romanticism in that her eccentricity is manifested in the eyes of the audience.

The episode opens up with the fourth movement of Ludwig van Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, also known as *Ode to Joy (An die Freude)*, adapted from a poem with the same title, written by Friedrich Schiller, which has become almost like an icon of Western culture. Premiered in 1824, Symphony No. 9 coincides with Beethoven's romantic period as his musical production signifies a transition from Classicism to Romanticism. In that sense, within the frame of this article, presence of Beethoven's prominent composition perfectly accords with Winckelmann's legacy. Starting from this captivating opening scene, the episode manifests its preoccupation with both Classical and Romantic traditions.

Another key moment is when everyone at the party eagerly tries Alo Glo in their faces and Stacey, though not keen on such products, shows allergic reaction to the lotion upon application. Her face gets reddish and itchy, which leads to unbearable pain and she has to leave the party early. When she gets back home, her husband Keith tells her to stop using Alo Glo no matter how glorified the lotion is everywhere. Keith loves Stacey the way she is, yet she cannot help getting mesmerised by the television ad of the cream as soon as she accidentally sees it. From this point on, the whole story gains a new dimension with fantastic elements through which the audience is bemused in an atmosphere of magical realism. The element of magic realism is rendered through the side effects of Alo Glo creating hallucinations on the part of the user. Suddenly, the man presenting the cream starts to talk to Stacey directly and convince her how Alo Glo can transform her body, soul and all her life. As a person chosen intentionally to advertise a beauty product, the Alo Glo Man attracts attention at first glance by his "beauty." Obviously, he is a reflection of classical Adonic beauty with his fair complexion and excellent body, a part of Greek sculpture and an artwork; his beauty sets an example in order to persuade and manipulate customers. However, if this instance is interpreted as a construction of Stacey's imagination, it becomes an articulation of the timeless strive for achieving beauty that fits to the standards of the *Zeitgeist*. This dialogue of the episode with the concept of classical beauty appears as part of the postmodern paradigm as far as the narrative is concerned. The main difference in the perception of nature in the periods of Neoclassicism and Romanticism is that the former envisages nature as a cultivated entity, whereas the latter is concerned with the untouched nature, nature itself. According to this constellation, Stacey's urge for believing in the miracle of Alo Glo and the toxic effect of the cream first on her face and then her whole body could be regarded as the expression of the dominance of the Romantic affinity of the text in the form of postmodernity. The recurring scenes of the dialogue between Stacey and Alo Glo Man is also an intricate

tributeto Tobe Hoopper's 1982 movie *Poltergeist*, which again can be seen as a way of reviving a classic text in a postmodern manner.

As Stacey gradually increases the amount of Alo Glo she applies to her skin, she does not get any better; on the contrary, day after day, her skin burns and scratches more and more. However, this cannot prevent her from using the cream, she stocks numerous tubes in the basement. Meanwhile, Keith gradually develops reaction to her state of mind, but is unable to intervene with her. After a while, Stacey's stocks of Alo Glo turn out to be a life form in the basement and transcend the borders of the tubes to become one big mass of goo in the shape of a human being; what is crucial about this monstrous being is that it is like a silhouette of a perfect body. It can be claimed that, as Marco Vito Oddo states, "The creature represents Stacey's future self, and once she sees this beautiful gooey doppelganger she's confident she made the right choice." (Oddo, 2022). Throughout almost all the episodes of *Cabinet of Curiosities*, a monster, a monstrous being or an image that stands for monster is present. Likewise, in "The Outside" it is the goo-like human becomes the monster; one can interpret this monster both as Stacey herself, and the persistence of beauty industry. Furthermore, the monster summons Vera Cruz in *The Skin I Live In*, Pedro Almodóvar's 2011 movie. The similarity is not limited with the appearance of the monster, but also the storylines intersect at some point. *The Skin I Live In* is about a plastic surgeon who constructs a synthetic skin which is resistant to any kind of outer injury; he conducts his experiments on the mysterious Vera Cruz whom he captivates. Here, analogous motifs in Nathaniel Hawthorne's short story "The Birthmark" (1843) comes into existence as well. The confidence, perhaps madness of Stacey's I mentioned formerly is at peak when she kills Keith due to her hallucinative state of mind as she gradually perceives him to be a burden of beauty she wants to reach. It is clearly an expected end as far as Keith is concerned; he is stuffed and placed on the couch so that "she can love her forever" as she has frozen the beauty of her relationship. Incidentally, Keith is regarded as the only "normal" one amongst the primary characters in the episode by some reviewers due to his prudent attitude towards Stacey's situation. However, I interpret his Stoic endurance as an absurd motif as he is "too good and yet weird to be true," his reaction when Stacey stabs her in his forehead can be seen in the following dialogue:

Keith: What the fuck Stacey... Oh... You stabbed me in the face... How deep is it? Huh... Hon..."

Stacey: I'm sorry...

Keith: Should I pull it out? I'm gonna pull it out... Okay... Ah...

Stacey: Oh jeez, oh...

Keith: Oh, I'm bleedin'... Oh no... Oh no... Is it bad?

Stacey: Yeah, it's pretty bad honey.

Keith: Oh... It's on my... It's on my glasses... Hon, this is... this is real bad. This is real bad. I... I need a... I need a towel... Will you go get me a towel, hon?

Stacey: Yeah...

Keith: Huh...

Stacey: Okay

Keith: Oh, I'll use my radio. Yeah, okay. Dispatch? Dispatch? This is Officer Chapman... I have a 10-33...

(Stacey, this time stabs him in his back with an axe.) (Amirpour, 2022, 54:05:00)

Afterwards, Stacey becomes almost one with Alo Glo in the bathtub with the direction of the monster and becomes a new woman through changing her skin completely. The regeneration she has gone through seems to be realised by "trusting the formula;" however, one can never know the end of the story.

The ending of the episode is with the appearance of new Stacey, gazing at the audience as if they are the ones to know all the truth; she is talking in an unspoken language with constantly changing facial expressions and the camera is moving in accordance with her movements. In this sense, as part of the narrative style, the potential omnipresent and “dangerous” narrator becomes the audience.

4. Conclusion

The episodes of Guillermo del Toro’s *Cabinet of Curiosities* are tangled with different visualisations of monsters waiting to be extracted and burnished, which becomes a sign of its urge for cooperation with older texts and communication with one another. The case of “The Outside,” however, is a notch above in the sense that it incorporates a very popular subject with so deep imagery that it provides the possible grounds to discuss the relation between Classicism and Romanticism. Stacey and her colleagues urge to reach the ultimate prerequisites of classical beauty also displays society’s present obsession with beauty and need for approval. Ana Lily Amirpour blends this crave for being and becoming perfect with the image of monster that becomes an indication of a monstrous society as well.

Clearly, the episode has a certain extent of dialogue with both the classic and romantic phenomena, along with many different intertexts, which appears as an indication of how it furthers the discussion in a postmodern manner. It forms almost a spider web-like constellations through integrating many different texts from cinema and literature and thus, constitutes a different perspective *vis-à-vis* Classicism and Romanticism. This way of connecting Classical and Romantic aspects, in this context, becomes a natural path to achieve a postmodern narrative discourse.⁵ Consequently, one can acknowledge that “The Outside” displays how a 21st century version of ancient Greek tragedy would be.⁶

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⁵ Though the usage of intertextuality is a major indicator of postmodern discourse, the intertexts I have mentioned in this article do not serve for analysing “The Outside” merely as a work of postmodern fiction. Concerning my argument, they rather form textual examples I relate with the reception of Winckelmann’s Classicism, which is said to embrace Romanticism largely.

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