

Fantastic Creature Pronominalization – The Use of He/She/It in Reference to Zombies, Vampires, Fairies, and Trolls in Guillermo del Toro’s Literary Work

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In this article, pronominalization is analyzed in reference to the fantastic creatures in Guillermo del Toro’s novels: the trilogy *The Strain* (del Toro & Hogan 2009; 2010; 2011), *Don’t Be Afraid of the Dark: Blackwood’s Guide to Dangerous Fairies* (del Toro & Golden 2011), and *Trollhunters* (del Toro & Kraus 2015). The analysis is based on the notion that an intricate connection between human and nonhuman fictional characters is created and expressed through specific usages of pronouns. My two guiding hypotheses are as follows: Firstly, the pronominalization of the fantastic creatures serves to express attitudes towards these creatures in a way that is situational and highlights subjective perceptions while it consequently overlooks the semantic or grammatical status of the referent. Secondly, the inanimate pronoun (it) is used to connote detachment and dehumanization, and the personal pronouns (he/she) are used to give expression to attachment, closeness and humanization. These two categories of pronouns are normally distinct, i.e., in most contexts they cannot be used interchangeably. In relation to del Toro’s zombies and vampires, it can be argued that the pronominalization serves the purpose of dehumanizing them, differentiating the dead vampire/zombies from the living humans, and pinpointing the contrasts of the “before” and the “after” of the transition between life and death. The pronominalization in reference to fairies, although complicated and not completely consistent, shows a clear tendency towards a correlation between animallike creatures and inanimate pronouns. In regard to del Toro’s trolls, the pronominalization follows a more consistent pattern, which clearly serves the function of expressing different kinds of attitudes towards the creatures such as detached appraisal and dehumanization, on the one hand, and friendship and alliance, on the other.

1. Introduction

Is a fantastic creature such as a troll, a vampire, a fairy or a zombie a *he*, a *she* or an *it*? Could the choice of pronoun perhaps depend on who is talking about the creature in question and what his/her relation to the troll/vampire/fairy/zombie is? This seems to be the case in the following extract:

It did not react. I considered running. Was I fast enough to bolt before feeling one of those tentacles tighten around my neck? **“He** can’t see you,” a voice said. **“He’s**

nearly blind.” **The horrid thing** straightened up and turned toward the oven. **It** gibbered a few more indescribable syllables (del Toro & Kraus 2015: 73).

The corpus of the present study consists of Guillermo del Toro’s novels: the trilogy *The Strain* (del Toro & Hogan 2009; 2010; 2011), *Don’t Be Afraid of the Dark: Blackwood’s Guide to Dangerous Fairies* (del Toro & Golden 2011), and *Trollhunters* (del Toro & Kraus 2015). The analysis of these texts is based on the notion that an intricate connection between human and nonhuman fictional characters is created and expressed through specific usages of pronouns. That is, the choice of inanimate or personal pronouns can be used not only to bring characters to life but to make them move between humanness and monstrosity, create distance or closeness, pinpointing the contrasts of the “before” and the “after” of the transition between life and death, and express relational attitudes on behalf of the human characters in the texts. My two guiding hypotheses are:

- The pronominalization of fantastic creatures such as trolls, vampires, fairies, and zombies in the texts analyzed serves the function of expressing attitudes towards these creatures on behalf of the human characters in a way that is situational and highlights subjective perceptions, while it consequently overlooks the semantic or grammatical status of the referent.
- The inanimate pronoun (it) is used to connote detachment and dehumanization, and the personal pronouns (he/she) are used to give expression to attachment, closeness and humanization.

As my analysis will show, the mixture of pronouns found in the texts under consideration is an example of how del Toro’s fantastic creatures are made to move between humanness and monstrosity in a way that can be interpreted as a non-complete process of (de)humanization. That is, the characters are not always either human *or* zombie/vampire/fairy/troll, but are also portrayed as something in-between. As will be explained in the following, such processes of (de)humanization can be explained with the underlying dichotomy of the English third-person pronoun system.

In Standard English, there are two sets of personal, possessive and relative pronouns: the ones that express *personhood* (*he/his, she/her, and who/whom*), and the *inanimate* ones used for inanimate objects and to a certain point, in reference to animals (*it/its, which*). These two categories of pronouns are normally distinct, i.e., in most contexts they cannot be used interchangeably. In reference to animals, however, Clark (1992) notes that there is a considerable inconsistency in their use. She argues that “[i]f the basic categories are indeed ‘personal’ and ‘inanimate’, then such inconsistencies may not be only explicable but inevitable, in so far as subjects which are animate yet non-human fit uneasily into the pattern” (Clark 1992: 636). Clark further states that “[a]lthough choice of generic pronoun in reference to a particular species is not always consistent even within a single work, variation is not necessarily either random or unmotivated” (Clark 1992: 639), and she concludes by noting that “[t]he grammatical vacillation in fact mirrors the profound ambivalence characterizing all human attitudes towards animals” (Clark 1992: 644).

My main argument is that through the choice of pronouns the narrators in del Toro's fantastic stories also express this profound ambivalence on behalf of the human characters towards the nonhuman creatures commonly found in his texts.

My guiding hypotheses are based on Clark's (1992: 643) previous observations that state that animal pronominalization "is governed not by the semantic or grammatical status of the antecedent but by the speaker's or writer's subjective perceptions." Clark (1992: 641) further argues that "context is dominant, and [...] context includes the writer's or speaker's attitude towards the type of animal in question." In a similar manner, Joly argues that

[i]t can [...] be firmly established that there is in English a *gender of discourse* which readily adapts to 'situation', in other words on variable, extra-linguistic factors. Consequently, discourse gender is to some extent unpredictable, since it implies the momentary attitude of the individual speaker (Joly 1975: 253).

Furthermore, Clark claims that there seems to be a "subconscious association of *it* with detached appraisal, if not callousness, and of *he* and *who* with fellow-feeling" (Clark 1992: 640). Likewise, Joly (1975: 267) notes that the use of *it* in reference to animals "emphasizes indifference from the speaker or unfriendliness on the part of the animal", and that it is used when "animals are considered with emotional detachment" or when they are "regarded as a species, not as a particular individual".

However, regardless of what pronoun may be used in reference to animals, their status as nonhuman remains clear. Hence, in Clark's (1992) examples, even though one and the same animal is referred to both with the personal and the inanimate pronoun in the same text, and sometimes even the same sentence, the fact that the animal in question is a nonhuman creature is always obvious. When it comes to zombies, vampires, trolls, fairies, and other imaginary creatures, however, this may not be the case at all. Zombies and vampires in most cases *used to* be human, and are occasionally someone the human characters used to know well, like a friend or a family member. And even though trolls and fairies are normally born as such, they often possess distinct human features such as speech, upright walk, and tool use. When one uses the personal pronouns in reference to a horse for example, the reason might be to express a personal relationship or, as Clark (1992: 640) puts it: a "fellow-feeling". And when the inanimate pronoun is used, in for example a dog manual, it might be in order to differentiate the trainer (*he/she*) from the trainee (*it*) (Clark 1992: 641). However, in fantastic fiction the distinction between human and zombie, the alive and the undead, is frequently characterized as less clear than the line between human and animal. Thus, the pronominalization of fantastic creatures carries much more meaning than the same grammatical procedure in relation to animals. Adams states that

[i]f you think about a monster like the vampire or the werewolf, you can see them as aspects of human behavior magnified and embodied; i.e. the vampire's connection to various kinds of (taboo) eroticism [...], the werewolf's link to animal violence [...]. With the zombie, what you get is *us*, pretty much as we are, maybe with a little damage (Adams 2008: 72–79).

Kee explains that as the figure of the zombie evolved from a creature born out of Haitian exorcism into the monster we find in the disaster movie genre, “the zombie’s explicit ties to the exotic and the Other were [...] weakened. Without a clearly recognized Other against which we define the self, it became that much harder to draw the line between ‘us’ and ‘them’” (Kee 2011: 22). 21st-century zombie narratives often seem to treat such creatures differently, particularly by emphasizing their rehabilitation and assimilation into society (Spooner 2015: 183).¹ Greene and Mohammad (2010: 31) give examples of a “possibility of reversal of the zombification process”², and Weinstock, in his discussion of Romero’s *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), notes that “there is little to distinguish the living from the dead” since some of the living characters are “as vapid and unemotional as the zombies they mercilessly pick off, one by one” (Weinstock 1999: 8).³

The same can be said about 20th and 21st-century versions of the vampire trope. For example Brite’s (1992) *Ghost* grows up among humans unaware of his vampire heritage; Stefan and Damon in the TV series *The Vampire Diaries* (2009-2017)⁴ are protected from the sun with the help of a magical ring; the inhabitants of Bon Temps in the TV series *True Blood* (2008-2014)⁵ can, as a result of the “Great Revelation” – in which the vampires reveal their existence to the humans – live openly among them. The ultimate example of humanized vampires might be the characters of Meyer’s (2005)⁶ *Twilight Saga*, who feed on animal blood instead of human blood. These are only some examples in which the line between vampires and human characters is made fuzzier than with vampiric archetypes such as Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897).

When it comes to trolls and fairies, it is harder to see any kind of evolution, since these fantastic creatures have not enjoyed the same level of popularity in popular culture as vampires and zombies have. However, the narrators in del Toro’s novels express a profound ambivalence towards these creatures on behalf of the human characters in similar ways as is done with the zombies and the vampires.

In my analysis, I draw on Yamamoto’s (1999) hypotheses about the relationship between *Animacy* and *Reference*. According to Yamamoto (1999: 1) “[t]he concept of ‘animacy’ can be regarded as some kind of assumed cognitive scale extending from human through animal to inanimate”. Within the *Animacy* framework, the *Individuation Scale*, i.e. “the degree to which we see something as a clearly limited and identifiable

¹ See for example the struggle to assimilate into mainstream society of the people suffering from PDS (Partly Diseased Syndrome) in the TV series *In the Flesh* (2013), the Romeo and Juliet inspired novel *Warm Bodies* (Marion 2010), the romantic comedy *I Kissed a Zombie and I Liked It* (Selzer 2010), and the film *Fido* (2006).

² Examples of zombies becoming human again are found in Marion’s novels *Warm bodies* (2010) and *The Burning world* (2017), Browne’s *Breathers* (2009), and the TV series *In the Flesh* (2013).

³ Some of the survivors even become cannibals and, in the words of the character named Cassandra in the TV series *Z Nation* (2014-: season 1, episode 3), humans can be “worse than Zs”. In del Toro’s *The Strain*, one of the creatures actually argues that the humans are monsters too: “Can you fail to see that, to all the lesser beings, you are the monster? It is you who took this planet for your own” (del Toro & Hogan 2010: 363).

⁴ The TV series is based on the novels with the same title by Smith (1991-1992).

⁵ The TV series is based on the novels with the title *The Southern Vampire Mysteries* (Harris 2001-2013).

⁶ The novels have also been adapted into films with the same title (2011-2012).

entity” (Yamamoto 1999: 3) is of particular relevance. Yamamoto states that it “seems natural for us to ascribe a stronger sense of animacy to an entity who/which is highlighted or activated as an individual in our mind than to one which is part of an indeterminate mass” (Yamamoto 1999: 28).⁷ This is in line with Clark’s (1992: 643) argument that personal pronouns are preferred when the referent is given a proper name. A significant factor within the *Animacy* framework is *empathy*, since it characterizes “the concept of animacy in human language and cognition” (Yamamoto 1999: 16). Dahl & Fraurud (1996: 56) state that “there is a strong connection between the animacy of a referent and the choice between different ways of referring to it.”⁸ The boundary between human and dehumanized is commonly far from clear. As for example Haslam (2014: 37) maintains, there are different levels of *dehumanization*. At the most extreme end of the spectrum “humanness denials [...] are explicit. Here participants make a direct evaluation of the lack of humanness of the target and have reflective awareness of doing so”.

In his analysis of the novel *I am Legend* (Matheson 1954) and its various movie interpretations, Holm (2015) comments briefly on the use of the noun *male* in relation to *man* as well as on the pronoun *it* instead of *she* in order to refer to zombies, and he argues that

the zombification is not just a physiological but also a cultural process. [The main character’s] sovereign decision about the [zombies’] non-human status is based on a preceding and pre-conscious interpretation in which his social imaginary frames the ontopolitical status of infected [sic.]. They are monsters (Holm 2015: 213).

Holm (2015: 211, 213) claims that the use of the words *male* and *it* in regard to the zombies plays an important part in the dehumanization process, but does not go any deeper into the subject. Joly (1975: 263) argues that the use of *it* in reference to the male ghost in Hamlet is due to the fact that “the ‘being’ referred to no longer belongs in the world of the living”, something that could likewise hold true for zombies and vampires.

Guillermo del Toro’s imaginary monsters are especially interesting objects of study since they are “unique and original creations that are much more complex than mere villains” (Riley 2015: 43). Del Toro himself asserts that his monsters are meant to “represent a portion of the human soul” (Breznican 2011). Furthermore, del Toro uses the monsters to “explore fundamental human issues such as love, alienation, weakness and, of course, fear”, and frequently “Guillermo’s creatures are more human than the true humans” (Breznican 2011). The vampiric Master in *The Strain* is a clear example of what del Toro himself aspires for the monsters in that novel: creatures “where you do not recognize the humanity, but our own inhumanity in them” (del Toro 2009). Newitz, editor of the sci-fi blog *io9.com* argues that del Toro explores a notion of xenophilia: “His creatures seem really different from us and really scary, [however, t]hey just look different and act weird, but they could also be our friends or actually be cooler than us” (Breznican 2011). This is especially true for the novel *Trollhunters* where the trolls,

⁷ See also Comrie (1989).

⁸ This can be directly related to Clark’s (1992: 640) and Joly’s (1975: 267) observations previously presented.

although at first frightening with their horrifying physical attributes, eventually become the human characters' best friends and allies. As I will argue in this article, the author's use of inanimate and personal pronouns in reference to the fantastic creatures in the three stories I analyze is a powerful tool to make characters oscillate between humanness and monstrosity in a manner that defies the distinction between *us* and *them*.

2. Analysis

In the present section the three literary works of Guillermo del Toro will be analyzed in chronological order. Each title will be treated in a separate subsection.

2.1 The Strain

The trilogy *The Strain* (del Toro & Hogan 2009; 2010; 2011) deals with a group of people in New York fighting to resist a vampiric Master and his army of zombie drones which has taken control of the planet, incarcerating the humans in "blood camps".⁹ It is one of the most complete vampire/zombie¹⁰ narrations published in the 21st-century. The three books tell the story from the beginning of the vampire/zombie disaster until its very end. What makes the trilogy especially interesting is that it describes numerous encounters between the human and the nonhuman characters, and the vampires/zombies appear not only in large anonymous groups but also as single individuals. By showing the creatures to maintain a kind of bond with their human loved ones, and have them consistently seek them out, del Toro makes their relationship more complex.

Throughout the three novels we follow the main characters' struggles to accept the inhumanity of the vampires/zombies they fight against, and the fear and pain of being forced to kill one that used to be a family member or a friend. As we will see, the pronominalization in reference to the vampires/zombies is highly complex and reflects the characters' constant movement, in the eyes of other characters, to and from humanness and monstrosity. The story is told from an impersonal extradiegetic perspective and describes the actions, feelings and thoughts of several different characters, both human and vampire/zombie.

The analysis of pronouns used with the antecedent "vampire" shows that there is no consistent pattern in the pronominalization throughout the trilogy. Furthermore, there is no direct relation between pronominalization and degree of familiarity between nonhuman creature and human characters. This clearly signals that pronominalization is used to create and express intricate relations between the human and nonhuman

⁹ In Book II these blood camps are directly compared to WWII concentration camps (del Toro & Hogan 2010: 361).

¹⁰ Although the monsters in *The Strain* are referred to as "vampires", it could be argued that they show more characteristics generally ascribed to the zombie than they do of the vampire. See my discussion on this matter in Flores Ohlson (forthcoming, a), and Christie (2011) for a similar discussion on the zombie characteristics of the creatures called "vampires" in *I am legend* (Matheson 1954). Also note that Cohen (2012: 400) calls Matheson's novel a "vampiric zombie novel".

fictional characters. It also shows how del Toro's original fantastic creatures are made to move between humanness and monstrosity. The lack of consistency in pronoun use in reference to the noun "vampire" creates the impression that the creature so described is neither clearly human nor nonhuman. However, inanimate pronouns are used less frequently in reference to vampires mentioned by name than to anonymous vampires. This fact indicates that the attitudes of attachment and closeness on the part of the human characters also affect the choice of pronoun, at least to a certain degree.

The first character to clearly realize that these creatures are not human is the boy Zack who is captured and brought to the Master by his mother after she is turned into a zombie drone. The following scene takes place at the beginning of the story when Zack has as yet no knowledge of what is going on in the city and does not know the man he sees through his bedroom window.

- 1) Zack looked out his window and saw a guy. A naked guy. [...] The
- 2) balding head and varicose veins on the legs pinned **him** at around
- 3) seventy, but there was a vigor to **his** step and a tone to **his** walk that
- 4) made you think of a young man. [...] The pale creature circled the house
- 5) [...]. Zack heard a soft moan [...]. The man walked out into the middle of
- 6) the street and then stopped. Flabby arms hanging at **his** side, **his** chest
- 7) deflated - was **he** even breathing? [...] **It** looked up toward Zack's
- 8) window, and for one weird moment they locked eyes. Zack's heart
- 9) raced. This was the first time he saw the guy frontally. During the whole
- 10) time, he had been able to see only a flank of the man's skin-draped
- 11) back, but now he saw **his** full thorax- and the pale Y-shaped scar that
- 12) crossed it whole. And **his** eyes-they were dead tissue, glazed over,
- 13) opaque [...]. He knew that scar, knew what it meant. An autopsy scar.
- 14) But how could that be? [...] Seeing naked male corpses walking in the
- 15) street [...]. The dead eyes looked at him with intense hunger... [...] The
- 16) man was gone, but **he** was everywhere now. He could be downstairs,
- 17) breaking in through the kitchen window. Soon it would be on the steps,
- 18) climbing ever so slowly – could he hear his footsteps already? [...] And
- 19) soon it would reach Zack's bed [...]. He feared the man's voice and its
- 20) dead stare. Because he had the horrible certainty that, even though it
- 21) moved, the man was no longer alive. Zombies....

(del Toro & Hogan 2009: 202-204)

In this scene, there are several uses of the inanimate pronoun that overlooks the semantic or grammatical status of the referent "the man". The first case is found in line 7, and it is in fact the first use of the inanimate pronoun in reference to a vampire/zombie in the trilogy. The change of pronouns occurs as Zack starts to notice the man's display of typical zombie characteristics, i.e. the sounds he makes, the sloppy posture with hanging arms and, most importantly, the deflated chest, which suggests that the creature is not breathing (lines 5-7). However, in what follows after Zack's acceptance of the fact that this man is no longer alive, personal pronouns are used (lines 11-16). At the end of the extract, as Zack's fear of the creature increases, the repeated use of the inanimate pronoun makes the nonhuman status of the referent more salient. These observations make it clear that even though the use of pronouns in reference to the noun "man" are in most cases the expected personal ones, the

semantical status of this noun as referring to a human being does not predict all pronouns. The narrator's inconsistent use of inanimate and personal pronouns in this scene creates the impression that pronominalization is determined by the human character's hesitant attitude towards a creature he did not expect to exist.

Zack's father, Dr. Goodweather (Eph), head of a rapid response team that handles biological threats, encounters one of these creatures for the first time when he examines Captain Redfern, one of the pilots of the airplane that brought the zombie invasion to New York. Captain Redfern is in the process of transforming into a zombie, and all through the examination and even later, as Eph is forced to fight against Redfern, only personal pronouns and his name are used in reference to this character. Setrakian, who has been hunting the vampire ever since his escape from the Treblinka concentration camp, tries to make Eph understand that Redfern is no longer human.

He is like a drone now, becoming part of a hive. A body of many parts but one single will. He looked at Eph "**This thing** must be destroyed." "What?" said Eph. "No." **He** is no longer your friend," said Setrakian. "**He** is your enemy" (del Toro & Hogan 2009: 285-286).

In this example, the noun "thing" is used in reference to a vampire/zombie; however, there are no inanimate pronouns in this extract. Below is a similar example:

Franco, or **this thing** that was Franco, didn't know or had forgotten or misjudged the properties of glass. **He** appeared confused (del Toro & Hogan 2009: 393).

In these two cases, the human characters encounter the fantastic creatures for the first time and have not yet completely understood exactly what is happening and who or what these creatures are. In the following extract, however, "the thing" is used in reference to a vampire/zombie in a scene after the characters have learned of the existence of these creatures, and the pronouns used are mainly inanimate ones:

- 1) **The thing** attacked. **It** charged [...] but then the leash chain
- 2) caught, snapping **the thing** back. They saw **it** now -saw **its** face.
- 3) **It** sneered, **its** gums so white it appeared at first that **its** bared
- 4) teeth went all the way up into the jaw. **Its** lips were pale with
- 5) thirst, and what was left of **its** hair had whitened at the roots. **It**
- 6) crouched on all fours on a bed of soil, a chain collar locked tight
- 7) around **its** neck, dug into the flesh. Setrakian said, never taking
- 8) his eyes off **it**, 'This is **the man** from the aeroplane?' Eph stared.
- 9) **This thing** was like a demon that had devoured **the man** named
- 10) Ansel Barbour and half-assumed **his** form. 'It was **him**.'
- 11) 'Somebody caught **it**,' said Nora. 'Chained **it** here. Locked **it**
- 12) away.' 'No,' said Setrakian. '**He** chained **himself**.'

(del Toro & Hogan 2009: 399-400)

In the dialogue (lines 8-12), Eph and his co-worker Nora use only inanimate pronouns in reference to a creature named Ansel, whereas Setrakian uses the noun "man" and the pronoun "he". This suggests that he is referring to the human Ansel was before his transformation. Earlier in the novel, the reader learns about Ansel's family situation, with

a wife suffering from obsessive-compulsive disorder, two children and two dogs. Before the transformation is completed, the father and husband chains himself in the dog shed in order to protect his family from what he is about to turn into. The pronominalization used by the narrator in this example depicts the characters Eph and Nora as having accepted the nonhuman status of Ansel. At the same time, the use of both personal and inanimate pronouns in reference to the same character serves to point out the “before” and “after” of the transformation. Setrakian’s use of personal pronouns identifies him as more experienced and indicates that he understands and accepts the whole process of transformation from human into monster. Hence the different uses of pronouns by the characters in this scene symbolize different stages of acceptance and attitude toward the vampire/zombies.

The noun “thing” is also used in reference to one of the creatures when Eph meets the vampire/zombie version of his ex-wife for the first time:

Kelly Goodweather was turned. A dead **thing** returned to **its** home. **Her** gazing eyes found Zack. **Her** Dear One. **She** had come for him. [...] **She** was a demon. A vampire. *One of them.* **She** was gone to him forever (del Toro & Hogan 2009: 494).

Here “dead thing” triggers the use of the inanimate pronoun “its”. But it seems as if the use of the proper name in reference to this important character in the story dominates the text and in the rest of the scene only personal pronouns are used. At this point we need to take into consideration Yamamoto’s (1999) concept of empathy. Even though Kelly is no longer human, the memory of her as a wife and a mother, as well as the important role she continues to play in the lives of Eph and Zack has a deep effect on the level of animacy or humanness they grant her in their descriptions. Therefore, they seem to feel empathy even for the vampire/zombie version of her. Greene and Mohammad put it as follows:

Our tingly entrails tell us that it *matters* who these zombies are that are doing the killing and the eating of the people we identify with. Zombies are dead flesh all right, but not *merely* so. Just because they are dead flesh doesn’t mean they aren’t also our family and friends (Greene & Mohammad 2010: 23).

The next time they meet Kelly, she is outside a barred bedroom window. During the time Zack is alone in the bedroom, “she” is used twelve times, and “her” twenty times, to describe Kelly’s physical appearance and actions (del Toro & Hogan 2010: 22-24). That is, when Kelly is alone with Zack, the narrator uses only personal pronouns in reference to her, which gives the impression that Zack is unable to dehumanize her and realize what a danger she poses to him. Eph, on the other hand, has a less strong bond with Kelly, since they are divorced, and he has a new lover, his co-worker Nora. He and Nora know they have to kill Kelly in order to keep Zack safe, and the narrator introduces the noun “vampire” and the inanimate “its” (line 2 below) in reference to Kelly at the same moment as Eph enters the scene. When Nora joins them in the bedroom, the noun phrases “corrupted human being” and “monster-mother” are used (line 4). These linguistic features show Eph and Nora to dehumanize Kelly, while also justifying the violence they intend to use against her:

- 1) Eph came racing back into the bedroom. He found Zack standing there,
- 2) staring dumbly at Kelly, the vampire squeezing **its** head between the iron
- 3) bars, about to strike. Eph pulled a silver-bladed sword [...]. The sight of
- 4) Kelly Goodweather - this corrupted human being, this monster-mother –
- 5) repulsed Nora, but she advanced, the virus-killing light in her
- 6) outstretched hand. Eph, too, moved toward Kelly and **her** hideous
- 7) stinger. The vampire went deep-eyed with animal rage

(del Toro & Hogan 2010: 24).

Nevertheless, Eph's empathy for Kelly continues to be high, and when he encounters her again in Book III, there is a change from inanimate pronouns to personal ones once he realizes that the creature he sees is his ex-wife:

The vampire hissed and weaved, slashing **its** long talon finger [...]. Eph raised his flashlight beam to the vampire's face. It was **Kelly**. **She** had saved him from Cream because **she** wanted Eph for **herself**. [...] **Kelly** approached, crouched low, a sneer of anticipatory ecstasy crossing **her** vampire face. At long last, **she** was about to have her Dear One. (del Toro & Hogan 2011: 414)

In these last two examples inanimate pronouns are used in reference to the noun "vampire" while personal pronouns are used when referring to the proper name "Kelly". This mixture of pronoun categories in reference to one and the same character creates a sense of uncertainty on the part of the human characters with regard to the (non)human status of the referent. It also signals the contradictory emotions of callousness on the one hand, and attachment on the other, that Eph is described to have towards his ex-wife and now vampire creature Kelly.

Apart from Kelly, another vampire/zombie plays an important role in the story. He is also individualized and called by his name: Mr. Quinlan, The Born. He is the Master vampire's only son, born from an infected human slave and he is half vampire/half human. He helps Eph and the others in their fight against the Master, and thus is the only "good" vampire/zombie in the story. Though none of the main characters have the same type of bond with him as Zack and Eph have with Kelly, in all but two cases he is referred to with personal pronouns and his name "Mr Quinlan" or "The Born". Both exceptions occur in Book III, the first one when Eph encounters Kelly for the third time and starts to use animate pronouns once he realizes that the vampire facing him is his ex-wife (see my example above):

Mr. Quinlan had arrived. The Born stepped next to Eph, **its** silver sword in hand, tipped in white blood (del Toro & Hogan 2011: 415).

This exceptional use of a nonhuman pronoun in relation to the half vampire/half human seems to underline Eph's lack of empathy for his ally The Born. Kelly, by contrast, despite being Eph's antagonist, seems to retain a certain humanness. Kelly used to be human, whereas the Born never was completely human and never had a family bond with the human characters. The second case of nonhuman pronouns in reference to the Born is at the very end of Book III, by which time he is entirely at the Master's will:

The Born, now infected by the Master's blood, hissed and writhed in the brilliant light. Smoke and vapor surged from **its** body as **the Born** screamed like a lobster being boiled (del Toro & Hogan 2011: 528).

Since Mr. Quinlan is half human, the dehumanization of this character through the use of the inanimate pronoun is an especially forceful example of how del Toro's fantastic characters defy the boundaries of the categories of human/nonhuman. Previously in the story, Mr. Quinlan's more human traits were emphasised. However, del Toro explains how in *The Strain* he attempted to make the creatures "as menacing and as real and as absolutely disgusting and alien as possible" (del Toro 2009). The Born truly becomes that kind of monster in his death scene, in which he is compared to a lobster and burns in the sun. The dehumanization through inanimate pronominalization is particularly effective since in the majority of cases Mr. Quinlan is referred to with personal pronouns, just as predicted by Clark (1992: 643) in her study of pronominalization in relation to proper names.

The pronominalization in reference to the vampiric Master is also non-consistent. In the scene where Eph meets him for the first time (del Toro & Hogan 2009: 434-438), there are twenty possessive pronouns used in referring to the Master. Eight of them are the inanimate "its" and twelve of them the personal possessive "his". There is no pattern in the use of the pronouns, i.e. both types of pronouns are used to refer to the same body parts: "its skull"/"his head", "its huge hands"/ "his free arm", "its eyes"/"his oryx eyes", "its throat"/ "his throat"/"his mouth"/ "his jaw"/ "his tongue". There are only two subjective pronouns, one of each kind ("it gripped", "he went over"), and six noun phrases, all of which indicate nonhuman features ("this thing", "the giant being", "the demon", "the giant vampire", "the monster").

It is thus obvious that although the Master is described as a "clearly limited and identifiable entity" (Yamamoto 1999: 3) and not as an anonymous entity in a mass of others, it/he is still characterized as a nonhuman being. In addition, the Master is depicted as the incarnation of evil, and the level of empathy the main characters are described to feel for it/him is low or even non-existent. Nevertheless, the Master is frequently referred to with animate pronouns (he, his, him).

This constant vacillation between personal and inanimate pronouns recurs throughout the three books, as we have seen, both in reference to the Master and in encounters with other vampires/zombies. It is striking how frequently personal and inanimate pronouns are used alternately to refer to the same creature in one and the same scene, as for example in the following:

A nasty little feeler [a blind child who has been transformed into a vampire/zombie] galloped in from the restaurant, followed by another on **its** heels (del Toro & Hogan 2011: 498).

The one [feeler] he missed came right back at him, and Eph caught **her** with his sword, but off balance and only with the flat side of the blade against **her** head (del Toro & Hogan 2011: 499).

In the first extract above the use of the inanimate pronoun together with the verb “gallop” clearly dehumanizes the vampire, while in the second example the personal pronouns remind the reader of the tragic story behind the little girl who was purposefully blinded by the Master to turn her into a vampire/zombie slave. Here, the use of animate pronouns highlights the character’s human past.

2.2 Don’t Be Afraid of the Dark

The narrative perspective of *Don’t Be Afraid of the Dark: Blackwood’s Guide to Dangerous Fairies* differs from *The Strain*, since it is restricted to an internal first-person narrator, the British biologist Blackwood. The novel consists of two different kinds of texts. On the one hand, there is The Catalogue, a sort of a detailed list in which the first-person narrator describes what he has learned by travelling the world and interviewing people who have had encounters with “the hidden people”, that is, the “dangerous fairies” of the title. He describes, for instance, what these creatures look like and why they are dangerous. On the other hand, we have Blackwood’s journal in which he narrates his own encounters with them. As I will show in the analysis, this is the only text in the corpus that presents a single example of pronoun oscillation in reference to one and the same creature. The usage of pronouns is nevertheless complex in this text as well.

In this novel, the denomination “fairy” includes a wide range of different fantastic creatures, from the small, humanlike creature usually associated with the word to creatures such as black dogs with gleaming red eyes, a murderous shape-shifter, the Leprechaun, and beings that can make themselves invisible. Most of the creatures are presented as a particular species of fairy, but some are individual creatures that are not shown to be part of any taxonomical group. The fact that pronominalization in this novel is difficult to trace underlines their many different variations. However, from the physical description given of most of the creatures, they can be organized into four different categories: 1) humanlike creatures, 2) animallike creatures, 3) shapeshifters who take on both human and animal forms, and 4) creatures whose nature is not described or only in such a way that it is not made clear whether they are more human or animallike. We find twelve entries where humanlike creatures are referred to solely with personal pronouns, seven entries where humanlike creatures are referred to with solely inanimate pronouns, twelve entries where animallike creatures are referred to only with inanimate pronouns, one entry where a humanlike shapeshifter is referred to with both personal and inanimate pronouns and one where a human and animallike creature is referred to with personal pronouns. Based on these observations, two particularly interesting facts should be noted.

First, there are no examples at all of animallike creatures referred to with personal pronouns, only of humanlike creatures referred to with inanimate pronouns. As a consequence, a clear relation between animallike creatures and inanimate pronouns is established. Second, there is only one example in which vacillation in the use of the pronouns in reference to one and the same creature occurs:

he is known as a Jack of the Green, and by many other names as well. [...] Though **he** often appears human, close inspection will reveal that **his** beard and hair are

made of grass and vines; and **he** can alter his size so that **he** is as small as a blade of grass or as tall as the tallest tree in the forest. The Lesovik can alter **its** appearance to that of any animal or plant (del Toro & Golden 2011: 136).

The fact that there is only one example in this novel is noteworthy, since the vacillation between personal and inanimate pronouns used for one and the same creature is such a prominent feature in del Toro's other novels. An explanation to this exception might be that the personal pronouns are used when the humanlike features of the creature are described, whereas the use of one inanimate pronoun is triggered as its nonhuman traits are mentioned.

"Creature" is an extremely frequent word in the text, used both in reference to the humanlike and the animallike creatures, and it is worth noting that both personal and inanimate pronouns are used with this noun (del Toro & Golden 2011: 60-62, 192, 198, 200). Yamamoto's (1999: 3, 28) *Individuation Scale* does not seem to explain the pronoun usage in the text, since there are both personal and inanimate pronouns used when referring to species and single individuals. As a matter of fact, when it comes to the seven cases of creatures presented as single individuals, three of them appear with inanimate pronouns, three of them with personal ones, and in one case there are no third-person pronouns at all. The novel is about *dangerous* fairies and they are indeed portrayed as quite unpleasant creatures, regardless of whether they are humanlike or animallike. This indicates that Clark's (1992: 640) categories of detached appraisal, callousness or fellow-feeling cannot be used to explain the mixture of pronouns in the text.

The most plausible explanation for the pronominalization structures in *Don't Be Afraid of the Dark* is Yamamoto's (1999: 1) cognitive scale for animacy which extends from human through animal to inanimate. Yamamoto notes that in this scale there are "more fine-grained cognitive processes, which, for example, make us feel that cats are more 'animate' than amebae" (Yamamoto 1999: 3). This could explain why the Banshee, as well as several other creatures in the text, are referred to with personal pronouns:

The Banshee [...] is an augur of death **whose** signing or wailing beneath a bedroom window portends doom for whoever sleeps in that room. The appearance of Banshees seems to differ significantly from creature to creature, though usually they are described as pale women with eyes bright red from constant weeping (del Toro & Golden 2011: 70).

While the Banshee sings, cries and looks like a woman, the animallike Cauchemar is referred to with inanimate pronouns:

A Cauchemar is a slender, almost feline creature with flesh the cold gray of coal ash and a proboscis that can extend to cover the mouth and nose of a sleeping man or woman so that **it** breathes the breath of the sleeper (del Toro & Golden 2011: 78).

This suggests that the use of the inanimate pronouns serves, on the one hand, to further dehumanize the animallike creatures and categorize them as belonging to the "end of the spectrum [where] humanness denials [...] are explicit" (Haslan 2014: 37). On the other hand, the humanlike creatures referred to with inanimate pronouns are clearly more

dehumanized than the humanlike creatures referred to with personal pronouns. The use of the inanimate pronouns could perhaps also be used for the purpose of expressing an unfriendly attitude on the part of the creatures in question, as suggested by Joly (1975: 267), since the fairies are depicted as creatures that clearly do not like to be discovered or studied, and act in a menacing way when they are.

In the last chapters of the book, the first-person narrator Blackwood recounts the tragic ending of his family following their encounter and interaction with the evil Tootbreakers or Tooth fairies. These creatures are categorized as animallike, although they can talk. At the end of the story, Blackwood states that they “are intelligent creatures, these fairies, but that does not make them like men” (del Toro & Golden 2011: 218), something which is enhanced through the use of inanimate pronouns only:

Until I heard the crack of a branch above my head and looked up to see one of them perched in the crook of the split trunk of an ancient oak. I froze in place, fearful that **it** would tear out my throat if I dared to run. **It** glared at me with what seemed a combination of disdain and fury. And then, worst of all, **it** spoke a single word. **It** said my name (del Toro & Golden 2011: 216).

2.3 Trollhunters

In a similar manner as *Don't Be Afraid of the Dark, Trollhunters* (del Toro & Kraus 2015) is narrated from the perspective of the boy Jimmy, with the exception of the first chapter entitled *Prologue*, which has an impersonal extradiegetic narrator. The novel tells the story of Jimmy who, together with two other children and two good trolls fights evil trolls. In the beginning, the children are terrified of the good trolls and try to kill them, but eventually they become friends and allies. As I will show in the analysis, the pronominalization of the trolls plays an important part in a narrative process that begins with the children's initial horror, followed by a process of acceptance, and finally friendship.

In the first two scenes in which the children catch a glimpse of a troll only inanimate pronouns are used (del Toro & Kraus 2015: 6, 48). It is when Jimmy is captured by one of the main character trolls, Blinky, an octopuslike creature, and brought to the land of the trolls, that pronominalization starts to change. In his first encounter with his uncle Jack, who had disappeared as a child and not grown up since then, he sees Blinky for the first time:

The thing was stomping dolls flat and leaning right over me. [...] a few of the eyes behaved as if uncertain that I was there. Like an idiot, I passed a hand back and forth in from of one of them. It did not react. “**He** can't see you”, a voice said. “**He's** nearly blind.” The horrid **thing** straightened up and turned toward the oven. **It** gibbered a few more indescribable syllables (del Toro & Kraus 2015: 72-73).

In this scene there is a clear distinction between the two characters' use of pronouns. Jack, who is Blinky's friend, uses the personal masculine pronoun, while Jimmy, to whom Blinky is still nothing but an unimaginable monster, uses the inanimate pronoun. Hence the difference in pronoun usage is due to the human characters' different

relationships with the troll and highlights their subjective perceptions of Blinky. Jimmy is also introduced to the other main character troll, a creature called ARRRGH!!!:

ARRRGH!!! crossed the room in four colossal lopes that shook rust from overhead pipes like falling snow. **The beast** loomed over me, then bent at the waist so that **its** wet nose was inches from my face. **It** sniffed once, then exhaled. [...]. **Its** avid eyes, each the size of a softball, catalogued my details. **It** snarled (del Toro & Kraus 2015: 76).

Although the troll is here presented with a name, only inanimate pronouns are used for it. It should be noted, however, that the pronouns refer to “the beast” and not directly to the proper name. On the contrary, in the following example the inanimate pronoun is used in direct relation to the proper name:

ARRRGH!!! took one look at the medallion, turned **its** awful face to the ceiling, and let loose with a tyrannosaurus roar (del Toro & Kraus 2015: 76).

Hence Clark’s (1992: 643) claim that personal pronouns are preferred for characters with proper names is violated by del Toro. The use of this pronoun underlines that, from Jimmy’s perspective, this troll is a highly inhuman creature. Nevertheless, when the trolls get distracted Jimmy seizes the opportunity to try to escape and as the trolls chase after him, he uses a personal pronoun for the first time:

The idea of wedging my body inside was the worst thing I’d ever considered, but at least **ARRRGH!!!** and **Blinky**, both of **whom** were getting closer, would be too large to follow (del Toro & Kraus 2015: 77).

As Jimmy tries to escape, he ends up in the troll city where he sees countless trolls in all shapes and sizes. In this scene there are personal pronouns used in reference to five different trolls (del Toro & Kraus 2015: 80, 82, 83). The personal pronominalization in the description of these five trolls seems to indicate that, having been introduced to Blinky and ARRRGH!!! and learning that they have names, Jimmy has begun to see them as individuals. Nevertheless, he continues using the inanimate pronouns in reference to ARRRGH!!!, as the giant troll closes in on him in the chase:

I saw a familiar black-furred giant poke **its** snout into the alley. **Its** orange eyes lasered in on me (del Toro & Kraus 2015: 82).

This use of inanimate pronouns in reference to ARRRGH!!!, but not to other trolls, becomes more and more salient as the story continues. That is, ARRRGH!!! is described as being less human in Jimmy’s perception than the other trolls.

Some of it made its way into the gash of Blinky’s mouth, and through **his** scaled skin I could see [...]. ARRRGH!!! was even less artful. **It** snatched whatever scraps **it** could from the air and showed them at **its** slobbering jaw. [...] There was no doubt **it** was enjoying **itself**; with every mighty swallow, **its** horns gored enthusiastically at the cabinet and **its** gargantuan feet stamped (del Toro & Kraus 2015: 123).

It is notable that even in dialogue with his human friend Tub, Jimmy now uses personal pronouns when talking about Blinky but not about ARRRGH!!!, and Tub mirrors this use:

“I’ll take the smaller one”, he [Tub] whispered. “That’s your plan?” I hissed. “What? The smaller one looks tricky.” “Tricky? **He’s** almost blind!” “Oh, yeah? Well, I bet **he’s** got a perfect hearing” (del Toro & Kraus 2015: 123).

This changes drastically, however, as Jimmy learns that ARRRGH!!! is female and starts to understand her language.

“Kill? You?” **Blinky** looked baffled. [...] My hirsute colleague, though - patience is not **her** strong suit.” “**Her?**” I looked doubtfully up at **ARRRGH!!!**. “**Her?**” Tub parroted. “**It’s a her?** I mean, **she’s a her?**” (del Toro & Kraus 2015: 128).

This example is unique in the corpus of the present study, as it is the only one in which a certain awareness of pronominalization is expressed when Tub corrects himself, changing from the inanimate to the personal pronoun.¹¹ While Jimmy, from this point onwards, begins to use personal pronouns not only in reference to Blinky, but also to ARRRGH!!! (line 2), his friend Tub, who does not understand the trolls’ language, goes back to using an inanimate pronoun in reference to Blinky (line 5):

- 1) **She** [ARRRGH!!!] gestured at what looked like a large boulder halfway
- 2) embedded in **her** skull. [...] Blinky’s tentacles spread out in a way that
- 3) somehow communicated apology. **He** then explained to me, in sentences
- 4) that were, for **him**, remarkable concise, that we all had to go, right now,
- 5) and then **he** told me why. [...] “What’s **it** [Blinky] saying, Jim?” Tub
- 6) pressed.

(del Toro & Kraus 2015: 130–131)

However, from this point on in the story both children only use personal pronouns in reference to Blinky and ARRRGH!!! in dialogue. The same goes for Jimmy’s first-person narration. It is clear that the human children characters are forming a bond of friendship and alliance with the trolls. When referring to ARRRGH!!!, for instance, the personal pronouns are used both with her name as antecedent, as in noun phrases such as “that monster” and “the hairy beast”:

Tub and I stared at each other, then at the bed being held over our heads by **ARRRGH!!!** as if it weighed no more than a sheet. **She** nodded us on, **her** horn ripping through my posters (del Toro & Kraus 2015: 135)

That monster was real and **she** was right here, communicating with me, walking on all fours so as to fit through the tunnel, **her** long red tongue licking stray globs of peanut butter from **her** fur (del Toro & Kraus 2015: 139-140).¹²

¹¹ For more examples of a clear awareness of the pronoun use in order to (de)humanize zombies, see Flores Ohlson (forthcoming, b).

¹² See also del Toro & Kraus (2015: 142, 201-211).

It should be noted nonetheless that, as the story continues, the use of noun phrases that describe ARRRGH!!! As nonhuman – e.g. “the monster”, “the hairy beast”, and “the gigantic ape-monster” – becomes less frequent, whereas the use of the troll’s name increases. This, along with the personal pronouns used, expresses attitudes of alliance, friendship and even closeness between the human children and the trolls and, in short, humanizes the creature. This reflects the notion of xenophilia that Newitz (Breznican 2011) argues can be found in del Toro’s texts. That is, the author’s fantastic creatures, even though they are not human, look different than humans and act in strange ways, they become the human characters’ friends.

In regard to other trolls in the story, there seems at first to be more of an inconsistent vacillation in pronominalization, since both human and troll characters use personal and inanimate pronouns:

- 1) [Blinky in dialogue with narrator Jimmy] A **schmoof** is, oh, how should I put this? I shall just come out with it. It is a fetus. [...] the young **schmoof** crawls in through the mouth and down the esophagus and burrows into the stomach lining, where **its** enzymes release a powerful sedative effect upon **its** host (del Toro & Kraus 2015: 129-130).
- 2) [Blinky in dialogue with narrator Jimmy] **Gunmar** is once more growing stronger. It has always been **his** goal to invade the human world and feed at will, and that is precisely what will happen if we do not locate **him** soon (del Toro & Kraus 2015: 141).
- 3) [Narrator Jimmy] The sacs were nearly the size of a **Nullhuller itself** [...]. If left undetected, a **troll changeling** can grow to full adulthood under **its** human skin (del Toro & Kraus 2015: 175).
- 4) [Narrator Jimmy] The **Nullhuller** that had made the plaster cast flattened **itself** against the wall. [...] **The troll** was too fast, **it** hopped (del Toro & Kraus 2015: 182).
- 5) [Narrator Jimmy] The half-formed human skull exposed the troll brain hiding beneath, a glossy green thing nipped with twitching nodules. I was crying when I killed **it**. **It** was an abomination [...]. But the changeling had already mastered a baby’s voice, and **it** sobbed as I hacked **it** into smaller and smaller pieces (del Toro & Kraus 2015: 182-183).
- 6) [Narrator Jimmy] The **Gräcaejvodnuy**¹³ were a race of trolls so nefarious that even their name was an assault, hard enough to write and impossible to say [...]. If a single specimen escaped, **it** would share your odor with others back at **its** hive (del Toro & Kraus 2015: 199).

Among these six examples, there is one (2) in which personal pronouns are used. The troll Blinky uses both inanimate (1) and personal pronouns (2), and the first-person narrator: the human trollhunter Jimmy uses inanimate pronouns (3-6). I claim that this

¹³ The transcription of this kind of trolls’ name has been simplified.

vacillation between inanimate and personal pronouns cannot be interpreted in relation to notions such as detached appraisal and callousness, or to attachment or closeness (Clark 1992: 640). This is because on the one hand, the schmoofs (1) are friendly inasmuch as they are used as tools by the trollhunters. They are however referred to with inanimate pronouns in a similar manner as the trolls that are indisputable enemies: the Nullhullers (4), the changelings (3, 5), and the Gräcaejivodnuys (6). On the other hand, Gunmar, the primary enemy, is referred to with personal pronouns (2). The characteristics of this pronominalization can rather be explained by Yamamoto's (1999: 3, 28) *Individuation Scale*, which sustains that a limited and identifiable individual is perceived as more animate than an anonymous mass of creatures. Moreover, Joly (1975: 267) notes that animals are referred to with inanimate pronouns when they are mentioned as a species and not as particular individuals. This is precisely the case with, on the one hand, Gunmar, and the communities of other trolls such as the schmoofs and the Nullhullers, on the other.

Yamamoto's (1999: 28) argument that it "seems natural for us to ascribe a stronger sense of animacy to an entity who/which is highlighted or activated as an individual in our mind than to one which is part of an indeterminate mass" is reinforced in the novel, because unlike the other trolls Gunmar has a proper name and is frequently mentioned in the story.¹⁴ There are a few exceptions to this pattern, one of which is cited below. This unexpected use of a personal pronoun in reference to an anonymous enemy troll cannot be explained by the notion of individuality or proper name. This troll appears only once and does not play an important part of the plot:

- 1) Wormbeards were so fat around the middle they could roll themselves at
- 2) you like runaway boulders. [...] chasing a rolling gray blob as **it** bulldozed
- 3) mailboxes and road signs and a single fire hydrant. I burst through the
- 4) jetting water and threw Claireblade like a javelin. It sunk into the
- 5) Wormbeard's spine and **he** unballled, denting two cars with **his**
- 6) outstretched paws.

(del Toro & Kraus 2015: 227–228)

However, were we to change the personal pronouns in reference to the troll in this extract, and use solely inanimate ones, lines 3-6 would read:

I burst through the jetting water and threw Claireblade like a javelin. It sunk into the Wormbeard's spine and **it** unballled, denting two cars with **its** outstretched paws.

This rewriting highlights that the first "it" in reference to the troll might refer to the blade that Jimmy throws at the troll. Although it is not likely that the antecedent of "its outstretched paws" would be confused with the blade instead of the troll, it can be argued that the change from inanimate pronominalization in line 2 into personal pronominalization in line 5 serves to differentiate the inanimate object, the weapon, from the troll in a similar manner as the trainer is distinguished from the trainee in the dog manuals studied by Clark (1992: 641). Del Toro here provides an example of a pronoun choice based on semantic features rather than an attitudinal position.

¹⁴ MacKay & Konishi (1980: 157) talk about "frequently mentioned antecedents".

3. Conclusion

In this article I have shown that in del Toro's fantastic narratives the pronominalization serves an important function in the creation and expression of an intricate connection between human and nonhuman characters.

In the trilogy *The Strain* (del Toro & Hogan 2009; 2010; 2011), the semantic statutes do not predict all pronouns, since both the personal pronouns and the inanimate ones are used in a non-systematic way throughout the three books. It can be argued that this linguistic tool rather serves the purpose of dehumanizing the vampires/zombies and differentiating the dead from the living. It is also used to point out the "before" and "after" of the transformation of specific individuals. However, the fact that in *The Strain* even the most inhuman and evil creatures are often referred to with human pronouns creates the impression that this distinction between human and nonhuman does not hold. The linguistic rule that predicts personal pronominalization in relation to proper names is not entirely true for *The Strain*, since there are a few exceptions in relation to two of the vampires/zombies and numerous ones in regard to the novel's main villain, the Master.

The most striking feature of pronominalization in *Don't Be Afraid of the Dark* (del Toro & Golden 2011) in comparison to del Toro's other two novels analyzed here is that there is only one instance of vacillation between the pronouns used in reference to a particular creature. All other creatures are consistently referred to either with personal or inanimate pronouns. There is also a tendency towards a correlation between animallike creatures and inanimate pronouns, and, although less consistent, a connection between humanlike creatures and personal pronouns. Both humanlike and animallike fairies are referred to with the noun "creature", for which both sets of pronouns are used. It is hence neither the semantic status that predicts pronominalization, nor the linguistic rule of personal pronoun use in relation to proper names. Pronominalization structures seem to function more as a tool to dehumanize the dangerous fairies.

In *Trollhunters* (del Toro & Kraus 2015) pronominalization also seems to follow a more consistent pattern than in *The Strain*. It clearly serves the function of expressing different kinds of attitudes towards the trolls, such as detached appraisal and dehumanization on the one hand, and friendship and alliance on the other. The change in pronominalization from inanimate to personal pronouns conveys the human characters' progress from fear and disgust to friendship and empathy. Some of the exceptions to this pattern are better explained with reference to grammar, than by drawing on extra-linguistic factors. Personal pronouns can, for example, be used in reference to trolls that have also been referred to with inanimate pronouns in order to differentiate the troll from an inanimate object. Furthermore, not only personal pronouns are used together with proper names, although it is indeed the case in the majority of examples.

As noted before, Clark (1992: 644) argues that the vacillation in animal pronominalization can express the profound ambivalence in human attitudes towards animals, something that can be related to the concept of *dehumanization* and the constant pronoun vacillation found in the corpus, especially in *The Strain*. Haslam (2014: 44) states that the prefix "de-" does not need to imply an absolute negation: "*Decapitation* may indeed involve a nonpartial removal of one's head, but other terms

(*demoralize, devaluation, decaffeinated*, etc.) may refer to a (relative) reduction rather than an (absolute) removal". Therefore, in the texts analyzed the mixture of pronouns can be interpreted as a non-complete process of (de)humanization. That is, del Toro's characters are "much more complex than mere villains" (Riley 2015: 43) since they are not always depicted as human *or* zombie/vampire/fairy/troll, but are also portrayed as occupying an in-between state. Del Toro's monsters can be "absolutely disgusting and alien" (del Toro 2009) and at the same time "more human than the true humans" (Breznican 2011). His trolls, for example, sometimes show so many human features that the human characters no longer find it important to clearly distinguish them from their human friends and family members.

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