

FROM THE DAMSEL IN DISTRESS TO THE FEMALE HERO: THE WANDERINGS OF CHRISTINE DAAÉ IN GASTON LEROUX'S *THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA* AND ITS LAST FILM ADAPTATION

Caroline Navarrina de MOURA *

Lis Yana de Lima MARTINEZ **

Lucia Sá REBELLO ***

■ **ABSTRACT:** The Gothic genre comes to the surface as the rightful source which provided the necessary license to passionately describe the fears, terrors, and horrors that the social revolutions called forth in the name of progress. As an example of this world-wide turmoil, the objective of this article is to analyse the trajectory of the character Christine Daaé in Gaston Leroux's *The phantom of the opera* (1911) and in the homonymous cinematographic adaptation of 2004 in order to investigate how the author and narrator manage to subvert Mademoiselle Daaé's representation by making usage of Gothic elements, such as the frame of a story within a story, the resource of the unspeakable, and the dichotomy of the surface and the profound (SEDGWICK, 1986) along with the symbolism of colour in media transposition. Both the literary piece and the film adaptation illustrate the major turning point in the narrative, regarding Christine Daaé's character due to the fact that Mademoiselle Daaé outbreaks from the character of the damsel in distress to the female hero, since she lies back on the novel structure she is inserted into, controlling the environment around her, and solving the problems and contradictions of the Gothic novel.

■ **KEYWORDS:** Female Hero. Film. Gothic literature. *The phantom of the opera*.

Having been able to drastically change the literary field, the novel, as its own name suggests, brings about new themes to the reading audience of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As so, this new literary expression has become

* UFRGS Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul – Programa de Pós-graduação em Letras – Porto Alegre – RS – Brasil. 90040-060 – carolinenmoura@yahoo.com.br.

** UFRGS Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul – Instituto de Letras – Programa de Pós-graduação em Letras – Porto Alegre – RS – Brasil. 90040-060 – yana.flafy@gmail.com.

*** UFRGS – Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul – Instituto de Letras – Programa de Pós-graduação em Letras – Brasil. 90040-060 – lucia.rebello@terra.com.br.

the source with which it was possible for authors to replace the classical heroes from the tragic epic poems that have preceded the genre. Due to three major revolutions in this same period, first and second Industrial Revolutions and the French Revolution, it was no longer interesting for the modern man or woman to come in contact with nor to identify to the shallow characters represented in those poetic narratives, such as Homer's *The odyssey* or the more contemporary John Milton's *Paradise lost*. The Industrial Revolutions have become a highly important point in History since both movements have changed the old aristocratic manufacturing form of production to the new, faster, and more productive industrial form of production of the machinery of the brand new factories in Europe, being its starting point in England. As a consequence, it increased people's income and their living conditions, making it possible for a middle class, a bourgeois class, to emerge along with and despite the efforts of the aristocracy to prevent this social movement of happening. The French Revolution, for that matter, has also contributed to these major changing in this new world order. Even though it was a local manifestation, it was able to reach and to influence the western world entirely due to the fact that, along with the 'Declaration of the Rights of Man', the recently emerged middle class conquered its rights, according to the departments of the law, granting a better quality of life in the new social order of the day. In this sense, we are introduced to literary works, such as Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and *Moll Flanders* (1722) that portray the common daily life along sided with their ordinary protagonists, demonstrating that it may not take a classical hero to overcome the contradictions and the obstacles of the path the characters must be confronted with.

However, the novel arises in the literary field in order to fulfil the need for a new type of aesthetical representation, only does its function reach to some extent. According to Dr. Carol Margaret Davison (2009), the eighteenth century represents a moment and a period of trauma to the old English society, meaning, aristocracy, since its events had transformed the logics of every-day life. For instance, it was not necessary anymore to contrive in matrimony only to maintain the blood lineage and the family surname so that the assets and the estates remain in the same circles as if marriage was a contract among families. With better living conditions, the wedding ceremony became an option: people could finally choose to be united by passion. Along with it, the fear of the aristocracy of being surpassed by the new bourgeois class called forth for a stronger and deeper manner to keep on aesthetically representing the modern scenario. In this sense, the novel is the source to accomplish this task, while the emergence of the Gothic genre manages to be the means with which authors may depict the terrors and the horrors of this traumatic period by adding psychological depth to the characters instead of the extremely realistic tone the first novels would present, without hurting and breaking the literary decorum, exalting the sublime.

The Gothic genre, then, emerges in the second half of the eighteenth century in England with the publication of Horace Walpole's *The castle of Otranto* (1764), in which the author adds a subtitle to the literary piece: a gothic story (DAVISON, 2009). This particular work became a major influence to the western world widely due to the fact that it presents an exaggerated number of gothic elements that diverge immensely in the realm of the fantastic: from doors that open and close mysteriously by themselves to giant helmets falling from the sky without any explanation whatsoever. Although the Gothic genre is known to have been born in the British Islands, we may also find it crossing barriers and infiltrating borders, becoming a worldwide phenomenon. Having received the influence of the German *Schauerroman*, the terror-novel, and the French *Kannibalregiment* and cannibalistic *buveurs du sang* terrors and horrors, we may come across with Gothic expressions in both countries. As the focus of this article is the French Gothic, only the latter will be worked with; according to Daniel Hall, fantastic literary manifestations that would later lead to the French Gothic may be encountered in the works of the precursor author Abbé Prévost in which:

Prévost is arguably the one of the first, in France at least, to combine a serious examination of the human condition with adventures designed to move the reader. That he employs the melancholy to demonstrate his views about the human suffering, as well as to add to interest to his works, only serves to strengthen his position as an immediate and available point of reference for the authors who followed him with more, or less, scrupulous intent. Prévost's importance lies in the development of the melancholy hero, of the proto-Sadistic villain, and above all in his position as 'one of the first painters of the lugubrious and melancholic setting'. His combination of natural description with the uncertainty and fear of a *sensible* but thoughtful narrator is rendered all the more powerful because it is not overstated. (2005, p. 82-83).

Differently from the English Gothic, the French torrent does not invest primarily in elements of physical and material terror and horror, such as the presence of ghosts or monsters. French Gothic dedicated its efforts of depiction and fidelity to the psychological depth and the relationships among characters in order to portray the fears and the contradictions of such society. As the genre evolves and develops within time and space, we are led to the unfortunate women of Marquis de Sade up to the turning of the century, when we are presented to Gaston Leroux's *The Phantom of the Opera* (1911), which is the aim of this research. Due to the author's journalistic tone, we are introduced to a story that is the gathering of information of a particular research made by an investigative reporter, who makes use of the legend of the phantom of the Opera House in Paris to picture a narrative of terror and horror, love and obsession. Thus, the objective of this article is to

analyse the character of Christine Daaé, in the original novel and in the theatrical version of 2004, observing her actions throughout the story in order to investigate how the Gothic elements used by the author managed to exalt her character, turning Christine into the truthful male hero of the novel instead of the regular Gothic heroine we are familiar with.

In order to do so, the concept of Gothic genre that this article relies on is the Freudian expression of *Das Unheimlich*: having explored several modern languages, such as English, French, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, and even the classic ones, Greek, Latin, Hebrew and Sanskrit, only the German language was able to provide the concept which has been translated into English as the ‘uncanny’ that means the particular object of even scenario that may seem familiar and cosy, but also the source of great terror and panic (FREUD, 1925). In addition to it, the concept of Gothic is extended by the notion of Professor Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1986), in which the professor states that this uncanny element, in modern novels, no longer lies on material and objective elements, but on the interpersonal relationship among characters. Accordingly, this element may be represented in three different manners throughout the narratives: the structural, which is the way the story is portrayed; the phenomenological, which is the relationship of characters and readers with images of time and space; and the psychological that refers to the construction and the depth of such characters. Along with it, professor Sedgwick’s theory of the veil will be used to illustrate that the elements of the surface, such as the veil, which is used to cover the scenes of high terror and horror, and the colours displayed in the scenes, as the colour red, for instance, which is used to represent the signal of an approaching, imminent danger or the end of the age of innocence, corroborated with the symbology of the colours by professors J. E. Cirlot, Natalie M. Kalmus, and Eugenia C. Delamotte.

2 *The Phantom of the Opera* as a Gothic structure

As demonstrated in the previous topic, the novel introduces a more prosaic, realistic, and pragmatic representation of the common, ordinary life:

The novel has assumed the position of the highest genre in popular and critical esteem. It has taken up the position that the epic once held partly because it does what the epic did – namely, represent the national life and embody the national myths. The novel is more than epic in its moral purpose, however; it must be reforming and critical of manners and social institutions. These criteria for the novel were developed in the eighteenth century, as were the technical devices of the novel: handling of the action, development of characters, presentation of ideas, and focus of narration. (RATHBURN, 1958, p. 22).

By following these criteria, the novel, as the literary source, accomplishes its function of turning the facts as real to the point of the reading audience believe such a tale would be possible to happen outside the paper and ink forms. However, as the Gothic genre slowly approached the field of literature, providing to the extremely rational age of reason, the period and the consequences of Enlightenment, the contrast with the age of passion that had been emerging in the literary environment, it was no longer possible to maintain the hard and flat structure of the realistic novel. In order for the Gothic conventions emerge as a subgenre of the novel, a new manner of structuring the narratives is called forth, which is named by professor Sedgwick as the story within a story within another story.

Since its roots in *The Castle of Otranto*, the Gothic authors have found a way to subvert their literary pieces and extract the worst of terror and horror out of their readers. Walpole's novel presents the surpassing moment when the modern, bourgeois world takes over the old, aristocratic society by illustrating the decay of a traditional, royal, Italian family due to an old prophecy which stated that the true owner of the property of Otranto should come back to take his proper place. Theodore, the young heir, takes over the old Manfred, and the reading audience must face the terrible atrocities this hero-villain is capable of so that the world he is acquainted with may not fall apart. To be able to publish his literary work, Walpole stated in the first edition the introduction, in which affirms to be only the translator of that 500-year-old manuscript. Thus, this Gothic frame remains as a fundamental characteristic of the genre, being highly explored by the following authors in order to involve their readers in the narrative so that, when they reached the core of the plot, meaning, the central problem of the novel, they would be far advanced in their act of reading, and would not have faced the contradictions of the protagonists directly.

Another trait that collaborates with the Gothic structure is the element of the unspeakable (SEDGWICK, 1986). Not naming the horrifying situation or the terrifying Gothic convention make it possible for the author to only illustrate the scenario, for instance, in the case of the precursor novel, we are introduced to scenes of abuse and attempt of incest, but the situation is never named or even mentioned.

In this sense, both characteristics are intrinsic to the Gothic genre, and lead us directly to the novel that is the focus of this article, because Monsieur Gaston Leroux's narrative presents the necessary structure and the quite amount of rumour among characters in order to accomplish the terror and even the horror environment requested by the genre. Published as a serialization between 1909 and 1910, and afterwards as a unique volume in 1910, the author of *The Phantom of the Opera* bases his literary piece on an old mythical legend of the phantom that would reside in the subterranean rooms of the Opera House of Paris. Using the phantasmagorical creature that had already been embedded in the collective unconscious of that particular reading audience, Monsieur Leroux calls forth his journalistic tone to

create a story which was fantastic and yet believable. As Dr. Carol Margaret Davison (2009) states, modern Gothic narratives had conquered a higher degree of realism due to the explanation for the supernatural events, a trace that had been premiered and explored by Mrs. Ann Radcliffe in her novels, however, the inclination of the characters to believing in such facts turns the material and concrete world of realism into a muddy ground.

The novel in question begins with a preface by the narrator who claims to be an investigative reporter and is about to describe the details that involved the story of the phantom, trying to extract the true facts in order to find an ending for the fantastic imagination. Thus, the narrator affirms to have gathered information from all sources as possible, such as letters from the former owners of the theatre, the rumours that went along in the backstage, and the statements of a man who supposedly was a close friend of the phantom's, the Persian.

Throughout the narrative, the narrator remains crediting the facts of the story to the information obtained in the archives of the National Academy of Music in Paris, old notebooks, and even the *Memoirs of a Manager*; that refers to the last statement of the last director of the Opera House, Monsieur Moncharmin. Albeit, Gaston Leroux presents to his public audience the information necessary to not be blamed for the horrors that that tragic novel is about to report. Not only does this preface work as a provider of a safe ground for the author to step on, but it also functions as the first lair of the Gothic frame of a story within a story within another story. Firstly, we are informed that the manuscript in question is the result of a search of the true facts of the existence of the phantasmagorical creature that made the underground of the theatre of Paris his home and territory, however, we end up involved not only in the story of the ghost but also in the terrible tragedy that implicated on the upper classes of French society. Such tragedy, which also involved the deaths of a concierge, who appeared hanged on a rope in the subterranean tunnels of the Parisian theatre, the Count of Chagny, who also appeared dead, laid on an abandoned branch on the backstreet of the same theatre, were all the result of the breaking of the ghosts rules within the administration of the Opera House. Those events also relate to the second lair of the novel that leads to the loving triangle among the main characters, the singing actress, Christine Daaé, the Viscount of Chagny, Raoul, and the phantom, Érik, which was the truthful cause of the terrors and horrors that put our journalist-narrator in the search for the mysterious events in the first place.

The journalistic tone of the narrative collaborates with the distribution of information about the facts regarding the problem in question. The display and the frame of the novel also corroborate for the author to choose which character is going to be spot on. As we have seen before, the protagonists of Monsieur Leroux's narrative is the typical distribution of the Gothic triad: the damsel in distress, the hero who is supposed to save the lady in danger, solve all contradictions, and win

every battle, and the hero-villain who plays the part of the unhonoured character that is capable of the most villainous actions to conquer his objectives. In this sense, we, as the reading audience, expect Christine Daaé, the true protagonist of this article, to play the part of the defenseless female persona in the narrative to suffer all the threats and to be the target of the hero-villain's ambitions. As the reading audience, we also expect Viscount Raoul de Chagny to be the hero of the reported story, and to defeat the terrible counteractions of the hero-villain who is supposedly the cause and the source of all terror and horror on both characters. Lastly, as the reading audience, we also expect Érik to be the horrifying persona of the hero-villain who is so frightening he is believed not even to be a human person, but a ghostly figure so hideous he must wander through the back tunnels and the backstage of the theatre. However, due to the structure of the novel, the distribution of information, and the mobile light spotted on the characters provided by the narrative of the journalistic narrator, we are presented to a twisted Gothic triad in the novel.

Mademoiselle Daaé is not introduced as simply the damsel in distress and in need of rescue. To what Christine is concerned, her character is described as one of the singing actresses of the theatrical company, a profession not desirable for the one who wished to walk among the upper classes of the French society. As an example of such fact, Raoul reminds himself the motives of not engaging a serious commitment to the love of his childhood, because the Viscount of Chagny would not see himself united in matrimony with a singer. Christine is one of the most mobile and dynamic characters in the novel, since she moves from one scenario to the next, for instance, she is constantly walking through the rooms of the Opera House, and is also the one in constant contact with the ghost. Mademoiselle Daaé is the character, whose actions not only solve the problems and contradictions provided by the central piece of the narrative but also is the one to save herself from the tyrannical persecution of the hero-villain. Christine is abducted twice by the phantom: in the first attempt, the phantasmagorical creature reveals himself to be a material character, named Érik, and he is the one who had been teaching her all those years she has been in the company. After two weeks, Érik agrees to Christine's requests to leave on one condition as to wear his ring as though she was her wife for eternity. In the second kidnapping, Érik steals Christine from the stage during a production of *Faust* in order to maintain her forever under his companion. At this moment in the narrative, Raoul and the Persian decide to rescue the leading singer of the theatrical company, but all both characters manage to do is to be locked in Érik's chamber of torture in the secret cellars of the Opera House. Once more, Mademoiselle Daaé is the one to assume the responsibility for the actions of the ghost who threatens their lives and also the lives of the public of the theatre by using explosives. Christine deals with the situation by making an arrangement with Érik: she promises to marry him if he agreed to let her become his living bride and to spare the lives of Raoul and the Persian. Yet, the ghost attempts to

drown both gentlemen, and Christine insists on becoming his bride. Moved by his beloved one's requests, Érik releases Raoul and the Persian, and after kissing each other on the forehead, the ghost allows Christine to part as long as she promised to keep wearing his ring and to return on the day of his death. As we may observe, Mademoiselle Daaé is spotted on by the light of the narrative focus and shows herself to be not the Gothic heroine of the novel, but the female hero.

Raoul, the Viscount of Chagny, on the other hand, is presented to the readers as the perfect character to play the part of the one all expectations should lie on:

On the death of old Count Philibert, he [the Comte de Chagny] became the head of one of the oldest and most distinguished families in France, whose arms dated back to the fourteenth century. The Chagnys owned a great deal of property; and, when the old count, who was a widower, died, it was no easy task for Philippe to accept the management of so large an estate. His two sisters and his brother, Raoul, would not hear of a division and waived their claim to their shares, leaving themselves entirely in Philippe's hands, as though the right of primogeniture had never ceased to exist. (LEROUX, 2013, p. 28-29).

However, as the youngest son of the lineage of the Chagny family, Raoul is the passionate and delicate gentleman who is capable of sacrificing his actions towards the greater good:

The shyness of the sailor-lad--I was almost saying his innocence-- was remarkable. He seemed to have but just left the women's apron-strings. As a matter of fact, petted as he was by his two sisters and his old aunt, he had retained from these purely feminine education manners that were almost candid and stamped with a charm that nothing had yet been able to sully. He was a little over twenty-one years of age and looked eighteen. He had a small, fair moustache, beautiful blue eyes and a complexion like a girl's. Philippe spoiled Raoul. To begin with, he was very proud of him and pleased to foresee a glorious career for his junior in the navy in which one of their ancestors, the famous Chagny de La Roche, had held the rank of admiral. (LEROUX, 2013, p. 29-30).

In this sense, Raoul plays the part of the damsel in distress in the place of Christine, since, along with his more delicate and fine features, all the Viscount of Chagny manages is to be trapped within the tyrannical misleadings of the hero-villain, and to remain catching up to the mysteries of the story as they keep on unravelling as the actions take place.

Finally, the character of the phantom of the opera functions perfectly in the notion of the classical Gothic hero-villain. According to Gilbert and Gubar (2000), this paradoxical character receives both qualities as a hero and a villain due to the

fact that their trajectory heavily resembles the path of the classical hero, in which obstacles towards personal development must be faced and overcome in order for the hero to succeed. Yet, the actions of the character along the trajectory resemble the attitudes of the counterpart, villainous character that is capable of terrible atrocities, such as tortures and persecution directed to their individual desire and interest. Gilbert and Gubar (2000) even classify this figure as the Gothic demon due to its ability to contaminate the environment around him and drag every object and character to ruin along with himself. Thus, Erik is the only character among the protagonist trio to play his role within the narrative, since he is the figure that is capable of causing panic in the artists of the theatrical company and also in the audience which attends the Opera House. As well as the hero-villain, Erik also is capable of applying terrible consequences in the ones who dare to disobey his orders, resulting in the multiple assassinations in the novel, such as the hanging of the concierge and the appearance of the body of the Comte of Chagny in the backstreet of the theatre. Lastly, his actions are based on and directed to his personal desire of turning Mademoiselle Daaé his wife for eternity.

Given the journalistic tone of the narrative, *The Phantom of the Opera* has been adapted into stage and cinema very often, resulting in the cinematographic version of 2004 that is also the aim of this article. The unravelling description of the facts and of the scenes of the novel along with the constant images of the stage of the Opera House, combined with the resource of light in colour have contributed for the protagonism of the character of Christine Daaé. These aspects will be dealt with topics 3 and 4 of this article.

3 The horse and the unicorn

Literature plays an important role in the communication between cultures. It is due to the exchange of information and knowledge in different fields of knowledge, such as political, social and cultural. From its origin, it walks with humanity modifying it and by her being modified.

The approximation between film and literature has been constant. The use of literary texts in the film ends up generating clashes between original authors and filmmakers seeking to make the adjustment. The conflict goes on odd and extremely subjective reasons - as subjective as all media are. In translating from one world to another, certain elements, perhaps fundamental to an author, may be impossible to be adopted into the audiovisual narrative. It is basically the difference that assumes that a cinematographic work is unique and incomparable with the literary original.

The comparison between novel and film fits reflection concerning the two media systems, to demonstrate issues such as the opinion of the writer regarding the film, the difficulties of adaptation of the novel, as well as freedom for the creative director. The differences between the processes of reparation and enjoyment of

literary and cinematographic works reside primarily in the individual work both in the formulation and the enjoyment in the first case and collective work and accessibility in the second. A significant difference is how the results of the adaptation form are received by the public.

One of the major problems that may prevent the clear understanding that film and book are different is perhaps in the direct association between the two worlds, which is detrimental to both. In the process of adaptation, the filmmaker can opt for an adaptation concerning part of the work, for a summary of the works of an author, or by the (almost)faithful translation of a narrative.

However, Ruy Barata Neto believes that the issue of adaptation is embellished, glamorized. He considers that there are good scripts and bad scripts and that would be independent of the fact that the film is or not an adaptation. The relation between literature and cinema, ponders Barata Neto, would be the same as the relation between a horse and a unicorn: both are animals that show some familiarity and, yet, are completely different (BARATA NETO, 2010). There are structural distinctions between the media that eliminate the possibility of a film to be absolutely faithful to a literary narrative.

Whenever there is any intention to consider questions of representation of each medium we must analyse the trajectory of an imaginary. Just as literature is responsible for creating an imaginary medium, cinema is responsible for representing imaginaries. Both media achieve by filling the gaps of reality, therefore, cinema and literature operate in the assimilation of the social. Thus, it can be said that it is proper to the cinema to deal with an “idea”. According to Alain Badiou (1998), to speak axiomatically of a film would be to examine the consequences of the very way an “idea” is thus treated by that film. That is to say, structure, cut-off, plan, movement, colour, bodily action, sound, etc., should only be cited insofar as they contribute to the “style” of the “idea” and to the capture of his innate impurity. While creating a movie, as it is pondered by Badiou (1998), the image is first cut off. In it, the movement is obstructed, suspended, inverted, paralysed. More essential is the presence is the cut, not only by the effect of the assembly but already and immediately by the framing and the dominated debugging of the visible.

Thus, the multiplicity of senses mirrored in each is absorbed totally different in another. In the literature, it is manifested through the poetic use of the word. In the film, the interaction is expressed by the word, the sound, the music and the image with the subsystems that it embraces. Edgar Morin (1970) considers that cinema supplants the personal universe by consigning and reforming reality. This article seeks, in general terms, the perception, given the differences between languages, resources, periods, etc., that the transposition of literary works to other media is a successful undertaking, as well as to point out not only the similarities and differences between literature and cinema.

4 The cloak, the colour, and the light: the surface and the depth in the Gothic novel

According to Professor Eve K. Sedgwick (1986), in order for the Gothic frame to properly work, the surface of the scenery built in the novel must be taken into consideration due to the fact that is the construction of the image that creates the effect of depth, making it possible for the readers to drown into the mysteries of the narrative, or, as it is the case of the current article, the movie making. In this sense, some descriptions, such as the depiction of the resemblance of one character with the face of the death, as we may observe in the case with the character of the ghost himself, or simply the disposition of colours in the description of a particular white dress, referring to the naïveté and purity of the character of Christine Daaé, and the sudden change of colour to the outraged red cloak possibly relating to the ending of that innocence, are indicators in the surface that some other Gothic convention may lie under the veil of the narrators penholder:

That the Gothic novel – or the Gothic convention – does not value ‘perpetual difference, play, and change’ highly as an antidote to the fixities of repetition is evident, not in the absence of figures of play and change, but in their firm subordination to the figures of fixity. In the Gothic, and specifically in Radcliffe, the best thematic representation of ‘difference, play, and change,’ as opposed to what inheres and endures, occurs in a typically pictorial image: color as opposed to outline. Color is, to begin with, often a lie, a disguise spread over an underlying ‘design’. (SEDGWICK, 1986, p. 161).

Literature has brought many symbolisms through the word. Often one can notice the use of colours and places to signify a character’s moral feelings or configurations.

According to J. E. Cirlot,

Colour symbolism is one of the most universal of all types of symbolism, and has been consciously used in the liturgy, in heraldry, alchemy, art and literature. [...] Colour symbolism usually derives from one of the following sources: (1) the inherent characteristic of each colour, perceived intuitively as objective fact; (2) the relationship between a colour and the planetary symbol traditionally linked with it; or (3) the relationship which elementary, primitive logic perceives. Modern psychology and psychoanalysis seem to place more weight upon the third of these formulas than even upon the first (the second formula acting as a bridge between the other two). (CIROT, 1990, p. 53-54).

Red, for example,

is the color of fire, gold, and roses; it is the color of faces when they show embarrassment, anger, or the flush of health or passion. It is also the color of blood, of course, but less often than one might think, purple being its traditional literary color. In Renaissance poetry red and white are often paired with the colors of beauty or love. Shakespeare's Venus tells Adonis he is 'More white and red than doves or roses are' (10); when Adonis alternately blushes for shame and turns pale with anger, she is pleased with both his red and white (76 -77). Viola says, 'Tis beauty truly blent, whose red and white / Nature's own sweet and cunning hand laid on' (12N 1.5.239 - 40). Red and pale make another contrast frequent in Shakespeare; it means cheerful and sad. 'Looked he red or pale,' asks Adriana, 'or sad or merrily?' (CE 4.2.4); Hamlet asks Horatio the same question about the ghost (1.2.232); Autolycus jokes, 'the red blood reigns in the winter's pale' (WT 4.3.4). In Milton even angels blush red with love, 'Celestial rosy red, love's proper hue' (PL 8.619). Red is sometimes the color of the devil, in a tradition that goes back to Esau, who was 'red, all over like a hairy garment' (Gen. 25.25). Mann invokes this tradition with his eerie red-haired figures in *Death in Venice* and *Doctor Faustus*. (FEBER, 1999, p. 169).

The colours are usually of great importance in Gothic narratives. Each colour is described with the careful pretense of a specific symbolism. In Gothic literature, places, as the Red-room, are used to represent "secret repositories of identity, where the truth about the heroine, her family history, and her rightful place in the social hierarchy is hidden away" (DELAMOTTE, 1990, p. 195). On the red colour, we may remember the Red-room in Charlotte Brontë's narrative:

the Red Room is, in two senses, an external image of Jane's own passionate interior. Imprisoned there alone, she encounters a strange spirit-like creature, 'gazing at me with a white face and arms specking the gloom, and glittering eyes of fear moving where all else was still...' [...] This fearfully alien thing is her own fearful self, a self in great part created by Mrs. Reed's tyranny: 'What a miserable little poltroon had feared, engendered of unjust punishment, made of me in those days!' [...] In fact, this place is an image both of the external world that oppresses Jane with its alien rule (the stately room, the throne) and her most private inner life as that world has colored it. (DELAMOTTE, 1990, p. 195).

In cinema, the advent of colours brought a world of new possible meanings:

We have found that by understanding use of color we can subtly convey dramatic moods and impressions to the audience, making them more receptive to whatever emotional effect the scenes, action, and dialog may convey. Just every scene has some definite dramatic mood – some definite emotional response which it seeks

to arouse within the minds of the audience – so, too, as each scene, each type of action, its definitely indicated color which harmonizes with that emotion. (KALMUS, 1935, p. 26).

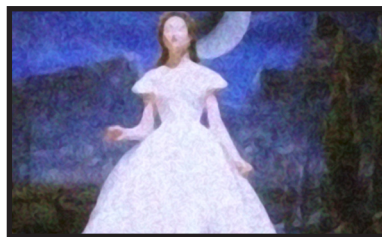
Kalumos reports, from the advent of Technicolor, the repercussion of colour on a film. Since then, colour has had the function of being an articulating element in the narrative. Colour can operate differently in the cinema. In a relationship between signs, the colour emphasises the psychological states of the characters. Not always it must be worn by a character to have this effect, it may be on the stage creating a context.

The Phantom of the Opera (2004), the film adaptation which we are analysing, is based in Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical that is itself an adaptation Leroux's novel. In the film, the spectator may see the importance given by the director in relation to the symbolism created by colours. In the film, we are introduced to Christine Daaé, a pure and innocent young woman. Orphan, she believes she is protected and guided by an Angel of Music. After the death of her father, she has no life outside the theatre. Her only connection with her father, who was a violinist, is the music. Thus, she loves music above all things and that is what promotes her bond to the Opera House. The Opera functions as her house, her work, and her prison.

She has no story of her own. She learns to sing with Erik, the phantom of the Opera. To him, a voice inside her head, she is extremely obedient. The more she is obedient to him, more she succeeds in her musical talent. Daaé “becomes an objet d'art” withal this success means “the surrender of her self-of her personal comfort, her personal desires, or both-that is the beautiful angel-woman's key act [...]” (GILBERT; GUBAR, 2000, p. 25).

Initially, the white colour is used to emphasize the character. White as a colour could represent innocence and, since medieval Christian art, purity, according to Michael Feber (1999) and J. E. Cirot (1990) respectively. Christine, always dressed in white, emits a light of her own as an angel while singing when she replaces the prima donna at the stage, as illustrated by **image 1**.

Image 1: illustration of Christine at stage (00:19:04 – 00:19:06)



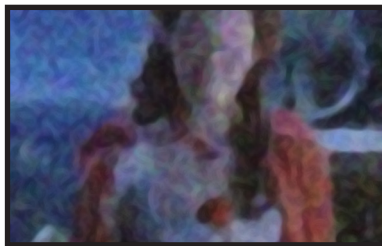
Christine's figure of contrasts with the Phantom of the Opera's figure. The more she gets closer to the character that inhabits the shadows more Christine's world gains colour. After her presentation, illustrated by the image shown above, she is taken to the dressing room. It is a red room with shades of pink and adorned with many pink roses left by admirers (**image 2**). Pink represents "the colour of the flesh, sensuality and the emotions" that have been growing into the heroine's mind, but also, as "the colour of flesh-tints", it is the prelude of the Phantom's "resurrection" (CIROT, 1990). In the dressing room, a single red rose is given to her, sent by him. She knows he is getting closer and she desires to see him. Notwithstanding, her Angel of Music only introduces himself due to his jealousy. He shows his figure through a mirror in the dressing room after listening Viscount Raoul, Christine's childhood friend, inviting her for dinner.

Image 2: illustration of Christine at the dressing room (00:26:47 – 00:26:49)



In this narrative sequence, Christine Daaé is taken by the Phantom to his rooms in the underground of the Opera House. There, by accident, she ends up seeing his disfigured and scarred face. Knowing that his plan to sequester her for a few days until she fell in love with him would not work, he frees her. Christine, however, would no longer be the same person. Her purity, somehow, had been broken. When she meets Raoul on the roof of the Opera House, she says she could never forget that face. Now, she no longer emits a light and her white dress is covered by a red cloak and holding the red rose in her hands, as illustrated by **image 3**.

Image 3: illustration of Christine wearing the red cloak (01:07:09 – 01:09:09)



Comparable to Miss Temple in *Jane Eyre*, the Phantom of the Opera “plays the role of the special mentor who educates the Gothic heroine in a bounded world” (DELAMOTTE, 1990, p. 197-198). However, the heroine receives limited knowledge and throughout the narrative passes realizing that this knowledge is not enough. The limit of this knowledge is demonstrated in the film by the fact that Christine is not completely dressed in red. The suspicious figure of a beloved educator whose system of education is linked to a system of propagation of ignorance is characteristic of Gothic novels whose main characters are women.

Nevertheless, Érik, the Phantom of the Opera, stands apart from Miss Temple in the sense that he comes to take the place of the paternal figure. Before her death, Christine’s father tells her that an Angel of Music would be sent to guide her. Thus, since the girl’s seven years, he exercises the authority of creator over his creature:

From Eve, Minerva, Sophia, and Galatea onward, after all, patriarchal mythology defines women as created by, from, and for men, the children of male brains, ribs, and ingenuity. For Blake, the eternal female was at her best an Emanation of the male creative principle [...] The roots of ‘authority’ tell us, after all, that if a woman is man’s property then he must have authored her, just as surely as they tell us that if he authored her she must be his property. (GILBERT; GUBAR, 2000, p. 12-13).

The break between the characters sets in when he, enchanted with the woman she has become, decides to exercise his power, no longer as a father or a teacher, but as a lover. When Érik ceases to be for her a protective angel, a voice in her head and becomes a ghost whose presence is physical and seductive, represented by the colour red in the film.

5 Final considerations

Both versions of *The Phantom of the Opera*, the cinematographic one and the original literary piece, present the depiction of the upper class of French society at the ending of the nineteenth century in Paris. Being a novel, the author, providing a journalistic narrator, makes usage of the elements of realism, such as the truthful description of characters, places, and even naming the sources of his research to the proper acquirement of the story of the phantasmagorical creature that resided in the secret cellars of the Opera House of Paris. By questioning the order of the day, and exposing the relationship sustained by the different characters from a different level of society, we, as the reading audience, are introduced to a story that presents an extent more than what meets the eye in the first place.

In addition to it, being a Gothic novel, it is the duty of the readers to unravel the lairs of the story presented by the narrator who was surprised by his own findings,

since the journalist claimed to supposedly have been looking for information regarding the myth of the ghost, and realised that all supernatural and mysterious events that occurred inside and in the surroundings of the theatre were connected somehow. The link that gathers each event together is the story of love and obsession among the triangle formed by the characters of Christine Daaé, Viscount Raoul de Chagny, and Érik. Even though we, as the reading audience, are led to believing that the uncanny element of the Gothic novel presented by Monsieur Leroux is the figure of Érik as the horrifying phantom, when the ending of the narrative is reached, all the Gothic conventions function as a foreshadowing effect that points out to Christine becoming the female hero of the Gothic passages.

Unlike several Gothic heroines, Mademoiselle Daaé does not go through a temporary escape from her prison, the Opera build itself and her subordinate condition to Érik, merely to be brought back to it again. The character changes with the course of the narrative, and the film emphasises her transformation using the red colour. The cinema could expose through images what was meant by Gaston Leroux through the word. From the moment Christine is introduced to this colour – first, to the red dressing room that marks her rise to the place of a prima donna and of success; and, second, to the red rose left by her mysterious teacher – she starts to be shown dressed in red or carrying the red rose. Her purity and submissive spirit were broken to never return.

MOURA, C. N. de; MARTINEZ, L. Y. de L.; REBELLO, L. S. De donzela em perigo a herói feminino: o preâmbulo de Christine Daaé em *O fantasma da Ópera*, de Gaston Leroux, e sua última adaptação cinematográfica. **Itinerários**, Araraquara, n. 47, p. 101-117, jul./dez. 2018.

■ **RESUMO:** *O gênero gótico vem à tona como a fonte legítima que forneceu a licença necessária para descrever intensamente os medos, os terrores e os horrores que as revoluções sociais provocaram em nome do progresso. Como exemplo deste tumulto mundial, o objetivo deste artigo é analisar a trajetória da personagem Christine Daaé em O fantasma da ópera, de Gaston Leroux (1911), e na adaptação cinematográfica homônima de 2004 para investigar como autor e narrador conseguem subverter a representação de Mademoiselle Daaé, fazendo uso de elementos góticos: como o quadro de uma história dentro de uma história, o recurso do indizível, e a dicotomia da superfície e do profundo (SEDGWICK, 1986), juntamente com o simbolismo da cor na transposição de mídia. Tanto o original quanto a adaptação cinematográfica ilustram o grande ponto de virada na narrativa, em relação à personagem de Daaé, devido ao fato de que ela transiciona de donzela em perigo a herói feminino, uma vez que está inserida na estrutura de um romance, controlando o ambiente ao seu redor e resolvendo os problemas e as contradições do romance gótico.*

■ **PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Cinema. Herói feminino. Literatura gótica. O fantasma da ópera.*

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