

Mary, Esmeralda, and Frollo: A Hermeneutic Reading of “The Hunchback of Notre Dame – The Musical”

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ABSTRACT

This essay aims to analyze the multimodal storytelling involving songs in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame – The Musical*. Two songs, “God Helps the Outcasts” and “Hellfire”, are chosen to be analyzed hermeneutically. The primary analysis is done through the scrutiny over the juxtaposition of different musical styles in the said songs. Comparisons to Victor Hugo’s original text and the Disney animated version – in which the musical is based on – is also done to shed more light on the new layers of interpretation.

Keywords: musical juxtaposition; musical theater; liturgical music; multimodal storytelling

ABSTRAK

Mary, Esmeralda, dan Frollo: Pembacaan Hermeneutik tentang “The Hunchback of Notre Dame – The Musical”. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mempelajari dan menganalisis *multimodal story telling* dalam rangkaian lagu-lagu pada *The Hunchback of Notre Dame – the Musical*. Dua lagu, “God Helps the Outcasts” dan “Hellfire” dipilih sebagai fokus penelitian hermeneutik. Analisis utama dilakukan melalui studi jukstaposisi gaya musik yang berbeda dalam lagu-lagu tersebut. Perbandingan dengan text asli karangan Victor Hugo dan versi animasi Disney – yang menjadi dasar naskah drama musikal ini – juga dilakukan untuk menggali interpretasi baru yang dihasilkan lebih dalam.

Kata kunci: jukstaposisi musik; teater musikal; musik liturgis; *multimodal storytelling*

Introduction

As the writer began writing this essay, the news outlet from every corner of the world reported the big fire in Notre Dame, Paris. One online content creator was quick to juxtapose the image of Notre Dame Fire with the scene from one of the iconic songs in Disney’s “The Hunchback of Notre Dame”, “Hellfire”. Over the years, the said song has gained notoriety as the most sexual and adult song in Disney’s repertoire – commonly associated with children. The creepy nuance is elevated by the juxtaposition of Frollo’s words of desire and iconic pieces of liturgical songs. It also marks the first attempt of Disney in incorporating liturgical music and composition in their soundtrack.

When Disney re-wrote “The Hunchback of Notre Dame” into a musical performance, several other songs from the animated version received the same treatment as “Hellfire”. They were juxtaposed with notable pieces of liturgical music, such as *Salve Regina* in “God Helps the Outcasts” and *Judex Crederis* in “Finale”. At the same time, the storyline also shifted in tone, from the comedic and uplifting Disney stories to that of Victor Hugo’s sombre storytelling style. It becomes a darker interpretation of the animated version. The question is thus raised, to what extent do these newly juxtaposed liturgical music change the meaning of the songs and the musical as a whole. This essay is, therefore, trying to address the question through the means of hermeneutical reading focusing on two songs –

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“God Helps the Outcasts” and “Hellfire” – as both singular entities and interconnected elements in the bigger narrative of the musical.

The Hunchback(s) of Notre Dame

The story of Quasimodo – one of the most famous hunchbacks in literature – was made known to the public when Victor Hugo published *Notre-Dame de Paris* (later known as *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* in the English translation) in 1831. Hugo’s initial intention for his novel was to raise public awareness of the value of the Gothic architecture in Paris, where some were neglected and often destroyed to give way for new buildings. It is reflected in the sizeable descriptive section of the book, which sometimes felt a bit too much and far exceeding the requirement of the story.

It is perhaps appropriate to regard the cathedral herself as a heroine in this novel due to her significance to the story (Simaika, 1962; Wildgen, 1976). Its presence looms around every character, creating intricate connections between them that revolves around the church of Notre-Dame. Quasimodo, the titular character of this story, is a deformed 20-year old bell ringer of Notre Dame who spends most of his life lurking under the shadow of bell towers. He finds his way into the very bosom of this Gothic structure through his adoption by the archdeacon, Claude Frollo.

Just like Quasimodo, Frollo spends his life under the stone roof of Notre-Dame. He seeks solace in the clerical life after losing Jehan, his younger brother, and his parents. It is the similar fate of being orphans and growing up alongside Notre-Dame’s stained glass that bonds Frollo to Quasimodo, strengthening their father-son on the relationship. Despite his position as an archdeacon, Frollo himself cannot win the affection of the Parisians. He is instead alienated due to his dour attitude and fascination with alchemy, suffering the fate of being distant, if not mythical, and the presence behind the church’s stones.

When a gipsy girl, La Esmeralda, enters the narrative and enamours Frollo, Quasimodo proceeds to abduct her at the behest of his adoptive father. The kidnapping ends up as a failure while

Quasimodo is caught and pilloried in public. Despite being the victim, Esmeralda unexpectedly takes mercy on him and offers him a drink of water – an act of kindness that leads Quasimodo to fall in love with her.

The competition for Esmeralda’s hand is further complicated with the arrival of Captain Phoebus to the scene. After a night of passion, Esmeralda becomes infatuated with Phoebus. Frollo, who spies on her, sees this and stabs the handsome military man out of jealousy. He blames Esmeralda, condemning her to march off to the gallows. Not wanting to see Esmeralda’s demise, Quasimodo sweeps down from an upper balcony in Notre Dame and rescues her by taking her up to the top of the cathedral.

Quasimodo shelters Esmeralda in Notre Dame, invoking her right of sanctuary from the church. Despite his attempt to save her, Quasimodo’s deformed appearance continues scares Esmeralda. She keeps longing for Phoebus – who survives the stabbing and decides to stay away from her for good. It is not until Quasimodo’s rescue when Frollo attempts to assault her that Esmeralda starts to befriend the hunchback.

Feeling rejected, Frollo decided to get rid of Esmeralda by handing her to the authorities. After a chaotic riot following the news that French monarchy has ordered Esmeralda to be taken from Notre Dame and hanged, the Archdeacon of Notre Dame issues Esmeralda his ultimatum: to accept his lust or to be hanged. The gipsy rejects him again, leading her to meet her demise by the gallows. Frollo watches the execution calmly from Notre Dame, unaware that Quasimodo stands behind him. Enraged by his adoptive father’s laughing while Esmeralda breathes her last breath, Quasimodo sends him falling off the cathedral.

After lamenting the death of both his adoptive father and a woman he loves, Quasimodo leaves Notre Dame and never to return. He lies next to Esmeralda’s corpse and dies of starvation while still clutching on Esmeralda’s remains. When an excavation group exhumes them years later, both skeletons have become intertwined.

In 1996, Walt Disney Pictures released their version / re-interpretation of Hugo’s Notre-Dame

de Paris as an animated film. As the animated release is intended to be a family consumption, the violence and religious contents are toned down. This phenomenon, as Gruner (2001, p. 276) argues, is due to the fact that children's literature is rarely overtly religious in the sense of direct engagement with faith, religion, and churches because of children's literature's vexed relationship with didacticism that keeps fantasy writers for children from engaging directly with religious language and concepts. This premise leads some characters to undergo some changes, both in their characterization and in their storyline.

Claude Frollo suffers the most change in order to bench the religious elements. He is relegated to a more secular position as a judge, while the position of Archdeacon of Notre Dame is given to someone else. As opposed to Hugo's portrayal of himself as a grey character, Disney's Frollo is instead simplified as the typical villain. Instead of taking the abandoned baby Quasimodo in out of the goodness of his own heart, he is a bloodthirsty and xenophobic judge who kills Quasimodo's parents – just because they are gipsy. Quasimodo enters his life as a form of punishment given to him by the Archdeacon of Notre Dame. The audience is never given Frollo's backstory as an orphan who tries to survive the harshness of Paris together with Jehan. From being a once-pious priest who is also capable of lust and vengeance, Claude Frollo is distilled into the epitome of evil, a maniac and a slave to his lust.

The treatment of Disneyfication also befalls Quasimodo and Esmeralda. Similar to the change the company did to the original tragic ending of *The Little Mermaid*, Quasimodo and Esmeralda are given a second chance in life. Esmeralda is spared from the death in the gallows and given a happy ending with Phoebus. The animated version even disregards the fact that Phoebus is a vain womanizer who cheats on her fiancé, Fleur-de-Lys de Gondelaurier, with Esmeralda. Quasimodo finds acceptance from the Parisians and welcome hands that lead him out of the life of isolation under Notre Dame's stone.

Following the tradition of Disney movies, the music in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* plays an essential role in building the setting. Di Giovanni

(2003, p. 210) describes the opening as “introduced by zoom in on the cathedral appearing amidst the fog and clouds, accompanied by bells ringing and Gregorian chants which become increasingly poignant.” The scene shifts into the streets of medieval Paris and Clopin – taking the role as the medieval bard – singing the narrative. The musical style also shifted from Gregorian-liturgical into pop music style. It is also interesting to note that the Notre-Dame school – an outstanding group of composers and singers working under the patronage of the magnificent cathedral during the late 12th and early 13th century – is the leading reformist in liturgical music by introducing the earliest repertory of polyphonic (multipart) music. The juxtaposition of these two different styles can thus be read as two voices trying to tell the story from different perspectives and relational setting, such as dialogic, complementary, commentary, irony, or many others.

In their classification of musical narrative functions in film and other multimedia, Wingstedts et al. (2010, p. 194 – 5) refer to this as the informative function. In this capacity, the music evokes particular cultural setting or periods, clarifying ambiguous situations and represent a character or phenomenon through the use of leitmotif – short, regularly recurring musical phrase associated with a particular person or idea (Meyer, 2012; Bribitzer-Stull, 2015). It further justifies the argument that the cathedral herself is treated as a character, with Gregorian chant attributed as her leitmotif. Thus, this opening scene introduces Gregorian chant as the leitmotif of Notre Dame, or “the sacred”, while popular music is attributed to “the profane.”

These two different voices come together during the narrative of Frollo and the massacre of Quasimodo's parents. While the cantus firmus is sung in a pop style (Judge Claude Frollo longed / to purge the world / of vice and sin), the Gregorian chant of Kyrie Eleison (Lord have mercy) comes in as the motet – providing commentary and ironic counterpoint to the violence. After the death of Quasimodo's father and the escape of the mother (Stolen goods, no doubt / Take them from her / She ran), the Gregorian-liturgical chant takes over as cantus firmus with “Dies Irae” as follow.

“Dies irae, dies illa
Solvat saeculum in favilla
Teste David cum Sibylla
Quantus tremor est futurus
Quando Judex est venturus”
(Day of wrath, that day
Shall consume the world in ashes
As prophesied by David and the Sibyl
What trembling is to be
When the Judge is come)

With this shift, the Gregorian chant voices the main narrative. It is no longer a commentary of secular music. It instead narrates the on-screen action – Quasimodo’s mother frantic run in search of a sanctuary after seeing her husband slew under the wrath of Frollo’s sword.

The interaction and dialogic nature between these two voices are expanded further in the musical version. The musical based on the animated version was first premiered in 1999 in Berlin as *Der Glöckner von Notre Dame*. The English translation and performance debuted several decades after the German version, in California in 2014. While the play retains core songs from the Disney animated, several new songs are added, and some songs from the movie are expanded. It is deemed necessary due to the change in the story – approaching Hugo’s original novel. The tone, in general, is darker and the comic relief – the three gargoyles in the 1996’s animated version – is taken out and replaced by a choir of saints, imparting a stronger presence of religious elements in the play.

The juxtaposition of Gregorian chant and pop music is used more extensively in the musical version. The format of live performance allows the Gregorian chant to manifest as a Greek chorus. The chorus generally represents the ideal observer, a hidden character such as the Cathedral herself, whose participation is telling the story together with the actor (Maricic & Milanovic, 2016; Weiner, 1980; Foley, 2003). It confirms the previous premise of the Gregorian chant as the representation of Notre Dame herself, the centre of Paris that oversees everything. Through the eyes of her gargoyles and stone saints, the Cathedral observes everything. After all, Notre Dame herself

means ‘Our Mother’, the one who watches and takes care of everyone.

In the musical version, Claude Frollo receives another overhaul in personality. His depiction is closer to Hugo’s vision in his book. “The Bells of Notre Dame” is expanded to accommodate this change, featuring more of Frollo’s backstory. He is described in a more three-dimensional manner, leaving the audience to judge his character through what he says and does concerning Jehan, his brother and Quasimodo’s father. His motivation to take Quasimodo under his wing is his love for his family. Being an orphan who is protected by Notre Dame, he could not doom his only nephew to suffer the same fate as his. It is a stark contrast to the animated version’s description of Frollo in the same song,

“...a figure whose clutches were iron as
much as the bells, Judge Claude Frollo...
Judge Claude Frollo longed to purge the
world of vice and sin
And he saw corruption, ev’rywhere except
within”

The musical version of the song also returns Frollo to his intended position as an archdeacon, revoking Disney’s attempt to involve less religious references and symbols in the climax of the story. While it might have something to do with the changing perspective of religion over time, the musical format allows explicit ‘dual audience’ presentation – where both children and adults interpret the text differently (Alvstad, 2010, Beckett, 2011) – as children’s audience needs to be accompanied by adults in going to a theatre hall. The animated version, however, has a higher risk of the children watching it alone.

The musical also sees the return of Esmeralda’s tragic demise at the end of the play. While she does not breathe her last breath by the glow as in Hugo’s original text, the gipsy still meets her demise because of smoke inhalation after being saved from the pyre. Driven by his affection to Esmeralda, Quasimodo carries her body away – as opposed to his quest to find Esmeralda’s unceremoniously thrown corpse in the book. Staying true to Hugo’s vision, Quasimodo perished by starvation while holding Esmeralda’s corpse at the unholy burial.

Will Esmeralda help the Outcasts?

As one of the main characters in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, Esmeralda is given her leitmotif based on her solo song, “God Helps the Outcasts”. In both the animated version and the musical, the song is first featured as Esmeralda’s prayer inside the Cathedral. The musical version, however, expanded the song through a new juxtaposition with “Salve Regina”. In doing so, the song changes its meaning from Esmeralda’s soliloquy and lament into a dialogue between her and Notre Dame.

While the animated version starts directly with Esmeralda’s prayer, the musical version starts with the chant of “Salve Regina”. Traditionally, “Salve Regina” is one of four classic Marian antiphons in the Catholic tradition. Its literal translation to English is “Hail, O Queen”. Taking the premise of Greek chorus as the voice of the Cathedral herself, this juxtaposition can be read as Notre Dame’s welcome greeting to Esmeralda. In that case, a question can be raised, why would the Cathedral refer to Esmeralda as the ‘Queen’?

“Salve Regina, Mater misericordiae
vita, dulcedo, et spes nostra, salve.
Ad te suspiramus, gementes et flentes
in hac lacrimarum valle.
(Hail, our Queen, mother of mercy
Hail our life, our sweetness, and our hope
to you we send up our sighs,
mourning and weeping in this valley of
tears)”

While it can be interpreted that Notre Dame herself is praying together with Esmeralda, the missing line from the chant conveys a strange meaning. The original line after “vita, dulcedo, et spes nostra, salve” is missing in this version. After acknowledging Virgin Mary as (the world’s) life, sweetness and hope, the classic formulation address Mary as the ‘poor banished children of Eve’ (*ad te clamamus exsules filii Hevae*). After all, Esmeralda is a gypsy – a pariah group generally banished from society.

This elimination might be a nod to Hugo’s original text, where La Esmeralda is not born a gypsy.

She is the daughter of Paquette Guybertaut from Rheims, seduced and left by a young nobleman before being a prostitute. Not long after Agnès (Esmeralda’s birth-name) is born, a group of gypsies kidnaps the young baby and replaces her with a deformed baby (later revealed to be Quasimodo). It leads to Paquette’s escape from Rheims to Paris. The separated mother and daughter are finally reunited just moments before the latter’s execution. Paquette also meets her demise in her attempt to plea for the guards to show her and Esmeralda mercy.

The interpretation of ‘Salve Regina’ as a welcome greeting from the Cathedral to Esmeralda is further justified by Wildgen’s (1976, p 325 – 327) archetypal reading of the gipsy. Wildgen associates Esmeralda with feminine forces – the moon, the water, and the earth. Esmeralda is the embodiment of anima, of the mother. Coincidentally, the cathedral’s name – Notre Dame – actually means “Our Mother”. This juxtaposition, thus, puts Esmeralda in parallel with the Virgin Mary – the patron/matron saint of the cathedral herself. In that case, the music is performing the guiding function (Wingstedts et al., 2010) – focusing the audience attention to Esmeralda.

As a liturgical song, ‘Salve Regina’ also serves the temporal function of musical narrative (*ibid*) – setting and foreground the time setting. Traditionally, ‘Salve Regina’ is sung after Compline – Prayers at the end of the day – or the final church service of the day. It sets up the event to take place late at night, which further justifies the parallel of Esmeralda and the biblical mother. Both are unwanted outcasts who try to find a place of sanctuary in the middle of the night. It is later reflected and pondered by Esmeralda in her line, “Still I see Your face and wonder, were you once an outcast too?” It is a question that leads the listener to recall Mary’s story when she gives birth to Jesus in a manger. It is Esmeralda’s genuine wonder while at the same time leads the audience to see the similarity in both women.

It is also interesting to mark the absence of ‘Kyrie Eleison’ chant in this score. Almost all the songs that are juxtaposed with Gregorian Chant in this musical always feature ‘Kyrie Eleison’. Liturgically, ‘Kyrie Eleison’ is a prayer to beg

for God's mercy and forgiveness. There is always something evil or something not exactly right to be asked for forgiveness. This missing element can also be read as the marking of Esmeralda as innocence, as the sinless figure. It, again, creates an association between her and Virgin Mary – who is traditionally believed to be a real figure who has never committed any sin.

This parallel also creates more sense for the last two lines of the 'Salve Regina' chant, "ad te suspiramus gementes et flentes in hac lacrimarum valle / to you we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears". The cathedral herself is sending her prayer to Esmeralda / the avatar of Mary. It does not mean that the prayer is directed to Mary. The prayer is raised through Mary due to the belief in the Catholic tradition that she has a better connection to God than other earth dwellers. In this sense, Esmeralda's role as the medium for prayer is established by her opening lines, "I do not know if you can hear me, or if you were even there". The close-up shot on the statue of Mary in the animated version made it evident that Esmeralda is praying to the holy virgin. The musical version, however, removes the explicit reference to Mary. It becomes unclear whom does Esmeralda address with 'you'. It opens up a possible reading and interpretation that she is forwarding Notre Dame's prayer – uttered and implied in a Gregorian chant – to a higher deity. In doing so, Esmeralda assumes Mary's traditional role in Catholicism.

All this juxtaposition and parallel position establish Esmeralda's role as an avatar of Mary, a liminal figure between the sacred – or the church / the religion – and the profane – the mundane human being. As such being – at least in this scene, Esmeralda is supposedly free of the worldly desire. Her initial fear and feel represent the profane side of her. The later part of the song, however, builds up her selflessness and divine side. It is done through juxtaposing the choir (singing in different leitmotif and void of any Gregorian element) representing the Parisian's prayer.

CHOIR:

I ask for wealth, I ask for fame
I ask for glory to shine on my name
I ask for love I can possess

I ask for God and his angels to bless me

ESMERALDA:

I ask for nothing, I can get by
But I know so many less lucky than I
Please help my people, the poor and
downtrod

I thought we all were the children of God

Other than establishing the sacred side of Esmeralda by comparing her prayer to general Parisian's prayers, this part can also be read as Esmeralda's response to 'Salve Regina' at the beginning of the song. "But I know so many less lucky than I, please help my people, the poor and down trod" carries a double meaning here. Without "Salve Regina" in the animated version, it is clear that Esmeralda refers to the gipsy – her people who are generally treated as outsiders and misfits in the society. The new juxtaposition, however, provides an opening for another interpretation. The line "ad te suspiramus gementes et flentes in hac lacrimarum valle / to you we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears" corresponds directly to Esmeralda's prayer. Notre Dame considers herself (and the Parisian) as the miserable, the one who cries and prays to and through Mary. Through her prayer here, Esmeralda channels and forwards Notre Dame's prayer to the higher deity, exercising the traditional role of the Virgin Mary. It is, thus, clear that the new arrangement of the song changes her role in the story completely.

What does Frollo Pray for?

Since its first release alongside the animated version of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, "Hellfire" has been widely acknowledged as one of the best Disney villain's songs as well as one of their darkest and most violent. It combines several essential liturgical chants with the lyrics about lust and carnal desire. This song might be the blueprint for the reworking of other songs into those in the musical.

The song is opened by the truncated version of "Confiteor" (literal translation: I confess), a prayer generally said during the Penitential Act at the beginning of the mass.

“Confiteor deo, omnipotenti
 Beatae Mariae, semper virgini
 Beato Michaeli Archangelo, sanctis apos-
 tolis
 Omnibus sanctis
 (I confess to God the almighty
 And to blessed Mary, the ever-virgin
 To blessed Michael the Archangel and to
 the holy apostles
 To all the saints)

It is interesting to note that the missing part of the chant helps setting up the power dynamics. Traditionally, the chant is followed by either “et vobis fratres / and to you, my brothers and sisters” or “et tibi pater / and to you father”. While the former invokes the feeling of brotherhood and an attempt to lower oneself in front of the group to seek for forgiveness, the latter establishes a stricter hierarchy where the priest/father is higher than the sinned. With the formulation in this song, the power structure becomes quite ambiguous.

It is, however, undeniable that the “Confiteor” prayers are a useful tool to establish the hierarchy. In this case, Stone’s (1999, p.6) argument can be applied to investigate the power construction, “[p]rayer is the common denominator in most films where religion’s chaplaincy role is being established in the face of violence or injury”. As the chant performs its guiding function, Frolo emerges from the backstage. The spotlight on him thus establishes Frolo as the religious authority yet ambiguously placed in between the equal vobis fratres and pater.

The archdeacon of Notre Dame’s part begins with the self-affirmation of his virtues. As if he is trying to defend himself, Frolo begins with “Beata Maria, you know I am a righteous man, of my virtue I am justly proud”. Interestingly, this affirmation is responded by the Greek chorus with “et tibi pater / and to your father”. Originally a part of “Confiteor”, this phrase can be read differently due to the phrasing and a significant distance from the first formulation. As Frolo is returned to his chaplaincy in the musical version, this phrase acquires a new meaning. It is undeniable that pater is addressed to Frolo.

In light of this new interpretation, the interaction between two different leitmotifs in this

song becomes more dialogic. Frolo’s use of “Beata Maria” at the beginning of his part can, therefore, be read as an attempt to start the dialogue with the cathedral. He addresses Notre Dame (or “Our Mother”) with her other name. It is no longer just a prayer; it is an exchange between the archdeacon and the entirety of his cathedral. It is, therefore, as if the all-seeing Notre Dame is trying to prove Frolo’s self-aggrandizement otherwise. The fragmentation and delay of this part from “Confiteor”’s original formulation are intended to create a more dialogic interaction between Frolo and the cathedral herself.

The traditional performative nature of “Confiteor” in the liturgical service provides another layer of meaning in the further dialogues that follow. The prayer is chanted together by the priest and the congregation, as it is a penitential act asking for mercy and forgiveness. It takes into account the priest’s nature as a human being who cannot escape sin. In that light, Frolo’s further self-affirmation with “Beata Maria, you know I am so much purer than the common, vulgar, weak, licentious crowd” becomes an irony. He is defying the very soul of “Confiteor”, to which the Greek chorus responds with “Quia peccavi nimis / that I have greatly sinned”. What is a confession turns into a soft accusation due to the archdeacon’s absence in the collective prayer. It also opens a more ironic interpretation which Frolo himself has realized his sin but unable to admit it. He walks down the path of self-defence instead.

The accusation from the chorus on the archdeacon’s sins continues by classifying Frolo’s sins into two categories, the sin of thought (cogitatione) and the sin of flesh (verbe et operae).

FROLLO:

Then tell me, Maria
 Why I see her dancing there
 Why her smold’ring eyes still scorch my
 soul

CHORUS:

Cogitatione (in my thoughts)

FROLLO:

I feel her, I see her
 The sun caught in her raven hair
 is blazing in me out of all control

CHORUS:

Verbe et operae (in my words and in what I have done)

Another mention of “Maria” in this part justifies further the interpretation of this song as an exchange between Frollo and the (congregation of) Notre Dame. The Gregorian chant itself is also split differently than the original prayer, “cogitatione, verbo, opera et omissione / in my thoughts, in my words, in what I have done and what I have failed to do”. The omission of omissione further emphasizes that everything has been done – not just in thoughts and words, but also in action. As a priest who is supposed to live in celibacy, it is hinted that Frollo has done some physical action driven by his lust over Esmeralda.

The possibility of reading Esmeralda as the avatar of Mary and/or Notre Dame that we have discussed in the previous section thus opens another layer of interpretation for “Hellfire”. Just as Wildgen (1976) sees Esmeralda as the mother archetype, she attributes Frollo to the archetype of ‘father’ and ‘magician’. Both symbolize power. Logic and structure as opposed to the ascetic and intuitive aspects implied in the archetypical ‘mother’. In “Bells of Notre Dame”, we are presented by how fast Frollo ascends in the official church rank. He resides within the structure and wields the power of the structure. He also commands the church. However, it is Esmeralda (as discussed in the previous section) that the Notre Dame is praying to. She is the other side of the religious coin, the ascetic aspect as opposed to the structural aspect that Frollo represents.

“Hellfire” is not just about Frollo’s carnal desire over the gipsy performer; it is also about his lust to seize more power in the church. As an archdeacon, he holds the structural power over the church. His image in society, on the other hand, does not allow him to gain more power over them. Frollo is feared due to his obsession with alchemy and the distance he maintains from the Parisian public. A dialogue with Holy Mary / Notre Dame in “Hellfire” reflects how his desire for power clashes with his conscience. In his craving for Esmeralda, Frollo wants to rule both the structural and ascetic aspects of the church, of Notre Dame,

and Paris. His line “Be mine, or you will burn” reflects his power-hungry attitude, that Frollo is ready to wreak havoc upon the church had he failed in his conquest. What is notoriously known as a violent and sexual song reveals a darker struggle and campaign for power.

Conclusion

Classic literature is continuously re-interpreted, often with the intention of re-contextualising it to ease the newer reader/audience to understanding. In doing so, the dialogue around the source is continuously renewed. One such re-interpretation attempts are through songs and music, such as the two songs from *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* discussed in this essay. The songs are arranged in a way that incorporates different musical styles, such as Gregorian chant and pop music. While people, in general, might think that the Gregorian chant is put there for the sake of creating an exotic atmosphere, the way the juxtaposition between different styles works there allows the creation of a new layer of meaning. The arrangement does not just complement/ illustrate the main narrative; it works out another narrative instead. In combination with the staging and acting, the musical becomes not just storytelling through multimedia. It becomes multimodal storytelling instead.

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