

**RETRACING THE GOTHIC ROMANCE: INSTANCES OF
TRANSTEXTUALITY IN GASTON LEROUX'S *LE FANTÔME DE
L'OPÉRA* AND ALEJANDRO AMENÁBAR'S *ABRE LOS OJOS*¹**

**RASTREANDO EL GÓTICO ROMÁNTICO: MUESTRAS DE
TRANSTEXTUALIDAD EN *EL FANTASMA DE LA ÓPERA* DE GASTON
LEROUX Y *ABRE LOS OJOS* DE ALEJANDRO AMENÁBAR**

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Resumen

Este artículo tiene como objetivo ofrecer un análisis comparativo entre la novela *Le fantôme de l'opéra* (1910) de Gaston Leroux y la película *Abre los ojos* (1997) de Alejandro Amenábar en el que se interpretará el largometraje de Amenábar como una adaptación postmoderna de la novela original de Leroux. También se identificarán aquellos rasgos propios de la tradición gótica y del relato romántico decimonónico reflejados en la aproximación modernista de Leroux y reinterpretados en el largometraje postmoderno de Amenábar en base a la noción de transtextualidad.

Palabras clave: tradición gótica, héroe byroniano, el doble, máscara, metaliteratura.

Abstract

This article aims to offer a comparative analysis between Gaston Leroux's novel *Le fantôme de l'opéra* (1910) and Alejandro Amenábar's film *Abre los ojos* (1997) in which Amenábar's film will be interpreted as a post-modern adaptation of Leroux's original novel. This analysis will also identify those traits pertaining to the Gothic tradition and the nineteenth-century Gothic romance as reflected in Leroux's modernist approach and reinterpreted in Amenábar's postmodern film on the basis of the notion of transtextuality.

Keywords: Gothic tradition, Byronic hero, the double, mask, metaliterature.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Andrew Lloyd Webber's *The Phantom of the Opera*—regarded as the longest-running musical in Broadway and based on Gaston Leroux's *Le fantôme de l'opéra* published in 1910—has lowered its curtain in the year 2023, after being staged for over 35 years since its premiere in 1988. In the wake of artificial intelligence and its unpredictable outcomes, Alejandro Amenábar's film *Abre los ojos*, released in 1997, already foretold the anxieties associated with uncanny scientific advances related to the technological supplantation of the human subject in our contemporary society. In terms of plot and characters, and particularly, the love triangle that is established in both narratives as indicative of the Gothic romance, Leroux's original novel and Amenábar's film present a series of significant parallelisms, which pave the way for a comparative analysis between both works.

As Ann Hall claims, from its publication to the present, Leroux's novel has fascinated writers and readers—as well as directors and audiences alike—insofar as, being an eminently Gothic narrative, it has managed to mirror evolving social fears and personal anxieties (2009: 2), thus incorporating variations over the years, while also preserving some elements that have been recurring in most of its adaptations. As Jerrold Hogle argues, among the many distinctive features characterising Leroux's novel is “the frightening face of the ghostlike title character, who usually wears masks for much of the story until an abrupt unmasking reveals his supremely ugly and horrifying visage” (2002: xi). This iconic motif, which has persistently typified the phantom of the opera, has symbolically categorised him as an embodiment of otherness in terms of class, race, and gender (Hogle, 2002: xii). Henceforth, although *Le fantôme de l'opéra* was originally published in the French journal *Le Gaulois* from 1909 to 1910, the plotline revolving around Erik as a Romantic figure with a mutilated face who haunts the Opera House in Paris, has transcended temporal, spatial and generic boundaries, while it remains rooted in the nineteenth-century Gothic tradition.

Adaptations of Leroux's novel have found reflection in genres ranging from literature to media, as its storyline has pervaded novels, comic books, musicals, opera, ballet, videogames, and predominantly, films. Released only a few years after the publication of Leroux's novel, Rupert Julian's silent film adaptation in 1925—with Lon Chaney's iconic performance and filmic features suggestive of German Expressionism—still remains one of its most popular cinematic versions. Over fifty years later, the original story was revived owing to Lloyd Webber's much acclaimed musical, written in 1986, on which Joel Schumacher based his musical film, released in 2004 and considered one of the most recent cinematic adaptations of Leroux's novel to date. In addition to these widely known films, as Hall (2009) contends, the plotline of Leroux's novel has been adapted to the screen on many other occasions covering a multiplicity of cinematic genres and approaches. As early exponents in horror cinema, there are also Arthur Lubin's romantic colour film in 1943 and Terence Fisher's shocking Hammer production in 1962. Brian de Palma's musical and colourful cinematic adaptation, titled *The Phantom of Paradise* and released in 1974, merges Leroux's novel with texts by Goethe, Oscar Wilde, and Victor Hugo. Later

film adaptations, like Ronny Yu's oriental romance drama *The Phantom Lover* in 1995 and Dario Argento's eroticised Italian film *Phantom* in 1998, underscore the exotic and illicit love story lying at the core of the original novel.

Despite these multiple adaptations, which explicitly acknowledge Leroux's novel as their basic source, there are even a higher number of works which evoke the plot and characters of the original text in a less manifest way, but also contribute to its perpetuation and transformation, while they resort to the iconic figure of the phantom of the opera in order to address new fears befalling contemporary times. In a film that blends romantic drama, thriller, science fiction and horror, Amenábar's film *Abre los ojos* revolves around a disfigured man falling in love with an actress, while trying to escape from a tragic past as time boundaries become blurred, dreams and reality intertwine and subjects transform into others, thus evoking and updating Leroux's novel and manifesting shared nineteenth-century Gothic undertones.

Presented as a series of documents and testimonies on behalf of an anonymous detective, Leroux's novel begins with a murder, as stagehand, Joseph Buquet, is found hanged in the vaults of the Parisian Opera House and the entity known as the Phantom of the Opera—who haunts the building and conceals his disfigured face behind a mask, but is truly a man of flesh and bone called Erik—is blamed for his death. When Christine Daaé, a young soprano, substitutes Prima Donna Carlotta to play the role of Marguerite in *Faust*, the Vicomte Raoul de Chagny recognises Christine as his childhood sweetheart and falls in love with her, whereas Carlotta feels jealous of her talented young rival. When the Phantom abducts Christine into the basements of the Opera House, she believes that he is the Angel of the Music that her father used to tell her about in her childhood, and she turns into his disciple in order to become an accomplished singer. The eventual appearance of a Persian man, who saved Erik's life in the past, reveals his tragic origins as a disfigured visionary architect who has been orchestrating all the mysterious events taking place at the Opera in order to win Christine's love.

In analogy with Leroux's narrative—with a script written by Alejandro Amenábar and Mateo Gil—*Abre los ojos* focalises on César (Eduardo Noriega), an orphaned young man living in Madrid who is accused of murder and is confined in a penal psychiatrist, where he conceals his face behind a prosthetic mask. Flashbacks reveal that, at César's birthday party, his best friend, Pelayo (Fele Martínez) arrived with his date, Sofía (Penélope Cruz), with whom César fell in love. After the party, though, César's jealous lover, Nuria (Najwa Nimri), offered him a ride in her car with the intention of crashing it to commit suicide. Although César managed to survive, his face is mutilated to the extent that he feels obliged to wear a mask. At the same time, he starts experiencing a series of disorienting events which lead him to call into question his own existence. When he eventually encounters Serge Duvernois (Gerard Barry), the owner of a cryonics company, César recollects that, after he became disfigured, he signed a contract with Life Extension, a corporation specialised in cryonics, with the intention of committing suicide so that his body would be preserved and, in the future,

he could either be resurrected or experience lifelike virtual reality dreams that would allow him to resume his relationship with Sofía and literally live the life of his dreams.

Given these preliminary parallelisms between both narratives, despite their differing temporal and spatial backgrounds, the use of comparative frameworks to approach both works in terms of characters, narrative structure, themes and imagery will prove that, from a contemporary perspective, Amenábar's film *Abre los ojos* contributes to transforming and updating Leroux's *Le fantôme de l'opéra* as a Gothic romance rooted in the nineteenth-century Gothic tradition. Drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin's notions of dialogism and carnivalesque (1981), Julia Kristeva considers the concept of intertextuality as "a mosaic of quotations", claiming that "any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (1986: 37). Subsequently, Gérard Genette draws on Kristeva's notion of intertextuality, but envisions it within the broader concept of transtextuality and considers it as a direct quotation from one text to another. Genette's categorisation also comprises the category of hypertextuality, which is defined as "any relationship uniting a text" known as the hypertext "to an earlier text" identified as the hypotext (1997: 5). Within the framework of postmodernism, Linda Hutcheon extends the connections among literary texts to comprise other artistic manifestations, thus referring to the concept of adaptation in its different meanings, which involve "an acknowledged transposition of a recognisable other work", "a creative and interpretive act of appropriation" or "an extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work" (2006: 8). A comparative analysis between Leroux's novel and Amenábar's film reveals instances of Genette's concept of transtextuality, which range from intertextuality to hypertextuality, in addition to Hutcheon's type of adaptation as an extended intertextual engagement.

Inasmuch as Genette's notion of intertextuality involves cases of direct quotation, in Amenábar's film, the character of the Phantom of the Opera is explicitly mentioned on two occasions. In an early scene, César tells Sofía about his nightmare in which he has an accident in Nuria's car and becomes disfigured like the main character in Leroux's novel. As César narrates in Amenábar's film,

Tuve un sueño horrible [...] Salgo de casa y resulta que la otra petarda me ha estado siguiendo [...] Se pone tan pesada que no sé cómo decirle que no. Total, me subo en el coche y la tía acelera, acelera y... ¡tras! Se suicida, conmigo dentro. Y lo peor no es eso. Lo peor es que se me queda la cara completamente destrozada en plan fantasma de la ópera. No veía la manera de despertar.

In a later scene, when César realises that his nightmare is, in fact, the memory of an actual event, his psychiatrist, Antonio (Chete Lera), tries to convince him that he is unable to distinguish dreams from reality, thus wondering, "¿tú convertido en el fantasma de la ópera?" In addition to these displays of intertextuality, Amenábar's film also engages in metatextuality since, from a postmodern perspective, it offers a critical commentary in relation to the fictitious universe in Leroux's original narrative, since, in Amenábar's film, César appears to be real, but he is actually a spectre in a cybernetic

universe, whereas, in Leroux's novel, Erik is mistaken for a ghost, when he is, in fact, a man of flesh and bone. Besides, as an updated version of Leroux's text, Amenábar's film could be considered a hypertext that adopts and adapts an original hypotext, which is Leroux's novel, in order to address current concerns and suit contemporary audiences. Likewise, bearing in mind that, as regards adaptations, Hutcheon explains that, "part of this pleasure [...] comes simply from repetition with variation, from the comfort of ritual combined with the piquancy of surprise" (2006: 4), it could be argued that *Abre los ojos* amalgamates aspects from Leroux's original novel, but also subverts them and updates them from a contemporary perspective. Henceforth, based on the premise that Amenábar's film revisits and transforms Leroux's original novel, this article will analyse a series of instances of Genette's concept of transtextuality, thus highlighting parallelisms and differences between both works, with the aim to prove that Amenábar's film conforms to the tenets of the nineteenth-century Gothic romance owing to its transtextuality with Leroux's novel, which is also rooted in the Gothic tradition. This comparative analysis will approach the legacy of the Gothic romance, the characterisation of the Byronic hero as a Gothic archetype, the prevalence of dualities and doubles, the pervasive presence of masks, the evolving discourses of the Gothic from modernism to postmodernism, and the metaliterary dimension prevailing in both works pertaining to the Gothic genre.

2. THE GOTHIC ROMANCE AND THE ALLEGORY OF PLATONIC LOVE

Even if they were both created in the twentieth-century, Leroux's novel and Amenábar's film display a series of features that evince that they are narratives grounded in the nineteenth-century Gothic tradition. As David Stevens explains, the textual characteristics of the Gothic tale comprise a fascination with the past, a fondness for magic, a turn for psychological insights, the representation of the sinister, a taste for exoticism and stylistic conventions involving plots within plots (2010: 46-47), which are illustrated by Leroux's novel and revisited in Amenábar's film.

In Leroux's novel, the labyrinthine subterranean passages of the Opera House, where Erik leads his lonely existence, symbolise a buried past waiting to emerge in contrast with the modernity of the Parisian city. Similarly, in Amenábar's film, César literally lives in perpetual remembrance and nostalgia of his past life, although his existence extends to a futuristic quarter of skyscrapers in Madrid. In Leroux's narrative, Erik is a talented illusionist who plays magic tricks, like ventriloquism and occultation, which lead people into thinking that he is a ghost. Analogously, in Amenábar's film, César's virtual life endows him with the gift of bringing into existence characters and events as if by magic in a virtual universe where he is a spectre. As the Phantom of the Opera, Erik symbolises the return of the repressed, which contrasts with the rational order that prevails in the Parisian society. In Amenábar's film, César's life is actually a dream in which his desires and anxieties are unwillingly mixed up by virtue of the unconscious. Erik's physical appearance categorises him as an outcast who causes social dread, thus obliging him to lead an

isolated existence. Correspondingly, in a contemporary society where the pressure of aesthetic standards predominates, César's disfigured face provokes fearful reactions that bring to the fore latent social fears of deformity. In Leroux's novel, the character of the Persian unveils Erik's exotic origins, as he learned the intricacies of magic and masonry in his foreign homeland before moving to Paris. In Amenábar's film, the exoticism of characters like Nuria and Duvernois, and their association with exalted states of the mind through drugs and virtual reality, bring to the fore the pervasiveness of alternative domains of reality. Finally, with the purpose of giving evidence of the existence of the Phantom of the Opera, the narrator in Leroux's novel presents a series of juxtaposed narratives that remain interrelated. Analogously, in terms of narrative structure, Amenábar's film is configured in resemblance with a series of concentric boxes enclosed within each other that conceal the puzzle lying at the core of César's mysterious existence.

In addition to presenting features pertaining to the nineteenth-century Gothic tradition, Leroux's novel and Amenábar's film are also rooted in Gothic romance insofar as both narratives introduce love stories which become a source of dread for female characters in the subgenre of female Gothic. As Ellen Moers argues, in an early stage of development in the genre, these narratives focus on heroines who are threatened with confinement by male tyrants from whom young females have to escape in order to marry the men they love (1976: 91). Leroux's novel faithfully reflects this premise, as is stated that, "la première pensée de Raoul, après la disparition fantastique de Christine Daaé, avait été pour accuser Erik" (1910: 297), while, in Amenábar's film, when Sofía goes missing, César is suspected to have kidnapped her.

This pervasive plotline in nineteenth-century Gothic romance is grounded in folktales like Charles Perrault's "Bluebeard" (1697), which revolves around the heroine prying into locked rooms and her resulting punishment, and Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve's "Beauty and the Beast" (1740), which addresses the fears of female confinement and male monstrosity. In Leroux's narrative, when Christine is willing to visit Erik's locked room in the subterranean canals of the Opera, he tells her explicitly, "vous devriez vous méfier depuis l'histoire de Barbe-Bleue" (1910: 436), whereas, in Amenábar's film, César is furious upon discovering that Nuria has sneaked into his bedroom without consent. Besides, in Leroux's novel, Erik is recurrently called a monster and he alludes to his "laideur maudite" (1910: 256), while in Amenábar's film, upon contemplating his mutilated face after the accident, César declares, "era un monstruo", thus assigning himself this same appellation.

The basic plot and motifs of the classic Gothic romance have perpetuated in subsequent Gothic love stories. As Diana Wallace claims, in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) and Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* (1938), the figure of the hero merges with that of the villain, while the pious heroine also possesses a darker female double who embodies her repressed desires (2016: 233). Accordingly, in Leroux's novel, Christine refers to Erik's ambiguous role as both hero and villain, as she confesses that, "je ne me serais imaginée que la Voix et le fantôme étaient tout un" (1910: 236). In Amenábar's film, after the accident, César

moves from being a successful handsome businessman to a miserable hideous outcast, thus playing an ambivalent role as a mischievous hero and tragic outlaw. Besides, in Leroux's narrative, in resemblance with Erik's dual role, Christine also acquires a double nature, which Raoul explicitly describes, stating that, "les deux Christine – le corps, et l'image – finirent par se toucher" (1910: 191). Correspondingly, in Amenábar's film, César realises that, in his dreams, Sofía and Nuria constantly transform into each other as if they were the same person.

According to Anne Williams, the Gothic romance is rooted in Apuleius's classical myth of Psyche and Eros (1995: 146), revolving around female inquisitiveness and male hideousness, which is replicated in both Leroux's novel and Amenábar's film. As the myth unfolds, Aphrodite sends Eros to shoot Psyche with an arrow so that she will fall in love with someone hideous, although it is Eros who accidentally falls in love with her, taking her to his castle, where she is taken care by a disembodied voice and is forbidden to look at her partner, as she is made to believe his appearance is outrageous. Out of curiosity, Psyche eventually decides to stare at Eros's handsome face, but in so doing, she wakes him up with her lantern's oil, thus unleashing Aphrodite's wrath, which condemns Psyche to undergo a series of trials. In Leroux's novel, when Erik abducts Christine into the vaults of the Opera House, she dares take off his mask and stare at his face, which infuriates him, as he states, "pourquoi as-tu voulu me voir? Insensée! Folle Christine, qui as voulu me voir [...] qui m'as arraché le masque, et qui, à cause de cela, ne pourra plus me quitter jamais" (1910: 258). Correspondingly, in a matching scene in Amenábar's film, it is César who asks Sofía to take off his mask and, although she expects to perceive his deformed traits, she finds herself staring at his unblemished visage, thus bringing them closer as lovers.

The myth of Psyche and Eros has also been interpreted as an allegory of the moral fall, insofar as the soul, personified by Psyche, gives in to temptation and indulges in a corporeal dimension of existence from the moment she falls in love with Eros. Henceforth, this classical myth symbolises the pulse between spiritual and physical love, which is extensively addressed in both Leroux's novel and Amenábar's film. In Leroux's narrative, in resemblance with Psyche, Christine is made to relinquish platonic love for romantic love, when Erik – whom she considers a disembodied spirit, since she regards him as the Angel of the Music that her father had told her about – eventually reveals his physical dimension and wishes to marry her. Conversely, in Amenábar's film, it is César who feels trapped between the physical love that Nuria embodies and the platonic love that Sofía personifies, since, even if he strives to hold on to Sofía's idealised love, he ends up indulging in Nuria's passionate encounters. Consequently, in Leroux's novel, Erik wishes to renounce platonic love for the sake of an actual relationship with Christine, thus stating his wish to have "une femme comme tout le monde" (1910: 442), whereas, in Amenábar's novel, César rather prefers a hyperreal platonic love to the detriment of an actual relationship. As a magician, Erik intends to relinquish his magic for the sake of reality, whereas, as a hedonist mortal, César forsakes his physicality to indulge in virtual reveries.

3. THE MONSTER AS A GOTHIC ARCHETYPE: FROM ILLUSORY PHANTOM TO VIRTUAL SPECTRE

The portrayal of the characters of Erik and César in Leroux's novel and Amenábar's film presents a series of features that revert back to nineteenth-century archetypes of the Gothic tradition, like the ghost, the vampire, and particularly, the monster. According to Julia Briggs, in Gothic narratives, the spectre arises as a virtual simulacrum of a deceased human being, it challenges the rational order, it symbolises the return of the repressed, it enacts the tension between life and death, and it turns into a reification of revenge (2000: 122-128). The character of Erik in Leroux's novel is initially described as a phantom, since his presence is noticed and his voice is heard, but he is never seen, as Christine regards him as an angel of the music who teaches her how to sing even if "elle ne le voyait pas" (1910: 100). Although it is later disclosed that Erik is not a spectre, his portrayal faithfully evokes that of ghost, as Erik has been on the point of death, his magic defies the laws of nature, he leads the life of an outcast, he physically inhabits a liminal space, and his return responds to his will to vindicate himself. Likewise, in Amenábar's film, in resemblance with a ghost, César has also been brought back to life, he constantly calls into question his own existence, his repressed memories remain latent, he lives on the margins between life and death, and he is willing to fix the wrongs that he was made to suffer in his past existence. Although the characterisation of both Erik and César is remindful of that of a ghost, some of their traits also evoke the Gothic archetype of the vampire.

As Anna Chromik argues, there are a series of features that have conventionally been associated with the vampire, such as nocturnal lifestyle, polymorphism, telepathy, lack of shadow, connection with particular animals and a characteristic appearance highlighting his pale face, red lips, sharp teeth, and black attire (2016: 709). The portrayal of Erik and César shares many of the features characterising the vampire, insofar as they move in the dark, their looks keep on shifting, they appear to have an extrasensory perception, they avoid mirrors, their clandestine existence is evocative of certain animals like rats and bats, and their pale complexion contrasts with their dark attire. In Leroux's novel, Erik is described as "un homme enveloppé d'un grand manteau noir" (1910: 234), there are no mirrors in Erik's room, he describes himself as living "au fond de la terre, dans un trou, comme une taupe" (1910: 423), and his cadaverous complexion responds to "une tête de mort" (1910: 12), as if he were a vampire. Correspondingly, in Amenábar's film, César literally and metaphorically lives in the shadows in order to avoid being seen, he rejects his reflection in the mirror, he likes sitting on the floor like an animal as he declares that "es lo único que parece real", and his deformed traits remind himself that he is living a perpetual life in death. Many of these features, which characterise both Erik and César, are suggestive of the conventional portrayal of the vampire, even if, in addition to the ghost and the vampire, some of the traits typifying Erik and César also conjure the portrayal of the monster in the nineteenth-century Gothic tradition.

In Leroux's novel, once Erik is no longer perceived as a ghost and he is endowed with physicality, he is often described as a monster, since "son horrible, unique et repoussante laideur" (1910: 401) is often brought to the fore. Similarly, in Amenábar's film, when César first stares at his disfigured face in what he believes to be a nightmare, his physical appearance closely resembles Erik's portrayal in Leroux's novel, which is described as follows,

Il est d'un prodigieuse maigreur et son habit noir flotte sur une charpente squelettique. Ses yeux sont si profonds qu'on ne distingue pas bien les prunelles immobiles. On ne voit, en somme, que deux grands trous noirs comme aux crânes des morts. Sa peau, qui est tendue sur l'ossature comme une peau de tambour, n'est point blanche, mais vilainement jaune; son nez est si peu de chose qu'il est invisible de profil, et l'absence de ce nez est une chose horrible à voir. Trois ou quatre longues mèches brunes sur le front et derrière les oreilles font office de chevelure. (1910: 13)

As Hogle explains, the notion of monstrosity involves the ultimate anomaly, owing to an oxymoronic nature which involves the coexistence of opposites, as the monster inhabits a twilight zone between life and death, and it verges on the boundary between humanity and animality, shifting its shape from one pole to the other of the spectrum (2016: 456). The liminal characterisation of the monster is evocative of Kristeva's conceptualisations of the abject—defined as the collapse of the physical boundaries between inside and outside (1982: 53)—and of the uncanny—as something familiar that is alienated through repression (1991: 184), which both Erik and César appear to emulate. As Hogle further claims, the figure of the monster is grounded in mythology as evidence of the violation of the laws of the gods upon mixing the incompatible and rupturing sanctioned borders (2016: 456), which reverts back to the concept of the abject. As is described in Leroux's novel in relation to Erik's characterisation as a monster, "il se servait des dons extraordinaires d'adresse et d'imagination qu'il avait reçus de la nature en compensation de l'atroce laideur dont elle l'avait doté" (1910: 512), thus underscoring that Erik embodies greatness and horror at the same time. Similarly, in Amenábar's film, César arises as an extraordinary entity whose existence extends beyond established limits, but also as a hideous progeny that disrupts the ethical boundaries separating life from death. According to Hogler's categorisation, the figure of the monster in Gothic narratives also arises as the locus of otherness which differs from the human norm so that the monster becomes the entity in opposition to which human beings define their own identities (2016: 456). As is described in Leroux's novel in relation to Erik, "il occupait l'esprit de Christine par la terreur, mais le cœur de la douce enfant appartenait tout entier au vicomte Raoul de Chagny" (1910: 410), hence establishing a difference between the embodiment of evil and the personification of kindness that each character respectively typifies which contributes to categorising Erik as the figure of the Other. In analogy, César also turns into the epitome of the uncanny in Amenábar's film—someone familiar who suddenly looks strange and becomes a source of horror—thus leading Sofía to shift her interest toward Pelayo and characterise César as the figure of the Other.

Monsters arise as a source of repulsion, but also of sympathy, insofar as, according to Hogler, society becomes dependent on monsters to construct its own identity against them given the cultural and personal incongruities that they represent

(2016: 457). In Leroux's novel, even though it is assumed that Erik is a preternatural creature, it is eventually disclosed that, "c'est un homme du ciel et de la terre" (1910: 269) and that "il ne demandait qu'à être quelqu'un comme tout le monde-mais il était trop laid" (1910: 517), thus revealing that Erik is ostracised as a monster in spite of his human condition and, even though he is eventually commiserated, he is also set apart. Similarly, although his friends Sofía and Pelayo feel sympathy for César after he is totally disfigured, his mutilated traits distinguish him from the rest in a society where looks are given most importance at a literal and metaphorical level. The visible difference that characterises Erik and César responds to Erving Goffman's notion of stigma, which consists of an attribute that makes an individual different and prevents him from being socially accepted (1963: 3). Despite the fact that both characters are ostracised and epitomise the notion of monster, they also elicit sympathy, insofar as the approach to each of them varies owing to the narrative focalisation employed in each narrative. As Martha Stoddard Holmes notes, first-person narratives about monstrosity reveal that notions like difference and disability are socially constructed (2016: 183), thus tipping the scales in favour of sympathy as opposed to repulsion. From a narratological perspective, Leroux's novel displays an external focalisation which underscores Erik's difference, whereas, Amenábar's film presents an internal focalisation on César, which contributes to triggering the audience's sympathy for his plight in a postmodern narrative in which the spectator identifies with the monster precisely owing to the notion of difference that he represents. Additionally, although Erik is initially considered a ghost, but it is subsequently disclosed that he is a human being, and thus, mortal, César reverts this process, since, even if he is first characterised as a human being, it is later on revealed that he is a virtual entity, and therefore, immortal. Henceforth, paradoxically, Erik has been considered a phantom in spite of being a mortal man of flesh and bone, while it is truly César who matches the categorisation of a preternatural creature since his virtual existence endows him with eternal life.

4. GOTHIC DUALITIES: DOUBLES, RIVALS, OTHERS

In her volume on adaptations of *Le fantôme de l'opéra*, Hall refers to the "double vision" that is required in approaching contemporary reworkings of Leroux's novel, which is compared with "the dual nature of the narrative's main character" (2009: 3). Correspondingly, according to Fátima de Santos Romero, Amenábar's film also constantly revolves around the pervasive notion of duality (2008: 199). In both Leroux's novel and Amenábar's film, these dualities find reflection in the figure of the double, commonly found in nineteenth-century Gothic narratives, which Otto Rank defines as "a wish-defence against a dreaded external destruction" (1971: 86), which both implies protection against impending obliteration, but also the confirmation of approaching dissolution. In both works, each character arises as a double in itself and turns into the Other of its antagonist, while it also establishes dualities with characters from the other work given the intertextuality existing between both narratives. The pervasive duality of characters who turn into doubles and others in both works underscores

the prevalent duplicity characterising nineteenth-century Gothic narratives, which is revisited in the two analysed narratives.

Erik in Leroux's novel and César in Amenábar's film respectively arise as doubles in themselves, but they also become double figures of each other. In Leroux's novel, Erik is recurrently portrayed by a series of dualities, since his face is constantly concealed behind a mask and the Persian, who has known him since childhood, "parlait d'Erik comme d'un dieu, tantôt comme d'un vile canaille" (1910: 222), hence underscoring his dual personality. Besides, he is depicted as a double figure insofar as his physical appearance categorises him as an outcast, but his magic gifts render him an exceptional individual. Accordingly, in terms of his looks, Erik's face is described as "si blême, si lugubre et si laid" (1910: 49), whereas his spirit, personified by his voice, is depicted as "belle comme la voix d'un ange" (1910: 223), which leads Christine to idealise Erik as the angel of the music that her father had promised to send after his death. Correspondingly, in Amenábar's film, César also arises an eminently dual character, insofar as he is portrayed as a handsome and successful hero who turns into a tragic and malevolent villain after his face is disfigured. As happens with Erik, his physique plays a relevant role to characterise César, since he is initially portrayed as flawless, but he is subsequently ostracised according to social aesthetics of beauty.

Erik's antagonist in Leroux's novel is Raoul de Chagny, who finds his counterpart in Pelayo – César's friend and rival for Sofía's love – in Amenábar's film. Leroux's novel is mostly internally focalised on Raoul to the extent that he turns into the actual hero of the narrative, whereas, Amenábar's film completely focalises on César as a Byronic hero. From the novel to the film, there is a shift from favouring the moral principles of the hero to privileging the gloomier aspects of the Byronic hero. Nonetheless, in Leroux's novel, Raoul also discloses his own dualities in comparison with Erik, as he exclaims that, "je lui arracherai son masque du visage, comme j'arracherai le mien" (1910: 181). Henceforth, Raoul is both ingenuous and passionate, since, even if it is revealed that "la timidité de ce marin [...] son innocence, était remarquable" (1910: 33), his passion and irascibility are also on the rise out of jealousy for Christine's close attachment to Erik. In Amenábar's film, Raoul's dual nature extends to his counterpart, Pelayo, who describes himself as César's best friend, but owing to his attraction to Sofía, he also turns into his rival. If César initially tries to court Sofía behind Pelayo's back, when he becomes disfigured, he suspects that it is Pelayo who now tries to win Sofía's love, thus unveiling Pelayo's own duality as a character.

In their role as the beloved of the tragic hero, Christine in Leroux's novel and Sofía in Amenábar's film turn into doubles of one another, while each character individually unveils a series of dualities. From Raoul's perspective, as he realises that Christine is pursued by the phantom, she is depicted as both timid and flirtatious, since Raoul contends that, "il avait aimé un ange et il méprisait une femme" (1910: 170), thus underlining Christine's inherent duality and establishing a distinction between her idealised and embodied self. In Amenábar's film, Sofía shares Christine's performing skills, since she is an actress and often dresses as a mime, hence recalling Christine's disguise as a domino at the ball of masks. Like Christine, who is both courted by Erik

and Raoul, Sofía is also pursued by César and Pelayo, while her attraction towards both prototypes of men unveils her dual nature as a coquettish, but also a modest, young woman.

Christine finds her mischievous double in Carlotta, the *prima donna* whom she replaces, even though Carlotta also possesses dualities of her own that render her closer to Christine, but also extricate her from the heroine. Christine emulates Carlotta as she takes her role as a soprano on the stage and is praised for her vocal skills, as Carlotta had also been acclaimed. Nonetheless, in contrast with Christine's pious nature, it is declared that, "la Carlotta n'avait ni coeur ni âme" (1910: 136). In Amenábar's film, Carlotta finds correlation in Nuria, who is César's lover until he begins to fall in love with Sofía. Henceforth, the dyad between Christine and Carlotta in Leroux's novel is echoed by that of Sofía and Nuria in Amenábar's film, as they turn into corresponding doubles of each other. Nuria's exoticism and passion, which are reminiscent of Carlotta and evoke the archetype of the *femme fatale*, contrast with the overtly innocence of heroines like Christine and Sofía. In analogy with Carlotta, though, Nuria also presents a dual personality, since, despite her apparently promiscuous nature, she is deeply in love with César. Besides, Carlotta's surrender to Erik's ventriloquism on the stage is evoked by Nuria's dependence on César's will in the virtual reality that they all inhabit.

The exoticism typifying the female characters of Carlotta and Nuria finds resemblance in male characters such as the Persian and Duvernois. In Leroux's novel, the Persian is described as "l'homme au teint d'ébène, aux yeux de jade, au bonnet d'astrakan" (1910: 348), which evokes Erik's roots in Eastern lands. The Persian also has a double nature, as he confesses to Erik that, in the past, "je t'ai sauvé la vie" (1910: 399), but upon unveiling Erik's wicked nature, he also admits feeling anxious "en laissant vivre le monstre qui menaçait aujourd'hui beaucoup de ceux de la race humaine" (1910: 408). The Persian in Leroux's novel finds his double in Duvernois in Amenábar's film, who also presents a series of dualities. Both the Persian and Duvernois contribute to unveiling essential aspects of the Byronic heroes, insofar as they briefly take control of the narrative. If the Persian unfolds dramatic aspects in Erik's childhood, which obliged him to escape from his homeland, Duvernois provides the clues so that César can unravel the puzzle of his virtual existence after dying and being reborn by virtue of cryonics. Like the Persian, who discloses Erik's origins, but also wishes to take Erik's life, Duvernois granted César the opportunity to live again, but presently, he also points out the need of César's death in order to reset his virtual life from anew.

Finally, if the Persian and Duvernois reveal the secrets of the respective Byronic heroes, Erik and César are helped along their tormented paths by figures like Madame de Giry and Antonio. In Leroux's novel, Madame de Giry acts as the intermediary between Erik and the owners of the Opera, while she also ensures that Erik's orders are obeyed. In analogy, in Amenábar's film, Antonio is the psychiatrist that helps César along his nightmarish existence, while he also ensures that César keeps his sanity when he starts losing control over his life in this virtual universe. Despite the fact that

both Madame de Gir y and Antonio are compassionate characters, their unconditional bond with the Byronic heroes turns them into their moral accomplices. Nonetheless, if the Persian and Duvernois are commanding and stand the pace with Erik and César, Madame de Gir y and Antonio entirely remain at the mercy of the heroes.

5. THE BALL OF MASKS: FROM MASKED SELVES TO SELVES AS MASKS

In both Leroux's novel and Amenábar's film, the presence of masks and disguises becomes pervasive, in resemblance with iconic nineteenth-century Gothic narratives, in which masks acquire both literal and symbolic meanings. Erik and César wear a mask that conceals their deformed traits, but in so doing, they are identified by means of their distinctive masks, which turn into their apparent visages, whereas their actual faces remain concealed, and owing to their grotesque features, they are mistaken for actual masks. In the passage of the ball of masks in Leroux's novel, when Erik makes his appearance, the guests notice, "la belle imitation de tête de mort que c'était là" (1910: 179), which blends with Erik's own face, as it is often described as a "tête de mort" (1910: 12), thus using the same terms to depict both his mask and his face. Correspondingly, in the scene in which César wears his prosthetic mask in a pub and he removes it and leaves it on the back of his head, he emulates a man with two faces, as mask and visage become fused. According to Bakhtin, masks are related to the notions of carnival and the grotesque body (1984: 297), which are characterised by hyperbole and excess, the lack of boundaries and the blurring of life stages, which often become a source of abjection, as borders are blurred, and also of the uncanny, as the familiar turns into the strange.

According to Catherine Spooner, masks are ubiquitous in Gothic texts (2016: 421), as is shown in Leroux's novel and Amenábar's film, in which the presence of masks is recurrent. Erik is described as a frightening figure "qui avait un masque qui lui cachait tout le visage" (1910: 234-235) and, as César reveals himself as the narrator of his own story during his confinement in a psychiatrist, he is sitting on the floor and covering his face with a transparent prosthetic mask. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick claims, the significance of masks lies in the act of concealment rather than in what is being concealed (qtd. in Spooner 2016: 422), and it responds to an act of codification in Gothic narratives that offers traces of personal identity, as self remains repressed, while, conversely, repression is exposed. In this respect, as Spooner further argues, the meaning of masks is determined by historical discourses and socially constructed differences (2016: 422). In both Leroux's novel and Amenábar's film, the masks that Erik and César wear become a sign of difference which emerges along their process of socialisation. As Erik explains, "mon père, lui, ne m'a jamais vu, et quand ma mère, pour ne plus me voir, m'a fait cadeau en pleurant, de mon premier masque" (1910: 258), thus implying the social need to conceal his difference. Correspondingly, when César becomes disfigured and surgeons are incapable of treating his malformed traits, they present him with a prosthetic mask, so that he can conform to a society where physical appearance takes precedence over the self. Their masks thus arise

both as a sign of difference and compliance with social constructs, although Erik's mask emphasises divergence, while César's mask is aimed to camouflage deviation. Nonetheless, if Erik is socially alienated and categorised as an outcast, even though he strives to belong, César struggles to preserve his individuality in a self-alienating society where uniqueness is nullified and he is made to conform to social standards.

Insofar as Erik and César don their masks, they manifest the transitory condition of the body and the self. As Spooner contends, in Gothic narratives, masks disclose "a repeated concern with bodily boundaries, transitional states and epistemological uncertainty" (2016: 421), since masked bodies, in absence of physical presence, revert back to the prevalence of the self and its own masks. In the Jungian model of the psyche, the self drifts between the persona as a social mask designed to make an impression on others, and the shadow as the unconscious aspects of personality that often remain repressed. In Leroux's novel, it is stated that, "le fantôme avait plusieurs têtes dont il changeait comme il voulait" (1910: 15), thus referring to his multiple personalities, as he wears his social mask in the presence of others, and his own face, which he also considers another mask, as indicative of his shadow. Analogously, in Amenábar's film, when César is surrounded by people of authority, he wears his prosthetic mask as a signifier of his persona, but also of his social subservience, whereas, when he is alone, his deformed face is suggestive of his shadow, which he feels compelled to cover in public, but allows him to release his repressed self. The transitional condition that the mask bestows upon these characters is also indicative, as Spooner further argues, of "a barrier between the living and the dead, this world and the afterlife" (2016: 422), which marks their distinctiveness as spectral entities trapped between two dimensions, between reality and dream, as their masks and faces become indistinguishable and so do their different selves. In Leroux's novel, when Erik's mask is removed, he concedes, "j'ai encore un masque [...] ma tête, c'est un masque" (1910: 257), thus moving from masked self to mask as self, in a reverberation of masks that construct his actual self. Correspondingly, in a universe of virtual reality, César's malformed face is reconstructed and, as he lets go of his prosthetic mask, his mask as self transforms into a self as mask, in a reverberation of selves that give shape to his virtual mask.

The interaction between self and mask paves the way for envisioning the mask as an agent of liberation as well as inhibition, hence enabling, but also precluding, the individual's engagement with the world. According to Spooner, the mask provides the subject with an overt alternative identity, which is perceived as a source of captivation, whereas it also emphasises the subject's covert deformity, thus becoming a source of dread (2016: 423). Henceforth, in Leroux's novel, during his confinement with Erik, Christine confesses, "je le sommais d'enlever ce masque" (1910: 247), hence revealing Erik's mask exerts a noxious fascination on her and suspecting that, "ma curiosité allait être la cause de tous mes malheurs" (1910: 257), since, after removing Erik's masque, she concedes that, "j'ai cru que j'allais mourir d'épouvante" (1910: 234). In Amenábar's film, when he is wearing his prosthetic mask to conceal his mutilated face, César is constantly asked to remove his mask so that they can see his face, but, when he takes off his mask, he notices that they are unable to talk to him and stare at his face.

In its origins, the mask evoked the facial protection that doctors used to wear during medieval plagues, while it was also endowed with a ritualistic dimension as masks enabled actors to acquire different identities in classical drama. The mask as a source of dread is thus grounded in the fear of deformity as contracted through the notion of contagion. In Leroux's novel, Christine hints at the symbolic threat that the act of touching Erik's mask involves, as she concedes that, "il m'avait répété que je ne courais aucun danger tant que je ne toucherais pas au masque" (1910: 259), thus implying an inherent risk of contagion that may lead to a reverberation of masked selves. Likewise, in Amenábar's film, when César sees Sofía for the first time after the accident that has deformed his face, she is wearing make-up as a street performer, while the rain that is falling blurs their facial features, thus suggesting a concatenation of grotesque selves that emulate masks. A pervasive sense of masquerade prevails in both narratives as masks become selves and selves turn into masks, since Erik admits that "j'ai inventé un masque qui me fait la figure de n'importe qui" (1910: 423), as his masks allow him to acquire different selves, while César resorts to surgical operations that transform his face as if it were a series of actual masks.

Nonetheless, as Spooner claims in relation to Gothic narratives involving masks, as the bearer of the mask is estranged from his original self and is entrapped in a role that feels alien (2016: 422), the source of horror lies in the collapse between mask and self. In Leroux's novel, when Erik is suddenly deprived of his mask, "le cri de sa douleur et de sa rage infernales" (1910: 254) find correlation in being deprived of his self, as his mask is taken for his self. In Amenábar's film, César is shocked upon perceiving that his masked self keeps morphing intermittently against his will, shifting from a pleasing to a hideous appearance, in a reverberation of selves that turn into masks and alienate him from his original self. In this respect, as Kosofsky Sedgwick claims, the symbolism of masks responds to the Gothic convention of drawing attention to surfaces (1986: 140-141). In Leroux's novel, Erik tells Christine that, "tu ne pouvais pas regarder mon masque à cause que tu savais ce qu'il y a derrière" (1910: 442), thus underscoring that the mask suggests the self that it conceals, as mask and self blur and amount to the same. In Amenábar's film, when César is given a transparent prosthetic mask that covers his malformed face, he retorts angrily, "yo quiero una cara, no una careta", unaware that both his mask and his face respond to masks as virtual selves that find no original correlation in reality.

6. MODERN AND POSTMODERN REINTERPRETATIONS OF THE GOTHIC

According to Walter Benjamin, *Le fantôme de l'opéra* is "one of the great novels about the nineteenth-century" (1986: 65). In fact, Leroux's novel arises as a modernist representation of the nineteenth-century Gothic tradition, as it revisits the inner turmoil and social alienation that characterised dark Romanticism in its fascination with the irrational and the grotesque. As Fred Botting argues, modernist Gothic narratives explore the irrational presence pervading the everyday (2004: 160), by means of the alienating modern urban setting, certain themes like fractured selves and scientific

experimentation, and the exploration of narrative techniques. As Emily Adler claims, the portrayal of the gloomy city in modernist Gothic narratives unveils anxieties pertaining to the buried past and fears related to industrialisation and class hierarchies (2016: 704), which are reflected in Leroux's novel and in Julian's film adaptation, particularly through its recourse to German expressionism, which subverts realism and underlines estrangement. As regards the buried past, in the description of the opera, it is stated that, "ce corridor avait été créé lors de la commune de Paris" (1910: 160), which associates the opera basement with earlier times, but also brings to the fore the contrast between the opera vaults and the cosmopolitan city of Paris, along with the distinction between the upper classes above and the ostracised subject inhabiting the opera's subterranean passages. The scientific experimentation that pervades modernist Gothic narratives also finds reflection in Leroux's novel, particularly in Erik's perpetual changing appearance, as is declared that, "tout le monde sait que la science fait d'admirables faux nez pour ceux qui en ont été privés par la nature" (1910: 25). Besides, critics like Andrew Smith refer to the modernist fascination with the process of writing (2016: 450), which draws attention to the narrative itself, as is the case with some passages in Leroux's novel in which the narrator explicitly addresses the reader and makes reference to the story itself, claiming that, "telle est la véridique histoire du Fantôme de l'opéra" (1910: 503). Some of these tenets characterising modernist Gothic narratives like Leroux's novel are revisited and transformed in postmodern textualities, like Amenábar's film, particularly by virtue of its intertextuality with Leroux's novel.

As Botting claims, the hybrid forms and narrative play in postmodern Gothic textualities turn into a figure of horror in itself, insofar as the distinction between fictional forms and narratives that shape reality is subverted, and the horror inherent in textuality connects with prevalent fears of disintegration and dissolution (2004: 169-171). In Amenábar's film, the narrative configuration, which underscores the blurring boundaries separating reality from fiction, contributes to unleashing narrative anxiety and becomes pivotal in triggering fear. Postmodern Gothic textualities also reflect underlying theories of postmodernism, such as the platonic dilemma between reality and representation, the Berkeleian precept that there is not reality that is external from the individual, the Nietzschean belief in the configuration of one's identity in the absence of God, Fredric Jameson's notion about the lack of knowledge of the past and its replacement for a perpetual present, and Jean Baudrillard's supplantation of what is real for simulacra. In *Abre los ojos*, César constructs his own reality according to his will, which is fictional in its entirety, but is interpreted as factual in a universe of cyberculture where time boundaries are blurred, eternal truths are non-existent, and subjects become replicants deprived of subjectivity. In postmodern Gothic narratives, the omnipresence of virtual reality and cyberculture run by large corporations gives shape to a dystopian future. In Amenábar's film, César's existence responds to a universe of virtual reality controlled by a company of cryonics that allows him to literally live the life of his dreams. Postmodern narratives are open-ended and ambivalent as opposed to the preferred unity and restoration of order that used to characterise modernist textualities. In contrast with Leroux's novel, in which Erik dies and the narrative order

is reinstated, in Amenábar's film, César's virtual dream of eternal life suggests that there is no end that will bring reassurance and redress ambiguity, but rather a plethora of plural paths that contribute to increasing complexity and ambivalence. Besides, as Julian Wolfreys claims, postmodern narratives collapse the distinction between subject positions, so that reader and character exchange their subjectivities in a mutually shared interpretive framework (2016: 519), since, by means of an internal focalisation, the reader shares César's anxieties as he tries to unravel his own existential puzzle.

As legacy of the nineteenth-century Gothic tradition, even though Leroux's novel mostly complies with a modernist interpretation, and Amenábar's film overtly conforms to a postmodern revisitation, *Le fantôme de l'opéra* displays some traits which characterise it as covertly postmodern, while *Abre los ojos* exhibits nostalgic modernist features. As Dennis Perri claims, Amenábar's film envisions a future in which technological and medical advances give rise to enhanced individuals (2008: 89), and virtuality no longer makes it possible to distinguish between artificial and conventional bodies, thus bringing to mind Donna Haraway's notion of the cyborg (1991) as a fabricated hybrid between machine and organism. The posthuman subject problematises the concept of the self as biological and technological components become intertwined. Nonetheless, as Perri further argues, in Amenábar's film, despite his virtual condition as an embodiment of the posthuman subject, César prefers the security of consistent categories and grows disturbed with the fluid features characterising virtual reality (2008: 92), thus yearning for the reassurance of the modernist past. Conversely, though, Erik in Leroux's novel shares many traits with the posthuman subject, insofar as he is described as living "au ban de l'humanité" (1910: 401) and he challenges the stable categories of the self prevailing in a modernist configuration of the world.

Besides, according to Nancy Katharine Hayles, the posthuman condition shifts from dependence on the dialectic of presence and absence to the dialectic of pattern and randomness (1996: 10). In Leroux's novel, as an apparent spectre, Erik exemplifies the dialectic of presence and absence, since, "personne ne le voyait dans la loge, mais tout le monde pouvait l'entendre" (1910: 77). In Amenábar's film, randomness causes to disrupt any arranged configuration of presence and absence, which obliges César to adopt a subjectivity based on the postmodern dialectic of pattern and randomness even if his mindset still holds on to a modernist conformation of reality. Correspondingly, although Erik in Leroux's novel mostly exemplifies the dialectic of presence and absence, he also suggests the postmodernist dialectic of pattern and randomness, since the world which he inhabits allows him to create his own reality through magic and illusionism. Likewise, César wishes to relinquish the rhizomatic universe in which everything is interconnected for the sake of the dialectic between presence and absence, which would allow him to resume his former identity.

In a postmodernist configuration, the figure of the Other arises as a virtual mirror of the fragmented self, since, as Bakhtin claims, the Other possesses "a surplus of seeing" which remains unavailable to the self even by means of mirrors (1990: 23-36). According to Carlos Fernández Heredero, Amenábar stated that his film addressed

“la importancia que damos a la mirada que los demás proyectan sobre nosotros en relación con cómo nos vemos nosotros mismos” (1997: 107). Nonetheless, even if a reverberation of others conditions the configuration of the self in Amenábar’s film, as Perri notes, César recurrently seeks in the mirror a confirmation of the identity that he longs to preserve (2008: 95), which evinces that he nostalgically evokes a modernist conformation of reality. Conversely, in Leroux’s novel, it is initially stated that, in relation to the mirror that hosts Erik’s universe, “la glace, il paraît, n’obéit qu’à Erik” (1910: 300), thus referring to the omnipresence of the mirror as an embodiment of the modernist configuration of reality. Subsequently, though, this same mirror gives way to Erik’s rooms in which this modernist reality is replaced for a world of simulacra rather than of mirror images, as it is unveiled that, “nulle part, dans cet appartement, il n’y avait de glaces” (1910: 252), which suggests the postmodern myriad selves that cannot be pinned down by the mere reflection in a mirror.

In terms of the conceptualisation of the hero, Santos Romero contends that the modern subject evokes Prometheus in his will to transcend the boundaries of forbidden knowledge, whereas the postmodern subject rather resembles Narcissus in his reverberation of selves (2008: 208). In Leroux’s novel, in relation to Erik, it is emphasised “son étrange education d’artiste et du magicien” (1910: 513), thus evoking Prometheus, while, in Amenábar’s film, César’s obsession with his looks bring to mind the figure of Narcissus. Nonetheless, when César becomes disfigured, he gradually turns into a postmodern Prometheus of cyberculture as he resorts to virtual reality to readjust his looks. Similarly, despite being deprived of an alluring appearance, Erik resorts to his knowledge of magic and illusionism to reimagine his looks as a modernist Narcissus. Despite Leroux’s novel is a modernist interpretation and Amenábar’s film is a postmodern revisitation of the Gothic tradition, both share modernist and postmodernist approaches that bring to the fore the complex duplicity of the characters and of the reality that they inhabit.

7. THE FANTASTIC AND METALITERARY ARTISTRY: TEXTUAL HOUSES, VIRTUAL NARRATIVES

Le fantôme de l’opéra and *Abre los ojos* are narratives that illustrate Tzvetan Todorov’s notion of the fantastic, which lays its roots in the nineteenth-century and is defined as “that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event” (1975: 25). According to Thierry Santurenne, as a writer, Leroux praised the function of popular literature to address issues related to transgression (2004: 1), and correspondingly, as a cinema director, Amenábar has often referred to horror as an ideal genre to explore the concerns of human nature (Sempere 2000: 40). In Leroux’s novel, Erik is believed to be a spectre, since his presence is noticed, but owing to his will to abscond from people as a result of his hideous appearance, he is hardly ever seen, thus calling into question his own existence. Similarly, in Amenábar’s film, as César’s dreams merge with apparently actual events, he begins to wonder whether he is living or dreaming. Nonetheless,

even if both narratives pertain to the genre of the fantastic, they respond to different categorisations according to Todorov's classification. Despite the fact that Erik is mistaken for a ghost, and thus, for a preternatural creature, Leroux's novel exemplifies Todorov's notion of the uncanny or the strange, insofar as "the laws of reality remain intact and permit an explanation of the phenomena described" (1975: 41). Conversely, owing to the fact that César is virtually resurrected from death and lives in a perpetual nightmare, Amenábar's film rather illustrates Todorov's concept of the marvellous, since "new laws of nature must be entertained to account for the phenomena" (1975: 41), insofar as the narrated events escape rational explanation.

The narrative configuration in Leroux's novel and Amenábar's film draws attention to narratological components that evince their respective metaliterary dimensions, as textualities that are evocative of nineteenth-century narratives pertaining to the genres of detective fiction and the fantastic. As Jean-Claude Vareille argues, *Le fantôme de l'opéra* juxtaposes a detective narrative that presents the results of criminal investigations around Erik, and a fantasy narrative that emphasises the bizarre events surrounding his ghostly figure (1989: 193), hence denoting that fact blends into fiction in the criminal investigation, but that the suspension of disbelief also becomes sporadically interrupted as a horror narrative. Analogously, *Abre los ojos* involves resolving a puzzle in resemblance with a detective tale, as César tries to make sense of his life, but it also turns into a horror tale owing to its pervasive sense of disorientation, as César feels constantly puzzled by the events that he is experiencing. Additionally, as Santos Romero claims, Amenábar's film resorts to a series of narrative strategies, which blur the boundaries between the realism of a detective tale and the fantasy of a horror story, such as the diegetic blending whereby dreams and reality become blurred, the anachronic temporal distribution in which actual events follow a linear order whereas simulated facts are presented as non-linear, and the complex narrative enunciation that oscillates between the techniques of 'telling,' which underscores its fictional dimension, and 'showing,' which endorses credibility (2008: 201-203). This attention given to their narratological components underscore the metatextual dimension in both narratives. In terms of their narrative focalisation, though, insofar as the events in the novel are told from the perspective of an omniscient extradiegetic narrator who does not participate in the events, Leroux's narrative acquires more objective undertones in comparison with Amenábar's film, which internally focalises on César's perspective as an autodiegetic narrator and displays a thoroughly subjective dimension.

Drawing on the pervasive metaliterary component in both narratives, the connections between Leroux' novel and Amenábar's film extend to instances in each narrative that reveal metaliterary connections with nineteenth-century textualities. As Isabelle Husson-Casta claims, "les heroines éthérées d'Edgar Poe, les gamins d'Alexandre Dumas ou de Victor Hugo, les automates du romantisme allemand et les surhommes verniens ont suffisamment nourri l'imagerie physique de Leroux, pour que sa propre galerie de portraits ressemble à un hommage continu" (1997: 69). In effect, in *Le fantôme de l'opéra*, the duality established between Christine and Carlotta

is reminiscent of the motif of female metempsychosis in Poe's tales like "Morella" (1835) and "Ligeia" (1838), the dungeons and medieval atmosphere conjure Alexandre Dumas's novels like *Le Comte de Monte-Cristo* (1844), Erik's deformity is evocative of Quasimodo in Victor Hugo's *Notre Dame de Paris* (1831), the demonic temperament characterising Erik reverts back to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Faust* (1808-1832), and the subterranean existence that Erik is condemned to lead is suggestive of Jules Verne's *Voyage au centre de la Terre* (1864).

In analogy, according to Antonio Sempere, as a cinema director, Amenábar defines his style as a mixture of "elementos tratando de generar un producto nuevo" (2000: 37), which suggests its intended intertextuality with other narratives, particularly within the nineteenth-century Gothic tradition. In *Abre los ojos*, as the hyperreal universe that César inhabits is gradually exposed, initial displays of scepticism are counteracted when characters establish an analogy with Verne's visionary inventions, which were also first met with incredulity, but ended up becoming true. Moreover, given César's portrayal as a hideous progeny and the constant disruption of temporal frameworks, *Abre los ojos* is also grounded in seminal science fiction novels like Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and Herbert George Wells's *The Time Machine* (1895). Besides, César's characterisation as an eminently double figure reverts back to literary doubles, mostly exemplified in Robert Louis Stevenson's novella *Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) and its influential depiction of the Other. Scenes in which César becomes obsessed to emulate his idealised image of Sofía are evocative of the classical myth of Pygmalion and Galatea, and the interaction between life and art, which was revisited in nineteenth-century narratives with artistic undertones like Edgar Allan Poe's "The Oval Portrait" (1842) and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890).

As each narrative reverts back to other textualities, the realities that they describe acquire an eminently literary quality that underscores their metatextuality. As Santurenne claims, the Parisian Opera House, which becomes Erik's abode, acquires an eminently literary quality and its ornaments emulate a literary riddle inviting readers to explore what they conceal (2004: 3). Insofar as Erik plays his tricks of magic and prestidigitation, the vaults of the Opera House and its labyrinthine subterranean passages become the domain of Erik's artificially baroque incantations. When Erik takes Christine to the basement of the Opera House, she refers to the "beauté mensongère de ce cadre inventé pour l'illusion des hommes", adding that "la nature n'en pouvait fournir de comparables" (1910: 210). Besides, given its fantastic quality, in resemblance with a literary text, this architectural structure acquires an organic condition that allows it to change and thrive by virtue of Erik's magic gift as an illusionist. As is conceded in Leroux's novel, "la salle réelle s'augmentait de six salles hexagonales dont chacune se multipliait à l'infini" (1910: 447), hence displaying the imaginative and prolific quality of the architecture in resemblance with a literary text and its intertextual reverberations. Analogously, in *Abre los ojos*, the universe of virtual reality in which César feels trapped obliges him to live in a landscape of dreams that keeps on morphing and transforming. As César's psychiatrist, Antonio, contends, in dreams, characters and places shift illogically and endlessly, although it is César who

is granted control over his visions so that he can literally indulge in his fantasies and give rise to his own plotlines in a universe of creativity.

In this respect, the metatextual universes described in Leroux's novel and Amenábar's film, and their intrinsic relationship with characters like Erik and César, bear resemblance with contemporary interpretations of Poe's tale "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839). By means of approaching the House of Usher in its symbolic dimension, Scott Peeples (2002) interprets the fictional house as Poe's creative universe, thus depicting it as a house of mirrors in which words conjure the illusion of depth. In an influential article, Richard Wilbur (1976) refers to the parallelism that can be established between the House of Usher and the artist, insofar as the building stands for Roderick's body and its interior symbolises the artist's creative mind in a symbiotic relationship between the artist and his fictional universe, which is also evoked in Leroux's novel and Amenábar's film.

In their respective fictional universes, Erik and César arise as the artists who create these landscapes of fantasy. As Santurenne claims, the metaliterary discourse in Leroux's novel is made effective since the novelist projects himself on Erik as the magician who gives rise to a fictional universe (2004: 2). Analogously, in Amenábar's film, inasmuch as César arises as the creator of his own reality in a virtual existence, he turns into a counterpart of the cinema director himself as the creator of this imaginary universe. This metatextual quality emerges in the texts as the creators make their own appearances. If, in Leroux's novel, an omniscient narrator, who explicitly addresses the reader, evokes the spectre of the novelist, in *Abre los ojos*, as scriptwriters of the film, Amenábar and Gil appear in a cameo whereby they exchange glances with César, thus creating a sort of mirror effect that momentarily subverts the suspension of disbelief.

In Leroux's novel, as the embodiment of the Romantic artist, Erik contends that, "je ne m'exprime jamais comme les autres" and "je ne fais rien comme les autres" (1910 : 441). Christine considers Erik "l'Ange de la Musique" whom she describes as a disembodied spirit that teaches her the language of music. Besides, the Persian, who knows Erik from his youth, regards him as "l'amateur de trappes" and "le roi des prestidigitateurs", describing him as "un homme dont la science bizarre, la subtilité, l'imagination et l'adresse lui permettent de disposer de toutes les forces naturelles" (1910: 414). Similarly, in Amenábar's film, Duvernois discloses that, insofar as César is living the life of his dreams, he exerts dominion over all the events and characters surrounding him, insofar as they are the result of his own invention. In one scene in which Duvernois and César are talking in a club, César wishes the people around to be quiet and, to his surprise, not only do they stop talking, but they stare at him as if waiting for directions to continue their performance. Even if both Erik and César are characterised as the creators of their own fictional universes, Erik's powers will become extinct, whereas César will perpetuate his existence in his virtual domain.

In a metaliterary passage in both narratives, there is a ball of masks respectively presided by Erik and César, which reverts back to Poe's tale "The Masque of the Red Death" (1842) and the fictional and grotesque universe that Prospero, as a master of

ceremonies, creates which contrasts with the bleak reality outside. In clear resemblance with Poe's tale, in Leroux's novel, as Erik makes his shocking appearance in the ball of masks, he is described as follows,

L'homme à la tête de mort, au chapeau à plumes et au vêtement écarlate traînait derrière lui un immense manteau de velours rouge dont la flamme s'allongeait royalement sur le parquet; et sur ce manteau on avait brodé en lettres d'or une phrase que chacun lisait et répétait tout haut: 'Ne me touchez pas! Je suis la Mort rouge qui passe!' (1910: 178-9)

As happens in Poe's tale when the Red Death penetrates Prospero's castle, Erik emerges from the passages of the Opera House to join the ball of masks above, disguised as the Red Death, thus denoting the metaliterary and grotesque quality of his universe of fantasy. Analogously, in Amenábar's film, César also joins a contemporary ball in a club, wearing a mask to cover his deformed traits, in a scene that underscores his condition as an outcast, but which also precedes the beginning of a virtual universe in which he will exert his dominion. Like Prospero in Poe's tale – evocative of the homonymous character in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1611) – who arises as the embodiment of the artist, in Leroux's novel, Erik personifies the figure of the *écrivain maudit* and turns into a counterpart of the novelist and, in Amenábar's film, César arises as the Byronic hero with inventive gifts that allows him to create a fictional universe, thus turning into an *alter ego* of the cinema director himself.

8. CONCLUSION

Leroux's novel *Le fantôme de l'opéra* and Amenábar's film *Abre los ojos* display instances of transtextuality that range from intertextuality to hypertextuality as Amenábar's film adapts and updates Leroux's original narrative in the era of cyberculture and virtual reality. Even if both works were respectively produced at the onset and at the end of the twentieth-century respectively, they are grounded in the nineteenth-century Gothic tradition, and in particular, in the Gothic romance, insofar as they portray a tragic love story, a Byronic hero evocative of different nineteenth-century Gothic archetypes, characters that turn into doubles of each other, the pervasive motif of the mask, imagery that reflects the individual's sense of estrangement in an alienating location, and the irruption of the fantastic in its different categorisations.

Nonetheless, despite the fact that both narratives revisit and update the Gothic romance, each text presents a different approach as indicative of its own time. In Leroux's novel, Erik and Raoul compete for the love of Christine, Erik appears to be a ghost although he is truly human, Erik and Raoul symbolically arise as doubles of each other even if the narrative focalises on Raoul's perspective, identities are unmasked in favour of selves, the order is restored by the end of the narrative when Erik eventually dies and, as a fantasy piece, the strange takes precedence over the marvellous, as the fantastic events that take place can be explained rationally. Conversely, in Amenábar's film, César and Pelayo compete for the love of Sofía, César seems to be human but he

is truly a virtual spectre, César and Pelayo move from friends to rivals although the narrative entirely focalises on César, selves arise as perpetual masks in a universe of virtual reality, the open-ended narrative grants no relief as the order is not restored eventually, and the marvellous is given priority to the detriment of the strange, as the fantastic events that occur escape rational explanation.

Amenábar's film, interpreted as a postmodern revision of Leroux's original novel, follows the trend of literary adaptations of *Le fantôme de l'opéra* published at the turn of the twentieth-century like Susan Ray's *Phantom* (1991), which is narrated from the phantom's perspective, and Frederick Forsyth's *The Phantom of Manhattan* (1999), which satirises the narrative conventions of the original story, while it sets the action in New York. In comparison with Leroux's original narrative, Amenábar's film shifts the narrative focalisation from Raoul as an honourable hero to César as a Byronic hero – and a contemporary counterpart to Erik – who not only turns into an embodied blending of hero and villain, but also into an actual Gothic archetype owing to his condition as a virtual spectre. As a postmodern revision of the original story, the narratological configuration draws attention to the artificial condition of the textuality which remains open-ended and offers no promise of relief. Either from a modernist approach in Leroux's novel or from a postmodern perspective in Amenábar's film, both narratives are rooted in the Gothic tradition and the nineteenth-century Gothic romance, thus giving evidence that its literary formula and narratological features keep pervading contemporary horror narratives.

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