

## On the Arts

# OBJECT RELATIONS PERSPECTIVES ON “PHANTOM OF THE OPERA” AND ITS DEMON LOVER THEME: THE MODERN FILM

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This study of the modern film version of “Phantom of the Opera” employs a mythic theme to illustrate how women can involve themselves with charismatic and eroticized narcissistic men, who are unavailable for true relationship within the conscious world of societal connection. How can the healthy-heroic woman extricate herself from the seductive web of such men, men who seek to own the women—not through sexual relations—but through ownership and control of the women’s creative talents? What are the developmental, internal world, dynamics that spell out the muse turned demon/lover theme in British and American Object Relations terms? Similar to the mythic vampire who entrances women to suck their blood, the male muse haunts the female artist to possess her talents. The “demon lover” creates himself to woo the unsuspecting female with potential but yet unrealized creative talents. He woos through entrancement, like so many psychologically wounded narcissistic characters who require mirroring to have any sense of existence!

**KEY WORDS:** narcissistic; demon; erotic; mirroring; darkness; mythic; soul; grandiose; merger; manic; symbiotic.

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## INTRODUCTION

*Phantom of the Opera* has mythic themes that have been created and recreated in film, theatre, and film again. In 1925 there was an early silent film version with Lon Chaney. In 1986 there was the widely reputed Andrew Lloyd Weber Musical. Then the music is heard once more, but now in a modern film, done in 2004 with such female stars as Emily Rossum and Minnie Driver. The haunting “music of the night” establishes an entrancing

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and royal seduction that evokes primordial yearnings for psychic incest between a father and a daughter. As the muse turns demonic the “demon lover” theme that I have so frequently written about in clinical cases and in the psychobiographic cases of well-known women artists and writers floods into the unconscious imagination of the audience. Having studied the demon lover theme and complex (Kavaler-Adler, 1985, 1986, 1988, 1989, 1991a,b,1992, 1993, 1996, 2000a,b, 2003, 2005) I found the 2004 movie of *Phantom of the Opera* to be most compelling. Therefore I have used my expertise on the object relations psychodynamics of the demon lover complex to critique the demon lover theme and its resolution in the 2004 movie version of *Phantom of the Opera*.

*Phantom of the Opera* tells the tale of a disfigured recluse who lives within a Paris Opera House. Locked up in a circus cage and beaten by a cruel and exploitative master as a child, the man who is to evolve into a brilliant musical genius, as well as into the male muse for a fair lady, first escapes through the aide of a young woman dancer, who is employed in the dance troop of an opera company. With the young dancer’s assistance, the abused boy finds his refuge in the basement of a cosmopolitan city’s opera house. He makes his home in its dark bowels of its dungeon, and creates his castle and palace there, as his grandiose self grows older along with his body that houses a potential true self. This young boy grows to manhood in the dark world that can easily be seen as symbolic of the hidden depths of the unconscious, but in this mythic case it proves to be an unconscious with vast creative resources.

Living in the unconscious world, and developing creative talents that evolve into the evocative composition of the “music of the night,” this young man develops himself into a haunting and charismatic persona. He contrives to woo others through entrancement, like so many psychologically wounded narcissistic characters who require mirroring to have any sense of existence. Narcissists live through a false and grandiose self—a very powerful image self. Similar to the mythic vampire who entrances women to suck their blood, the male muse haunts the female artist to possess her talent. *The Phantom of the Opera* character haunts, woos, and entrances a young maiden with raw but potentially great singing talent. Then he mesmerizes her through playing the role of her teacher, and weds her in his imagination through the music of the night. The male muse as Phantom of the Opera composes music that entralls his young female protégé, giving her the promise of a prodigious operatic talent.

Drawn into the spell of the grandiose male father-god figure, who proclaims he can create her, (as Robert Browning’s Duke creates his Duchess, and as Pygmalion creates Galatea), the young virginal woman and virginal creative singing talent allows her male master and muse to

control her as a patriarchal guardian. She is naïve and unaware of the fact that the phantom wishes to fully possess her soul. She is also unaware that this male figure of the night will attempt to keep her from leaving his land of darkness and candelabras. In this recessed land, within the basement of the opera house, the Phantom of the Opera woos his young female protégé with the music of the night, trying to prevent her from escaping out into the world of human and marital relations. As with many female artists, as the young heroine's talent matures, her sharing of her art and her self-expression with the "Phantom," who calls himself her teacher, creates an artistic romance. Through this romance, the young ingénue is drawn into a symbolic wedding with her male muse. This symbolic wedding is based on the critical element of psychic incest. It is a wedding that borders on the edge of merger. This is a merger that often exists in a world of art and creative process, whenever this world becomes removed from the wider world.

This romance with the muse is so often, in the majority of cases I have studied in women artists and writers, turned into a tale of seduction in which the male muse transforms into a dark demon lover. The demon lover can only lead the lady to her death, which he can do as soon as she submits to marriage with him. This marriage always has in its background the incestuous desires for the early symbiotic mother fused with the oedipal father. In *Phantom of the Opera*, when the muse's desperation to keep the young woman from leaving him turns his arts from hidden manipulation to overt manic erotic possession, the woman who has been entranced must wake up to save herself from being swallowed up by the dark night of the unconscious. This unconscious can envelop her as her demon lover leads her into a secluded life within the creative process, and away from the outer world of consciousness and light. The male muse leads her away from the light of human relations, marriage and interpersonal intimacy. This outer world, from which she is kept by her demon lover, is a world beyond the stage and its mirroring audience. It is a world where two people can touch. In this outer world two people can realistically know and understand each other. They can feel an embodied connection that brings intimacy as well as "the creativity of everyday life," that D. W. Winnicott (1971) has spoken of. This outer world stands in stark contrast to the narcissist's sealed off hall of mirrors, where erotic desire merges with idealized images, perverting the creative process into an addictive and entrapping gilded cage.

In *Phantom of the Opera* the potential Greek tragedy is set in motion as the demon lover attempts to possess his young infatuated student of creative expression. The Phantom, who is both teacher and muse, molds the young heroine's voice and expression into his own image. Thus the muse turns into the archetypical demon lover. The mythic demon lover,

who mirrors the sinister qualities of the narcissistic character, will always seek to mold his young female protégé's voice and expression to reflect his own idealized image.

### THE RED SHOES: MYTH AND MOVIE

We can see this clearly in the mythic tale and film of *The Red Shoes* (Kavaler-Adler, 1996; GB, Technicolor, 1948). *The Red Shoes* is a play within a play, in which a young woman with talent is enlivened with the manic erotic intensity of the hungry male muse, embodied in the figure of the patriarchal ballet master and director. Becoming the ballerina starlet, the young ingénue merges her talent and her core creative self into the vision of the father figure muse, who then turns demonic through his wish to possess her by keeping her in his ballet company, away from the outer world. The ballet director wishes to possess his young female star as a narcissistic extension of himself. This theme unfolds as a direct parallel to the play within the play of the *Phantom of the Opera*.

In *The Red Shoes* movie the paternal muse/demon tries to keep his female star under his auspices, in the contrived theatrical land in which he rules. He and his young female ingénue exist apart from the world at large, secluded and sealed off in the world of the creative process that is dominated by the male muse/demon's vision. The prima ballerina's merger with the director is disrupted when the ballerina falls in love with a young male composer within the director's ballet company. The interlude of evening romance between she and the composer promises much more than the world of the night. The composer is offering the kind of love that includes marriage and a life out in the light of day, beyond a world built solely on living in the world of one's art and within the creative process. The move to the outside world is jump started, however, when the paternalistic ballet director becomes jealous of the composer and of his relationship he now has with the director's special female protégé. When the composer is then forced to leave the company he demands that the ballerina come with him if she loves him.

### RESONANCE AND CONTRAST WITH THE REAL LIFE STORY OF SUZANNE FARRELL

In the movie version of *The Red Shoes* the composer who wishes to marry the young female heroine is forced by the male director's treatment of him to leave the company. This resonates with the real life story of Suzanne Farrell, the prima ballerina of the New York City ballet, who refused to accept a marriage proposal from her aging ballet director, George Ballanchine, with the similar consequence that when she accepted

the proposal of a younger male dancer in the company her new husband was forced to leave the New York City Ballet to appease the wrath of the patriarchal director, Ballanchine. Suzanne Farrell, however, did not succumb to the fate of the misanthropic heroine of *The Red Shoes* ballet and movie. She herself said she could “take the red shoes off” (Farrell and Bentley, 1990, p. 210), referring to her ability to come out of the trance of being the “princess” daughter of the male “king” (god-daddy) ballet director. She could leave the fantasy world of ballet stardom to have a marriage in the real world separate from the company, and only come back after she had established herself on her own in the world at large, outside the stifling grandeur of Ballanchine’s domain. Suzanne Farrell did this even when black listed by Ballanchine all across the country as a punishment for her exiting Ballanchine’s domain, and as a punishment for having a marriage with an age appropriate man that could be free of the psychic incest dynamic that she shared within her theatrical merger with Balanchine, her grand choreographic director father-figure. Farrell married Paul Maja, began to fix up a home in the Adirondacks, and struggled to survive economically when she couldn’t get work as a ballerina in America due to Ballanchine. She finally found work across the Atlantic in Europe, becoming a star ballerina in Maurice Bejart’s Belgium ballet company, a theatrical company. Bejart made a bid for Suzanne Farrell as a prima ballerina for his company, promising performance engagements all over the world. Suzanne could come back to her art without abandoning her husband and marriage, although she had to travel without Paul since Paul was not engaged by the Belgium company. With Bejart’s company Suzanne Farrell’s talent could be prized and realized. There she could still dance to the music of Tchaikovsky that she loved from the Ballanchine ballets, but she could also establish herself on her own, and not relinquish the marriage bond with her husband who shared her passion for dance. Eventually, she chose to go back to Ballanchine, but now on her terms, married to the man of her choice, not to a god-daddy muse, and dancing what she liked, and later teaching, following her hip replacements and early retirement from dancing. In returning to the Ballanchine company Suzanne even got an apology from George Ballanchine, who surrendered his macho and narcissistic bravado for her. She had trouble with him humbling himself, and tried to soothe away his need to apologize, but nevertheless she received the humility from Ballanchine that she had earned and deserved (see Kavalier-Adler, 1993).

### A RETURN TO THE RED SHOES

The female prima ballerina in this movie of *The Red Shoes* proves herself to differ critically from the real-life prima ballerina Suzanne Farrell, who

knowingly declared, "I can take the Red Shoes off." Unlike Farrell, the woman who leaves the muse father in the mythic tale of *The Red Shoes* confronts a devastating fate. She tries at first to break away from the narcissistic and patriarchal director, when the young male composer she has fallen in love with, after her rise to stardom, tells her that she must leave the ballet company to marry him. She dares to attempt a departure from the father figure, who rules the supposedly most grand ballet company known to the female ingénue. She actually does marry an available male in the world, rather than remain under the spell of incest by being wed through the creative process to a grand god-like father figure.

The director of a ballet company is often a god within the world of the company, especially when he is also the chief visionary and choreographer. In the movie of *The Red Shoes* the young female star cannot stay away from her male muse/demon lover in his creative process domain. The young female star becomes a misanthropic heroine as she returns to the scene of soul possession, in the land of the stage, a land ruled by her father-muse figure. The ballerina in *The Red Shoes* ballet and movie does break away from the male director, when she falls in love with the male composer. She makes a move towards separation and towards life, entering the world of intimate human relations, which exists beyond the claustrophobic hall of mirrors that exists for those who live solely on the stage. In fact she breaks the psychic incest bond with the muse-father-god by having an embodied, non-incestuous marriage with a man who isn't afraid to live in the wider world, the world beyond the stage.

Yet unlike Suzanne Farrell, who could "take the red shoes off," the young misanthropic heroine in the tale of the manic syndrome symbolized by *The Red Shoes* cannot stay away from the mirroring magnetism of the male muse, who may symbolize her own grandiose self-extension. Early preoedipal trauma in the heroine can be imagined (as the absence of her mother is suggested), which is so common among the many female writers and artists I have studied (Kavaler-Adler, 1993, 1996, 2000a, 2000b). In the mythic movie of *The Red Shoes* the former prima ballerina supposedly re-encounters the ballet director by accident, but in the land of the unconscious from which her archetypal psychic incest tale emerges, there are no accidents. Once re-encountering the male ballet master, who is also the world's renowned ballet's choreographer and director, she is compelled to submit to his wishes (and on another level to his magnetic and charismatic magic spell). Her own narcissistic strivings, expressed through her own powerful ambition, merges in with the muse/demon director's narcissism and ambition. Consequently, the misanthropic heroine does not surrender freely, as a female with adequate separation and individuation in early childhood could. She returns to playing the role of the female heroine

victim in the ballet of *The Red Shoes*, the heroine/victim who puts on the shoes that are designed for her by a Black Magic male shoemaker. These shoes carry the manic erotic energy of the archetypal father, who wishes to control the young and naïve starlet. Within the mythic ballet that is within the movie's broader play, the first symbolic representation of the "demon lover" appears in the form of the Black Magic shoemaker, who can control the young female heroine through the power he invests in the red ballet slippers, which are designed for his female daughter/victim.

I propose that the manic erotic energy of the "red shoes" is the kind of frenetic energy that is engendered in those who practice psychic incest. As the father figure passes these shoes to the female protégé who become his symbolic daughter/victim, the young female protégé takes her life in her hands as she puts on the shoes. She does so in both the ballet itself, which is the play within the play in the movie, and in the outer play around the ballet theatre troop that performs the ballet.

Unlike Suzanne Farrell, who is able to leave Balanchine's ballet company because she is forced to do so when she marries, and who then shows the strength to come back on her own terms once she has established herself as a star abroad (being blacklisted in America by Balanchine) and as a wife in the world, on her own terms; the young female protégé in the movie, *The Red Shoes*, comes back to the male muse father without an adequate separation-individuation process. She has languished in the background of life as her new husband has launched out into the world with his talents as a composer, defying the male ballet director by establishing himself outside that man's company and that man's control. His young wife has watched the male composer practice his music and progress, but unlike him she has not ventured forth to perform with any company separate from the one she has so idealized, the one in which she has played the role of the princess under the auspices of the male ballet director, who is supposedly world renowned. In other words, the young *Red Shoes* ballerina fails to establish her separate selfhood.

I would propose that it would be psychologically consistent with this young female character, even though she is fictional, that she conceivably suffered early trauma with her mother in the first three years of life, when the self separates and integrates, as was suffered by so many non-fictional living female artists, who were captured by the muse/demon in the demon lover complex (Kavaler-Adler, 1993, 1996, 2000a). If primal mother loss is significant, this symbolically archetypal daughter of psychic incest would naturally be seeking the love lost from an early mother through a "special" relationship with a father figure. Combined with the compensation for the primal mother loss is the oedipal stage erotic infatuation sought in terms of a special relationship with the father. Consequently, the daughter of

psychic incest is irresistibly drawn back into the lair of the predatory patriarch. This patriarch—the ballet master and director in *The Red Shoes*—misses his female self-extension because he probably misses the grandiose image reflection of himself that he sees in her stardom. So when the young prima ballerina returns to the patriarchal ballet master, and to the scene that she once evacuated to wed an available man who is related to her as a woman—not as a father figure—she becomes doomed. She becomes lost to herself as soon as her husband abandons her due to his rage at her for returning to the male patriarch who had become his enemy. Without her husband, and without being able to leave her father-figure muse in the form of the ballet director, the young starlet loses all sense of cohesion because she no longer has a male extension of herself to give her the grandiose self's illusion of wholeness. I am speculating that as the ballerina is left by her husband an early maternal abandonment trauma is re-incited. Inevitably then, the lady becomes possessed!

We can conjecture that the fictional misanthropic heroine has never fully differentiated herself from her early mother, as was the case of all the well-known women artists and writers I have studied who developed a demon lover complex, resulting in the women not being able to metaphorically remove the red shoes that bind them in compensation to a father figure. This would explain why the misanthropic heroine cannot survive without the support of an external other, in this case the husband. Without the support of the husband who may have served as a critical psychological support for her in her undifferentiated state, the young misanthropic female becomes an archetypal psychic incest victim. She puts on the red shoes, which are symbolically endowed with the black magic of a psychic incest father, and can't take them off. The shoes then send her in a frenetic dance to her death! Unable to call her husband back, the young ballerina cannot retrieve the interpersonally related love that this independent male composer had offered her at the time when he led her out of the grandiose world of the ballet director, and into the world of daylight, consciousness, and marriage. Encased in the black magic powers of the *Red Shoes*, the disempowered ballerina is conquered by the power of the prince of darkness. She is torpedoed into the manic frenzy of whirling dervishes and Middle Age St. Vitus dancers. She is propelled by the manic erotic intensity of the father, who is sealed off in his own narcissistic world, so that his energy is pulsating with compulsion and intentions of possession. She is swept away, swept up, and driven by the whirlwind of manic erotic intensity. She is endowed with the mark of her symbolic father's unconscious psychic incest within the "black magic" red shoes.

The fatal contrast between *The Red Shoes* ballerina and the life of Suzanne Farrell is explained by how Farrell's early preoedipal connection

with her mother was sustained despite oedipal issues. The contrast is poignant but becomes profound when the fictional victim in *The Red Shoes* is seen as a true archetype for all women with traumatic failings in the mother–daughter connection in the first three years of life. Unlike Suzanne Farrell, who leaves Balanchine and finds her own self-center, as well as creating an outside world relationship with her husband (outside the sealed off world of the ballet theatre and its psychic incest dynamics), before she chooses to return to Balanchine and his company, the female protégé of *The Red Shoes* cannot take her red shoes off. She dances to her death, torn between her craving to inhabit center stage in the heart of her god-father muse—now her possessive demon lover—and her craving to have her outer world husband return to her. In the stultifying world of an internal creative process, without the interpersonal relations of separate beings who can have dialogues, she loses all transitional space between self and other and is lost. *The Red Shoes* ballerina flies over a balcony to her death as she desperately runs after her husband, a husband who loses patience with her entranced state and abandons her.

#### PHANTOM OF THE OPERA IN CONTRAST TO THE RED SHOES

How does this mythic tale transform and get defined in the movie and tale, *Phantom of the Opera*, adapted from stage to film? Does the heroine of *Phantom of the Opera* follow the plight of the female victim in *The Red Shoes*, or like Suzanne Farrell, can she take the *Red Shoes* off? Can she, like Farrell, hold the positive view of a male muse without being possessed and becoming captive to the demon lover, who lives in the world of the unconscious in the night?

In *Phantom of the Opera* the young heroine is drawn both toward the white and black knights. She is drawn towards the light of day in which an embodied interpersonal love is possible, as well as towards the muse/demon lover who entrances her with the music of the night and then seeks to possess her. Both the daytime prince and the dark lethal prince of the night captivate her. Her daytime prince admires and loves her, however, not just desiring her for her talent. He does not seek to possess, dominate, and control her.

By contrast the dark prince, who becomes the Phantom of the Opera, views the young female protégé as an idealized and erotic self-extension. Within the lust of an operatic character role, the young and talented female is wooed in a dominating and sadomasochistic encounter by the male muse figure, the *Phantom of the Opera*, who she had up until then referred to as her teacher. In the movie an older male opera star is forcibly cut out of his most erotic and demonic aria by the male muse Phantom. The Phantom

interjects himself between the aging male opera star, who he actually kills, and the young female ingénue who he has worshipped (and narcissistically loved), as he has tried to create her, and to contrive her destiny in bondage to him. His true dark side emerges from behind his image as a muse as he shows he is willing to kill to possess the young virginal female, whom he considers to be his creation. For him love is a narcissistic passion as he instinctively loves the image of himself in the young female, for this young ingénue has learned to sing the music of her male teacher, who continues to have paternal control over her. The Phantom has taken advantage of the fact that this young protégé has lost her actual father, after an earlier loss of her mother. He has trained the young female's voice and body towards his view of a natural and authentic female opera star, which sharply differs from the contrived and affected opera Diva, who is played beautifully in the movie by Minnie Driver. When threatened that he might lose control of his protégé victim the Phantom attempts to control his young victim through arousing within her a vision of her deceased father's ghost.

At first, the Phantom as teacher had protected his protégé in a fatherly way, as in overseeing that she stays in and rests at night. But his fatherly protection has continually erupted into a manic erotic craving for his young ingénue. His passion, therefore, continually transforms into possession. Although the muse Phantom has shown himself in the fatherly guise of one who has protected his mythic daughter from harm, by keeping her as his private guest in the opera house, and making sure she has rest, he has also been keeping her from the outer world of dating and socializing.

The young heroine has been invited into this outer world by a young and valiant prince, the aristocratic young male who has wooed her in spite of the muse/demon. He is also the white prince who has been able to promise the young heroine marriage and its accompanying future in the world beyond the stage. The white prince offers the heroine a developing life with all the promised intimacy that can exist between a mature woman and a mature man.

By contrast her muse/demon Phantom has wooed her away from the world, seeking to harbor her in the world of the stage. Inevitably this attempt to live in the secluded make-believe world of the stage turns stultifying, as it does for all those who wish to live their lives exclusively on the stage, sealed off within the internal world of the creative process that puts them there. The Phantom has courted his female prey in dungeons lit by candelabras, during the deepest and darkest hours of the night. Playing the father protector, his visage has turned to the edge of incest as he leads his virginal female star to his lair. Once capturing her presence in the dark world that he lives in, the Phantom mesmerizes the young female who has come to fruition through the passion of his music, with that which he proclaims in

an aria to be the haunting “music of the night.” The Phantom has prepared a royal bed and bedroom for the female victim of his “black magic” music seduction. He entreats the young woman to enter a chimerical world of implied transformation through an instant of magic, as in a beguiling magic spell, which he weaves with his musical serenade. He keeps the father/daughter boundary at first by not joining her in the royal bed he had prepared especially for her. He is content at this earlier time to woo her with his music.

But then the young girl becomes curious. She reaches out and unmasks the side of her male muse’s face, which has been damaged and hidden. She sees the face that carries the deep gouges and scars of the Phantom’s former life, the early life as a beaten and abused child, a child who would have been beaten to his death if he hadn’t escaped, and hadn’t sought refuge in the opera house. Outraged at being unmasked, the Phantom turns away from her! The scars on the Phantom’s face record a history of shame that he wishes to hide from the world through a mask, as many narcissistic characters mask their hidden flaws and the shame of their failings behind a contrived (grandiose) image self. Half masked and half handsome (tall, energetic, and attractive), the demon lover can flamboyantly woo his young female prey, never perhaps realizing consciously that he has a hidden agenda of enslavement for the woman whom he worships, which is a compulsive repetition of the enslavement and persecution of his own childhood past.

As long as the young ingénue submits to the Phantom’s patriarchal power, she is safe! She sleeps the night away within the chamber of jewels, music, and satin décor that her dark prince has prepared for her. But at the moment when she has the nerve to unmask the dark prince/demon lover her act of defiance is punished by his turning cold and full of hate, before he turns fully away and emotionally abandons her. This is the other side of the muse, the demon lover’s cravings to coerce and possess. This is the side of cold abandonment, which is triggered the moment the male Phantom is defined. When the sadistic male, with the traumatized child inside of him, attacks with cold narcissistic rage and abandonment his disguised vulnerability appears. He becomes threatened the moment that he is exposed from behind the mask that has shielded his narcissism and its inflamed wound. The polarized threats of possession and abandonment await any lady who dances with the demon lover. In this movie of the *Phantom of the Opera* such threats are hinted at before they emerge full force.

Promptly after experiencing a cold and hateful anger, the dark prince recovers and continues to play the fatherly role that has drawn the young maiden down to his private chambers, in the basement territory of the Opera House. There is a scene in a cemetery, where the heroine seeks her

father's spirit. The Phantom/demon lover, also the dark prince in the tale, attempts to silently masquerade, fully hidden, as the longed for father that the young female ingénue has lost so young. He is fully hidden at the cemetery where the young female heroine's father's body resides. It appears as if he would have succeeded, as he lights up the deceased father's mausoleum—if the white prince did not punctually arrive to rescue his maiden.

All this is leading up to the scene where the demon lover exposes the murderer inside of himself. He attempts conquest through interjecting himself into a staged opera performance, where he sings entrancing and soul endowed music.

Another scene also readies us for the scene of climatic wooing by the demon lover. It is the scene in which the whole social world, with its habitation inside of the awe-inspiring opera house, participates in the world of masked mystery and masquerade. It is the scene of brilliant elegance, in which all are black and white, and all are hidden from view, because it is the night of the Masked Ball. In this private world of the Masked Ball, contrived and hidden within the opera house, the Phantom of the Opera can be hidden among the many that mimic him, behind his mask. Yet it is in this gilded world of nighttime glamour that he is to appear most suddenly as the dangerous figure who he is to prove to truly be. When he reveals himself through the violent sword attack on the white prince, who has previously bested him at the cemetery, he again threatens the future life of the heroine, who is now engaged to her white prince, the male love who inhabits her conscious, as opposed to her unconscious, mind. Although noble the symbolic white prince is actually a potential realistic husband. He exists in connection with the outside social world where marriage and relationship are possible, rather than black magic and possession.

Although the demon lover escapes again, the white prince, who has proven to the young female ingénue that he can love through relationship, rather than through sadomasochistic possession, must be forced to witness the striving of his betrothed maiden's unconscious incest desire. In the scene where the Phantom of the Opera murders to steal the starring operatic role that will place him beside his female muse and his female victim, the white prince is forced to watch. The white prince, who is the socially sanctioned boyfriend and fiancé, is forced to witness the demonic wooing and tantalization of the Phantom, which arouses his virginal bride to the heights of erotic passion within the context of an overall erotic torment.

Singing the aria in his half masked face and superior tenor voice, the Phantom of the Opera is let loose to tantalize the young girl who has not yet known full erotic desire and passion. As the young female inevitably responds to the Phantom's ardent operatic aria wooing, the white prince

fiancé watches with horror and helplessness. The ardent wooing of the Phantom of the Opera seems to involve the hyper intensity of one craving an oral level symbiotic merger with another, combined with the erotic lust of oedipal desire. The white prince watches his young girlfriend, who has sung sweet and chaste arias to him in former scenes, emerge from her cocoon into the full regalia of an enflamed and erotically aroused bestial woman. He has no way to fight the demon lover now, for he is paralyzed in the static role of one in the audience. The white prince is forced to witness that the theatrical stage now only welcomes the two operatic stars, the young female impresario and the demon lord of lust, the Phantom, who has stolen the part of the male star who the Phantom has murdered.

But this is not the last scene. The operatic play ends and the scene of potential entrapment and death awaits. For as the prince and the opera house staff alert the police to the dark hidden home of the Phantom beneath the stage, in the dark interiors and dark waters of the basement, the demon lover Phantom figure runs to escape, and he takes his female heroine victim with him. The Phantom demon lover murderer takes the female, who he wishes to be his other half, with him. He seeks to possess the female protégé to merge her into his world. He seeks to find an eternal life through merger with an innocent female muse, who he has carried within himself through music and song.

It is again the tale of "Beauty and the Beast," where each character mirrors the polarized shadow side of each other. The white prince fiancé, the young aristocratic fiancé, finds a boat to sail himself into the hidden lair of the Phantom and demon lover. When he arrives, the dark prince has the maiden in his possession, indifferent to the maiden's betrothal to her white prince. He threatens to shoot and kill the young white prince, who is ready to die rather than leave without his love. (This is the crisis created by unconscious splitting within the internal psychic world.)

It is in this moment—when the two sides of the young woman crystallize into a powerful interaction—that the young female can break free. In breaking free she proves herself to be the female who can find her own power. In fact, she ultimately proves that she can, like Suzanne Farrell, "take the red shoes off" (Farrell and Bentley, 1990). Psychologically astute in the moment of crisis, the young female heroine emerges as a differentiated personality. This differentiation has been preceded by her erotic liberation when having appeared on the grand operatic stage as a full equal with the Phantom, singing from her own passion, rather than merely from his teachings. Now no longer naively transparent, the rapidly maturing heroine thinks quickly in the moment of crisis. More importantly she begins to feel at a level of deep need, grief, love, and longing that allows her heart to speak and to become articulate through individuation.

The young heroine of *Phantom of the Opera* does not openly reveal her desperate desire to protect and save her young male fiancé. Instead she turns artfully away from him. Thus, she protects her fiancé inadvertently by surrendering, rather than submitting, to her demon lover. Seeing beyond the demonic to the child within the Phantom, as well as to the injury hidden within his rage, the female heroine turns to kiss the demon.

Here the young heroine's move is strategic and not naïve. Yet perhaps she also wishes to awaken the true prince within the now murderer muse/demon lover. As she turns to kiss the demon lover on the scarred and marred side of his face, she miraculously kisses away the hidden shame within the demon. As with the mythic and archetypal "Beauty and the Beast" the beauty of a genuine kiss of love from the young female virgin and heroine turns the demonic lover into a true (white) prince, who can for the first time let his young female victim free to go. This is unfortunately a mythic outcome that fuels the illusions of many naïve women who think they can cure malignant narcissistic men with love (i.e., "the women who love too much"), as if they could offer the magic "quick fix" kiss—Melanie Klein's "manic reparation," as opposed to "true reparation" (Klein, 1940, Segal, 1975).

In the "Phantom of the Opera" tale as told in the movie, the Phantom's shame is overcome by the young heroine's willingness to kiss and face his dark side. The young virgin, now having transformed through the Phantom's erotic seduction, into an erotic woman, kisses away the Phantom's shame. In this scene, unlike the earlier one, where she unmasked him, the female heroine does not turn in terror from the sight of her seducer that has turned dark as he has hidden behind a mask that obscures his interior shame. Now she consciously faces the man who has formerly drawn her towards him through deep unconscious elements within her own psyche that she had formerly been unprepared to encounter. She faces her own unconscious as she faces the dark side of her always haunting muse/demon lover. Her reward is that the demon lover transforms into a mature man who can relinquish her. He transforms as he allows his girl victim to become a woman who can choose to leave him.

The lady, now emotionally grown, can presently join her fiancé to embark on an ever developing, spontaneous life in the world. This would be a life that is not contrived within a sealed off unconscious world. Before the lady leaves her vanquished, or converted, demon, however, she offers the Phantom lover the precious ring that her white prince has given her to betroth her. She leaves a symbol of the moment of love that she has offered and shared with him to the transformed demon. And then she is truly free to go! She leaves empowered within her own moment of choice. She is no longer the damsel in distress, who needs rescue. She has become a woman who is free to leave one man and to join another.

The end of the movie allows us evidence that the young woman has found her life in the world with her chosen man. She has lived her life! For when the movie ends it is a lifetime later, after her death, when her widowed husband comes to an auction of old relics at the opera house. He bids for and buys a music box for his now deceased wife, who, according to her gravestone, has been the mother of his children. The music box symbolizes the young woman's early life as a star in the world of music. At the very end of the movie her widower (the former white prince) places the music box on her grave. Ironically then, we, the audience, are allowed to view the rose and black glove of her relinquished muse/demon lover that now resides on the deceased heroine's tombstone. The Phantom of the Opera has turned heroic through the empathic love extended to him in one poignant moment, by the woman who he could once only narcissistically love.

Apparently, through the young heroine's capacity to love, although now buried within her tomb, the Phantom of the Opera has faced himself. The implication appears to be that he has freed himself from the bondage of his own confinement in the bowels of the opera house, which seems to have been the external metaphor for the bondage of shame within his mind. At the moment when he allowed his princess—never to be his queen—to fly from him, he left the opera house and re-entered the outside world. This outside world exists beyond incest and merger. It is a world of daylight and consciousness. Perhaps now the Phantom is free of his former shame. In turn, the young female ingénue who once could only serve as a caricatured (part object) muse for him has become a full three-dimensional woman who could love.

## CONCLUSION

In essence, *Phantom of the Opera* is a symbolic tale about a male muse who goes mad, and turns into a "demon lover" (see Kavalier-Adler, 1985, 2005). The muse turns into a demon when he is forced to live within the unconscious and instinctual world that cultivates his creative process, rather than living outside of his unconscious mind, in the daytime world of interpersonal life and relationship. In the tale of *The Red Shoes* the female heroine becomes a misanthropic heroine as her addiction to the transferential power of the father-god-muse entraps her. She is wooed regressively back from a life in the outer world, beyond the creative process and its stage. She allows the male muse's tantalizing power over her to have the malignant outcome of psychic marriage to a demon lover.

In contrast, the female heroine of *Phantom of the Opera* is able to separate from her paternalistic god-father muse, who becomes demonic only when he has full power of possession over her. The heroine of *Phantom*

of the Opera not only separates from her potential “demon lover,” as Suzanne Farrell, the very real heroine, was able to separate from her muse/demon, George Ballanchine. Beyond this the heroine of *Phantom of the Opera* (2004) transforms her muse/demon as well! I speculate that the misanthropic heroine of *The Red Shoes* was a character who represented all those who have primal mother trauma within the first three years of life—when the self is first forming. In this sense she symbolizes all those female artists and writers I have studied, particularly in two books: *The Compulsion to Create: Women Writers and Their Demon Lovers* (Routledge, 1993; Other Press, 2000) and *The Creative Mystique: From Red Shoes Frenzy to Love and Creativity* (Routledge, 1996). These developmentally arrested women had primal trauma resulting in a state of arrested or pathological mourning, which manifests in object relations terms as a “demon lover complex,” or in other words, as a pathological addiction to a tantalizing and demonic internal object (Fairbairn, 1952).

Suzanne Farrell, who in her own words, could “take the red shoes off,” stands as a healthy contrast to the misanthropic heroine of *The Red Shoes*, and to all those women artists and writers with primal traumatic mother loss in the first three years of life (see Kavalier-Adler, 1996). The heroine of *Phantom of the Opera*, like Suzanne Farrell, also survived tantalization by her powerful paternal muse, and like Farrell, is able to survive with a capacity for mature love, once she is able to separate from the idealized father figure. Both Suzanne Farrell and the fictional heroine of *Phantom of the Opera* suffered acute father loss that seemed to play a profound part in their magnetic attraction (but not “fatal attraction”) to an idealized father figure, who was also a muse for each of them in their creative self expression. Farrell had a detached father who was emotionally unavailable to her, and after her parents divorced during her latency years her father was significantly lost to her. Yet, the fact that such father loss was not compounded by an earlier traumatic loss of the mother seems to account for the ability of both Farrell and the fictional heroine of *Phantom of the Opera* to separate from the male muse father figure, rather than to dance to their death in the symbolic “black magic” red shoes.

Although the Phantom heroine’s mother may have died, the maternal dancer who came to care for her as a mother seemed to have nurtured her over time, staying by her side in the operatic dance company. When the mother is not good-enough in this way a woman can escape the fate of *The Red Shoes* misanthropic heroine by entering into an object relations psychoanalytic treatment that allow a critical “developmental mourning process” to unfold. Such mourning can be seen in the clinical cases in *Mourning, Spirituality and Psychic Change: A New Object Relations View of Psychoanalysis* (Kavalier-Adler, 2003), and in many other clinical

articles in which the developmental mourning process is seen, such as “Pivotal Moments of Surrender in Mourning the Parental Internal Object” (Kavaler-Adler, 2007).

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