

Film

**FROM MIRCEA ELIADE'S TEXT TO ITS
CINEMATOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATIONS: THE
PICTURE OF MISS CHRISTINA AS CENTRE OF THE
LABYRINTHINE PATHWAY**

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Abstract: *As commonly known the labyrinth represents not only a major element of the intercultural dialogue but also a cultural, mythological, religious, literary and artistic icon. Its pattern implies several stages, among which the initiation, the inner change and the conversion, all being meant to deeply modify the subject that is confronting such a complex pathway. Plunged into a space full of obstacles, the subject is continuously experimenting. Thus, he has to enter the labyrinth, to search the only true way through the labyrinth, to hesitate, to lose himself, to descend into Inferno, to split his soul, to find the centre of the labyrinth and finally to find the exit. Such complex patterns could be found in many of Mircea Eliade's narrative texts. For the characters that find themselves trapped inside the maze every experience can be regarded as an attempt to reach the centre of the labyrinth. It is the case of the novel "Miss Christina", where the protagonists, despite their efforts, miss their meeting in the centre of the labyrinth and implicitly their individual initiation. Since this centre stands for the place where two different types of worlds could find each other, it may be interpreted as the most important element of the labyrinthine pathway. The study intends to give an insight into the protagonists' search for the centre as well as an analysis of the very centre as a synthesis between life and death. Having the form of a picture, this centre is meant to become a substitute of life. Exceeding the literary area, the analysis of Miss Christina's picture takes into consideration its cinematographic representations as means of visual expression of the same experience.*

Keywords: labyrinth; symbol; character; literature; cinematography.

Introduction and General Reflections upon the Meaning of the Labyrinth

The following study intends to analyse the centre of the labyrinth from a visual perspective as employed within the narrative and the cinematographic representations.

Starting from its definition, as a place constructed of or full of intricate passageways and blind alleys, as a network of a huge number of halls, tunnels and chambers, the *labyrinth*⁵³ may be regarded as one of the major cultural myths, symbols, archetypes and element of reality found in many cultures. Its universality proves that there is something common shared by all ancient cultural systems, something fundamentally central which states it as the symbol of the human ultimate destination (Conty, 2002: 15). Most of times it is revealed in a chameleonic form, continuously changing its pattern but, at the same time, keeping its essence.

From a general perspective upon the very concept, the *labyrinth* comes in three variations: the *unicursal*, the *Irrweg* and the *network*. Taking after Santarcangeli (1967), Bord (1976), and Kern (1981), Umberto Eco drew the basic classification of these variations. Starting with the classical labyrinth of Cnossos⁵⁴ also known as the *unicursal*, Eco stated that such labyrinth contains only one path: the path to the centre and from the centre to the exit⁵⁵ (Eco, 2014: 52).

The second type of labyrinth defined by Eco was the *Irrweg*⁵⁶ also called the Mannerist labyrinth, a variation that proposes alternative choices, but all the pathways lead to a dead end except one, the one that leads to the way out. It is a more complex pattern than the previous simpler one. Such a labyrinth generates the form of a tree filled with blind alleys misleading the visitor's steps on the way, forcing him to mind his steps and change the course in case he mistakenly chose a certain path. This kind of labyrinth is a complex network of paths, with junctions, choices and dead ends, twisting and deceptive weaving between tall barriers; and finally, an elusive goal to be reached (Fisher, 2004: 4). Each point of the labyrinth functions as a crossroad with two possible pathways, the true one and the false one.

⁵³ From the very beginning it is necessary to state the difference between labyrinth and maze as two terms considered synonyms but employed for different contexts. Each term stands for a different reality. The labyrinth defines a single path to the centre and from the centre to the exit, but the maze refers to a puzzle full of crossroads and intersections

⁵⁴ According to Paolo Santarcangeli's terminology, this type of labyrinth should be called *pseudo-labyrinth* since its pattern does not include any possibility of choice (Santarcangeli, 1974: 59).

⁵⁵ In order to give a more explicit overview, Umberto Eco imagined the act of unrolling the unicursal labyrinth using a single thread as the means of extricating from the labyrinth since the pathway always leads where it has to lead, and it is impossible to lead anywhere else (Eco, 2014: 52).

⁵⁶ Besides the term *Irrweg*, in German language, there is also *Irrgarten*, both having the same nominal and verbal root *Irr-*. The first one refers to a misleading path while the second one states the labyrinthine patterns of gardens (Santarcangeli, 1974: 87).

The third kind of labyrinth introduced by Eco was the *network*⁵⁷ in which every point may be related as well as connected with any other point. In this case the structure of the labyrinth is always under permanent construction due to the possibility of connecting any point with any point and thus turning the process of connection into a process of correction. This kind of labyrinth may be traversed by taking a different route each time the visitor comes to a certain point and, in this way, constantly correcting the image of the *network*, either it is a true image of a section or a hypothetical image of the whole structure (Eco, 2014: 53). For this kind of labyrinth each point represents the centre⁵⁸ offering more than one option to follow.

These three types of labyrinths may represent patterns for different pathways that will lead the protagonists of Mircea Eliade's *Miss Christina* on their search for the centre. The archetype of the labyrinth plays a major part in the evolution of both characters, Miss Christina and Egor, since its nucleus is viewed as a sacred place, meant to centre, to concentrate and to protect the individual soul. At the same time, the labyrinth influences the evolution of the other characters since all are engaged in their own quest in reaching a centre. Such a place may be interpreted not only as space but also as time or state. Regardless its shape, this centre favours the contact with the metaphysics, initiating the possibility of communication with the divine. The contact with the metaphysical world generates a microcosm whose centre represents a spatial and temporal metamorphosis: the profane space acquires transcendental features while the chronological time receives mythical values. The simultaneousness of two types of space as well as of two types of time is based on the paradox that makes possible the simultaneous existence of the living being and the non-being (Eliade, 1992: 95). Thus, the very centre stands for the connection between the living being and its own self facilitating the transfer of meaning from the macrocosm towards the microcosm. Once the living being reaches the centre, all the limits withdraw allowing the two worlds, the external and the internal, to collide. The influences of the centre extend towards the living being in concentric circles (Poulet, 1961: 13-15). The centre makes possible the interaction between the sacred and the profane. Potentiated by the profane, the sacred becomes easier to be recognised by the living being in its inner quest (Eliade, 1993: 541-542). Knowing that any type of inner quest represents an opportunity for facing initiation experiences, the living being is plunged into a labyrinthine

⁵⁷ According to Eco such a labyrinth cannot be unrolled since it is infinitely extendible, having not an inside and not an outside as opposed to the first and second types of labyrinths which have an inside as well as an outside from which one may enter, and toward which one may exit (Eco, 2014: 53-54).

⁵⁸ According to Patrick Conty, the centre of the *network labyrinth* is everywhere, and its circumference is nowhere (Conty, 2002: 166).

path full of symbols⁵⁹ that are meant to reveal an entire system of meanings. In its attempt to reach the centre and to find its true meaning, the living being needs to discover the unseen by surpassing its visible world.

The path to the centre is neither simple nor fast since it is always a means of introspection aiming to reveal the inner self and to connect it to metaphysics. Throughout time the very centre was associated with different geometrical shapes such as the point, the circle, or the sphere.

As a fundamental geometrical notion, the point stands for an a-dimensional sign whose representation is based on human imagination⁶⁰. Viewed as the beginning and the end of everything, the point may symbolize the centre as an imaginary expression of temporal and spatial nothingness. Different from the geometrical point, the metaphysical point signifies the primordial unity that contains the existence as well as the nonexistence. Such a point becomes capable to generate a spatial and temporal abyss that radiate in concentric circles. The circle contained by the primordial point, when extended, embodies the effects generated by the very point (Champeaux, 1966: 23-24). Having no beginning and no end, the circle may represent the infinity. Approaching the circle from a temporal perspective, it may also be considered a symbol of time since the circular movement is a continuous movement with no beginning or end. The same movement spinning around its own centre determines a never-ending movement which could be regarded as the natural movement of the sphere, the next geometrical figure in terms of volume. When associated with the concept of time, the sphere contains the whole universe, including time⁶¹ (Aristotle, 1966: 106-107). Even more, the divine is both the minimum, in the shape of the circle, and the maximum, in the shape of the sphere. Thus, the minimum coinciding with the maximum in each and every atom, when this atom starts to move around its own centre its movement will never stop.

During its quest, the living being intends to reach the centre of the universe. Since the centre is the very essence of the universe, all its features could be transferred towards the living being. According to the Renaissance philosophy, the central placement of the living being was justified as being the perfect position to facilitate the connection with everything that surrounds

⁵⁹ These symbols play an important part as synthesis of everything that is known and everything that is unknown.

⁶⁰ Regarded by Leibniz as the centre of universe, the point was considered as the initial and ending place and moment containing the abstract multitude of points that could be identified in its contents (Heidegger, 2003: 438-439).

⁶¹ In his turn, Plato considered the circle and the sphere as the two figures chosen by divinity for giving a certain shape to the universe since both are able to include all the other figures. The reason why the universe took the shape of the circle, and the sphere was because these two figures's extremes are situated at the same distance from the center (Plato, 1993: 145-147).

the centre. In this way, each part of the universe becomes visible to the living being. The correspondence between the macrocosm and the microcosm may be identified in the similar circular movement not only of the universe which extends itself from the centre towards its extremities but also of the living being in its inner quest towards its own soul⁶². The living being may be viewed as the centre containing every points of its individual sphere as well as of the whole universe. From this perspective, the microcosm becomes able to mirror the macrocosm (Béguin, 1970: 106-108). The living being contains in its essence the divine centre that, in its quest, needs to be discovered. In its search for the sacred situated in the inner world as well as in the external universe, the living being has to cross many labyrinthine paths that lead towards the centre of both universes. Following Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophy, the living being, although it lost the possibility of acceding the divine Heaven, it may still be guided and connected to the sacred universe on the unconscious level (Eliade, 1986: 26-28). When the living being reaches the divine centre, this act will always determine the connection with the sacred dimension of its existence no matter the level of connection, internal or external.

The whole journey through the labyrinth⁶³ of the inner quest aims to reach the centre of the labyrinth so that the spiritual transformation may begin. As a representation of the universe, the labyrinth is meant to help the living being to re-join its own essence. Placed in the very centre of the universe, this essence is a true reflection of divine⁶⁴.

The Labyrinth as a Connection between Life and Death

The story of love and death presented in *Miss Christina*⁶⁵ as a story between two characters that come from two different spaces was inspired by

⁶² The idea of the human soul as the center of the infinity was identified in Novalis' narrative *Heinrich von Offterdingen*, in Astralis' words: "Ich bin der Mittelpunkt, der heilige Quell." ("I am the central point, the holly spring.") (Poulet, 1961: 135).

⁶³ The labyrinth may be regarded as a complex symbol corresponding to a series of archetypes or characters and objects with archetypal values among which there could be mentioned: Theseus, Ariadne, Minotaur, the cave and so on.

⁶⁴ The labyrinthine space could be conceived as a representation of the whole world since it is also a dialectical synthesis of oppositions such as life and death, sacred and profane, knowledge and ignorance, order and chaos and centre and edge.

⁶⁵ The story presented in *Miss Christina* is a type of fantasy that is constructed on an archaic substratum of the Romanian imaginary folklore capturing the narrative structure magical elements, mysterious deeds and a world under the sign of the curse (Ivanov, 2021: 74). It is a story about a woman, Christina, murdered during the 1907 rebellion who tries to return to the world of the living through a love relationship with a young man, Egor. Unfortunately, she is sent back to her world being murdered for a second time by the same young man. (Alexandrescu, 1999: 159-160)

the Romanian folklore⁶⁶. The labyrinthine pattern contains the major elements that are necessary for covering a whole inner quest: the penetration into the labyrinthine space, the hesitations, the searches, the missing of the centre, the plunging into Inferno and the exit of the labyrinth. In the case of *Miss Christina*, love becomes the true pathway for experiencing life and death, as a way to acquire knowledge and experience⁶⁷.

Although the shape of the labyrinth belongs to the first type known as the *unicursal* labyrinth, for the protagonists, Christina and Egor, the centre as well as the initiatory pathway seem impossible to be reached. Their aim is to get at the centre of the labyrinth and from the centre to the exit, but there are stages in their journey through the labyrinth making the purpose hard to fulfil. Longing for everything that could not have been experienced during her terrestrial life, Christina forces the limits of death and veils the world of the living helped by other female characters: Simina, Miss Moscu, Sanda and the nanny. There are certain similarities between the four female characters that are experiencing life and Christina, who died thirty years ago. These analogies, such as Simina's cold look, Miss Moscu's passion for blood or the girls' death that happened almost simultaneously, suggest not only the possibility of life transfer into death but also the possibility of death transfer into life. On the other hand, Egor is not prepared to reach and face the centre mainly because he cannot exceed the limit of life so that he may step on the labyrinthine path towards the metaphysical world. Since he is unable to overcome his fears and disgust caused by Christina's wound, he prefers to choose life although he is aware of the fact that his own life is to be a continuous wandering in search of the very centre.

The two characters belong to two different worlds: Christina comes from death while Egor comes from life. The connection between their two universes is possible first because of Egor's search for love and adventure and second because of Christina's need for love. Their ways cross each other in a moment that corresponds to their first steps into the joint labyrinthine path. Both share the status of the traveller: Egor starts his journey in a dream while Christina enters and then leaves the mundane in a carriage, similar to Charon's boat (Scarlat, 2011: 30-32). Their wandering through the labyrinth aims to find the hidden meaning of life and of death in order to accomplish the initiation for the mystery of living and dying. For Christina such an

⁶⁶ According to Sorin Alexandrescu's opinion, the Romanian folklore may represent a source of inspiration for a story that tells about a cursed world conquered by a ghost and saved by a hero who murders the ghost for the second time. (Alexandrescu, 1999: 157-158)

⁶⁷ Eliade's prose contains other novels that refer to love as a life and death experience. For example, *Wedding in Heaven* reveals the fact that death becomes a way that makes possible the reunion of the two sides of the primordial couple exceeding the narrow circle of the material world.

accomplishment could be regarded as a release from the terrestrial influence and forces while for Egor it may be viewed as a defeat of death through art, beauty and love. The intersection between the two paths is represented by the moment of contemplating the picture of Miss Christina.

The picture stands for the synthesis between vivid and void since, within the stillness of the canvas illustrating the image of Miss Christina as she was thirty years ago, the painter, Egor recognizes life itself as her face seemed illuminated by emotion which emphasized the pale colour of her childlike cheeks (Eliade, 1994: 34). For the painter the picture is alive, and he engages himself in a communion with the image. Influenced by her sad eyes he decides to painter her again according to his vision. This time he intends to reveal her true emotions and feelings. Moreover, the connection between Egor and Christina's image from the picture is initiated in the moment when the painter looks at it with different eyes and no longer considers it a mere painting. He recognizes Christina's feelings and states because he himself has to confront with something very similar. That is why, for Egor to look at the picture means to look at himself as if in a mirror, having his own subconscious revealed and represented by Christina's image. Not far from Dorian Gray's case, the picture of Miss Christina enables the transfer of life from her towards other characters. Miss Moscu and Simina find themselves in a constant need of Christina's image in order to live their own lives.

Egor's intention to re-paint Christina's image represents a metamorphosis generated by Egor's discontent of her identity. In the process of re-shaping Christina's identity, the painter's contribution is essential. In fact, his intention is to re-shape his identity as an artist being dissatisfied of his professional becoming. Unfortunately, he cannot fulfil his intention, he cannot overcome his own limits, and, for this reason, he is continuously experiencing the states of fear and disgust. In his attempt, he becomes able to transfer Christina's image from his dreams into reality. Although he does not pass into the picture and remains a spectator⁶⁸, by only looking at the painting with the intention of re-creating Christina's image and identity, Egor defies reality.

The painting is the most important element in Christina's room, a sacred space in the whole house, where almost no one is allowed to enter. For Miss Moscu and Simina, Christina's room represents a *centrum*, a space without time and destined to meet Christina and to experience again past events. Nothing was changed in this room, the stillness of the frozen objects

⁶⁸ In Egor's case, love is not sufficient for him to perceive Christina as an *eon* of light meant to facilitate his connection with her world and become part of it. As she reminds him many times that their connection is only aesthetical determined by his intention to re-paint her image in order to truly represent her and her identity, his love for her becomes of second importance. (Finaru, 2007: 205-206)

would maintain the connection between the living and the dead. “*It seemed that sun has never passed through this room and time has never destroyed anything. Nothing seemed refreshed, changed since Miss Christina died.*” (Eliade, 1994: 35)⁶⁹.

In her way towards the centre, Christina makes the living suffer, mostly the three women who are influenced by her. In his turn, Egor enters the Christina’s room heading towards the mysterious centre of a different world. The frame of the painting marks the border between the two worlds. On one hand it is the frame of a painting belonging to reality and on the other hand, it is the frame of a dream⁷⁰ belonging to the metaphysical world. According to Sorin Alexandrescu, the path covers both worlds whose interaction is given by any act of hesitation or conflict generated by the confrontation of the two main forces meaning life, embodied by Egor, and death, represented by Miss Christina (Alexandrescu, 1999: 160-161). The same path reflects the inner labyrinth that each character has to face and to go through.

“She spoke with such pathos, with such hunger for love that Egor was terrified. He tried to run. He ran as if on an endless hall, unknown, sinister. After few moments, he thought he was alone. He breathed deeply, he was scared and tired. He started to step aimlessly, dizzy, without knowing where he was. His thoughts were scattered, his will was blind. The hall spread like a mine gallery. Suddenly, from ahead, he felt a vague smell of violets. Egor hesitated for an instant then he decided quickly and opened the first door he saw.” (Eliade, 1994: 79)⁷¹.

The opened door allows the access not only into the space of Egor’s room but also into the space of his soul. Both spaces share similar features such as disorder and mess. The external space of Egor’s room is a reflection of his self that yearns for love. In order to make the encounter possible, Ego plunges into the state of dreaming. During his dream, he loses himself so that the encounter be possible. Their meeting places them close to the very centre

⁶⁹ „Parcă soarele nu trecuse prin această odaie și timpul nu măcinase nimic. Nimic nu părea premenit, schimbat, când musrise domnișoara Christina.” (Eliade, 1994: 35)

⁷⁰ Christina meets Egor for the first time in his dream while he is still learning the code of another reality. Within his dream, Egor finds himself trapped inside the body of a butterfly, like the one wandering through Christina’s room. Moreover, the butterfly represents one of the well-known symbols of the mystic fiction standing for the haunted soul in search for the divine.

⁷¹ „Vorbise cu atâta patimă, cu atâta foame de dragoste, încât Egor se înspăimântă. Încercă să fugă. Alerga parcă pe un coridor fără sfârșit, necunoscut, sinistru. Se crezu, după câteva clipe, singur. Răsufală adânc, speriat, ostenit. Începu să pășească la întâmplare, amețit, fără să știe unde se află. Gândurile îi erau risipite, voința oarbă. Coridorul se întindea ca o galerie de mină. Simți deodată, lovindu-l din față, un miros vag de violete. Egor șovăi o clipă, apoi se hotărî brusc și deschise cea dintâi ușă pe care o întâlni.” (Eliade, 1994: 79)

of the labyrinth. For the last time, Christina comes into his dream and from there into his reality hoping to find a meaning for her death since she had no time to get a meaning for her life. The meaning she chooses is given by love. In order to reveal the sacred dimension of life, Christina sacrifices her world. Unfortunately, Egor is not aware of the value of her sacrifice, neither is he aware of the importance of the certain moment when he could have entered the centre of the labyrinth. He is not able to experience simultaneously an earthly and an unearthly love nor is he able to exceed his human condition. Although he started his journey inside the labyrinth in search for the meaning of life, he misses the centre and, thus, he cannot escape the terrestrial forces and has to wander through the earthly labyrinths (Boldea, 2008: 55-64).

The two characters miss the centre of the initiatory labyrinthine path which is similar to a complete love meant to unify Life and Death. The two existential dimensions remain in a state of conflict. By destroying her painting, her room and everything that once belonged to her, Egor pushes Christina back to death. Her suffering is transferred to the other women that could be regarded as Christina's avatars. Miss Moscu disappears. Simina as well as Sanda dies in agony right after the moment when Egor stabs Christina's heart with an iron bar. From the worldly perspective, Christina's death could be interpreted as the fulfilment of the desired accomplishment of reaching the centre of the labyrinth and thus of having the possibility to step out of the labyrinthine path. On the contrary, from Egor's point of view, Christina's death is viewed as a return to Inferno.

The Picture of Miss Christina as Centre of the Labyrinthine Pathway

The painting of Miss Christina reveals an image of a very beautiful young woman. Governing the room that once belonged to her, the picture may easily catch the eyes of the persons that enter the mysterious space. At the same time, since Miss Christina is no longer alive, the painting functions as a gateway to the metaphysical world. Moreover, it is the centre of the concentric circles which configure the path to the portal that mark the entrance into another space, as noticed in the first and second figures. The labyrinth contains all these circles: the house, the room, the frame of the painting and the curtains within the painting. The image of Christina is placed right in the centre of the painting. Transposed into a cinematographic representation, the painting of Miss Christina fulfils the same function as in the literary version. Both films, the one launched in 1992 as well as the one from 2013, introduce the image of a beautiful young woman as the central figure of the composition.

As it could be observed in both cinematographic representations of the homonymous novel⁷², the painting captures the interest of the viewers mainly because of the combination between the external calm and the powerful potential activity. In both cases, the figure is sited as if resting, yet it shows energy which focuses on a specific direction indicated by her looking. The body seems relaxed, yet it looks as if out of space. Such a visual effect could be obtained by lengthening the figure and the objects that surround it, thus emphasising the vertical aspect of the central axis. At the same time, the position of the shoulders and arms configure another circle placed around the medial section of the picture, another central nucleus. Each painting exhibits dynamic relations necessary for establishing a certain equilibrium between the visual forces within the picture. The subject of the paintings functions as a major part of the structural concept and aims to lead the viewer's eyes towards the very centre of the labyrinth but in different ways. Following the same purpose, light exposes the essence of the painting through its intensity, colour, quality and angle. In order to define space and to suggest shape, light is employed to create various levels of contrast on the subject⁷³. In both cinematographic representations, light as output from a direct source, travels in an aligned and focused path following the labyrinthine pathway. Although the painting is placed in a dark corner, light is controlled not only to fill the shadow area but also to lead the viewer's interest towards the most important point. Besides light, there are other elements that focalize on the same spot. As the picture of the 1992 film version contains additional elements such as the curtains and the armchair, the picture of the 2013 film version focuses more on the figure excluding any other addition element. While in the 1992 film the position of Christina's hands indicates an opening of the central circle thus showing a wider centre extended towards the other world, the 2013 film version presents a close circle framed by the position of Christina hands in order to determine the focalization of the viewer's perspective to concentrate more on the very central point of the composition and of the labyrinth.

The film from 1992 uses a painting that highlights the importance of the subject's image within the picture and its relationships with the other elements while the one from 2013 tends to focus more on the relationship developed between the subject and the viewers.

As it could be notice in the figure 1, the painting from the 1992 film reveals three main visual plans: the back wall and the curtains, the armchair and the central figure. These plans are disposed concentrically, from the

⁷² For the present study, there are two cinematographic representations of Eliade's novel *Miss Christina* that are taken into consideration: the one from 1992, directed by Viorel Sergovici, and the one from 2013, directed by Alexandru Maftai.

⁷³ Each level of contrast is meant to create the illusion of the three-dimension representation.

largest to the smallest, guiding the viewer's eyes towards the centre of visual interest: Christina's image. Knowing that the selectivity of the human eye obtains in the depth dimension, the position of these elements guides the beholder's attention by throwing certain limited ranges of depth into sharp focus. In addition, the depth dimension contributes to cognitive factors of different natures, meaning that it can make the elements size variable and thereby adaptable to the needs of the observer (Arnheim, 1997: 26-27). Furthermore, the size of the critical area also determines how much of its surroundings is contained in the visual field at the same time, meaning that the smaller the area, the more of the environment appears, that is the more the object is shown in context⁷⁴. The choice depends on how much detail is relevant. In this case, the frame, the curtains, the armchair, the hat become important elements since they are meant to lead the viewer's eyes towards the centre of the painting which contains Christina's figure.

The size, the colour, and the position of all these elements represent means of guiding the viewer's look through the labyrinthine space of the painting. Thus, a scale of increasing brightness leads from the dark frame, curtains and armchair to the light face and hands, the two focal points of the whole composition (Arnheim, 1974: 39).

At the same time, the vertical axis established by the curtains is interrupted by the horizontal axis resulted from the position and size of the armchair, dividing the composition in two. Since the armchair occupies the lower part of the painting this particular area is stressing more vigorously the horizontal than the vertical. Even more, it also enhances the upward

movement of the whole by the fact that, from a vertical perspective, the lower area full of colours and shapes seems taller than the upper one.

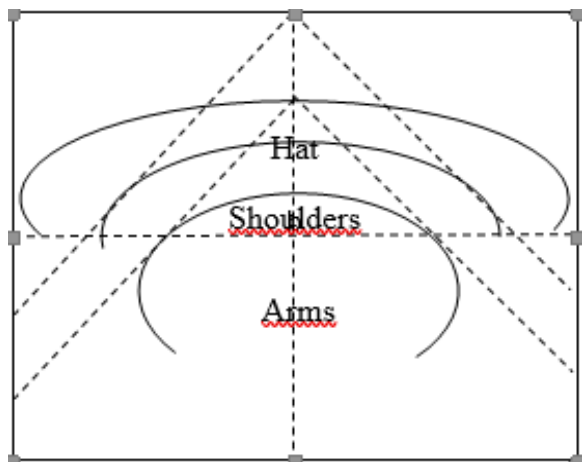


Figure 1 – *The concentric circles*

That is why the eye is guided in the direction of smaller and lighter areas. The upward movement is also enhanced by the asymmetrical placement of the figure in

relation to the armchair, since the figure presses forward by occupying

⁷⁴ Inversely, with increasing size of the element, its context is moved out of sight.

mostly the left part of the chair⁷⁵. Both, figure and chair are tilted at almost the same angle relative to the frame. By drawing concentric circles, the viewer's perspective focuses on the very centre of the labyrinth, as in the figure 1.

The painting from the 2013 film represents a different version of the same character. This time there is only one important plane within the painting: the one containing Christina's image. In a similar manner to the previous composition, the figure is placed in a sited position. Although the chair is not visible, the position of the character is obvious. Her shoulders and arms form an oval around the middle section of the composition, generating a centric core of stability. The head is anchored on the central vertical as the main focal point in connection to the hands.

Opposed to the former example, the hands are thrust forward as if in an attitude of potential activity. According to Arnheim, both focal points of the composition are neutralizing the action of each other by interlocking (40). Thus, although the head is at rest, it contains directed activity in the viewer's eyes

On the other hand, Cristina's hands are also engaged in a certain activity by being moved forward. Moreover the rising of the head can be checked by its central placement as well as by its nearness to the upper border of the frame. It rises till it is caught by a new base. Since there are no other elements to lead the viewer's eyes towards the centre, the whole figure plays this particular part. Thus, it rises from the bottom base to the upper edge of the painting, displaying a gradual heightening of intensity, as in figure 2. The black background makes the figure appear stable and rooted and yet suspended in space. More than that, the resting position of the body is

balanced by the dynamics of the hands.

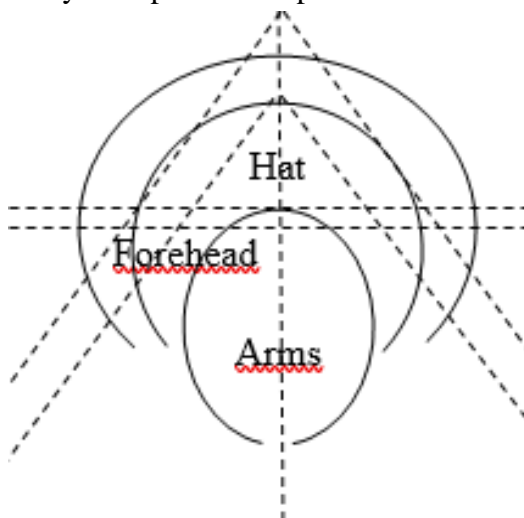


Figure 2 – *The concentric circles*

By establishing dynamic relations in the whole composition, as in figure 2, a particular balance could be established between rest and activity which mark the content of the painting. In other words, the pattern of visual forces that interact within the picture may reflect the content in such a way to generate a powerful impression

⁷⁵ It is commonly known that the human eye moves in the direction of diminishing areas or spaces. (Ross, 2007: 26)

upon the observer. In this case, the concentric circles suggested by the position of the head, shoulders and hands as well as the contrast between light and shades supported by the colours aim to attract the viewer's interest towards the core of the painting and the labyrinth⁷⁶.

The cinematic frame, this time focuses not only on the central figure of the composition but also includes the presence of the viewers. The frame of the painting marks the borders between the two worlds, but it also delimits the portal towards the metaphysical universe. In this example, the two worlds, the world of the living and the world of the dead, are looking at each other as it could be noticed in the next figure. From this point of view the 2013 film gives a more detailed representation of the centre of the labyrinthine path than the 1992 film.

In both compositions representing Miss Christina, the subject matter of the picture is an integral part of the structural conception. Since the shapes are identified as body, head, hands, armchair or curtains they are meant to play a particular compositional part. Supporting an abstract pattern, these formal elements of the painting convey a specific meaning to the picture itself and to the whole cinematic frame. Besides the basic significance of a seated young woman the picture sustains the meaning of the centre either visual or metaphysical.

At the same time, the very elements could be considered as counterbalancing which enables the picture to rest on point and counterpoint. Although these elements may appear as antagonistic, they are not contradictory or conflicting⁷⁷. On the contrary, they set a dominant force against subservient other forces. Thus, each relation among these elements is unbalanced in itself.

On a perspective, when put together, these elements tend to balance one another in the structure of the whole composition.

Conclusion

The labyrinthine pathway that the main characters are going through is meant to re-establish the order of the elements that belong to both worlds, the one of the livings and the one of the dead. By challenging love, Christina and Egor start their journey through the complex labyrinth, hoping to reach

⁷⁶ The viewer's interest is also caught by the light and pale colours of the figure's hands and face as well as by the light colour of the dress, both contrasting with the dark background not only of the painting but also of the room.

⁷⁷ In most cases the antagonistic forces in a visual composition, either painting or film, are not meant to create ambiguity. Knowing that ambiguity confuses the visual artistic statement and leaves the observer hovering among the assertions that do not end up in a whole, the counterbalancing elements need to be created in such a way that they form a pictorial or cinematic hierarchy (Arnheim, 1974: 41).

the centre as proof of accomplishing their quest. Although they did not succeed in reaching the very centre, the journey itself represents a major experience for each of them. Confronted with the obstacles within the labyrinth, the two protagonists succeed in heading towards the centre but because of Egor's insufficient courage, both are plunged back into the worlds they come from. Even so, both of them could glance the centre of their labyrinth when their paths cross each other and interact in front of the picture.

The painting representing Miss Christina represents the portal that connects the two worlds and allows the protagonists to encounter each other and to accomplish their initiation for the mystery of life and death and thus ending their search. Although neither of them succeeds in their quest, the picture could facilitate the connection between the two worlds. As the centre of the labyrinth the painting of Miss Christina stands for the very end of the labyrinthine pathway and the distribution of the concentric circles is meant not only to frame but also to lead the same path towards its own central point.

The literary description of the painting includes the necessary elements to an imaginary representation of the picture. Transposed into a cinematographic representation, the painting of Miss Christina fulfils the same function. As stated before, both films, the one launched in 1992 and the one from 2013, introduce the image of a beautiful young woman as the central figure of the composition, but while the picture of the 1992 film version contains additional elements such as the curtains and the armchair, the picture of the 2013 film version focuses more on the figure excluding any other addition element. The position of the character highlights different meanings: in the 1992 film, the position of Christina's hands indicates an opening of the central circle thus showing a wider centre extended towards the other world, in the 2013 film version a close circle framed by the position of Christina hands in order to determine the focalization of the viewer's perspective to concentrate more on the very central point of the composition and of the labyrinth. Although the use of light is similar, focusing on the central character, the source of light is relative to the reflective subject affecting the intensity of lighting. The 1992 film version disseminates the light in the medium while the 2012 movie version concentrates light on the main point, Christina's image. Either way, Miss Christina's picture is, first of all, the cinematographic representation of the very centre of the labyrinth, similar to the imaginary representation of the same painting provided by the literary text, thus becoming the visual expression of the same experience.

The present study reached its target in finding corresponding elements between two artistic representations, narrative and cinematographic, for the employment of specific artistic instruments in the attempt to represent the painting of Miss Christina as the centre of the labyrinthine pathway.

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