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Thomas Adès's *The Exterminating Angel*

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Abstract

Thomas Adès's third opera, *The Exterminating Angel*, is based closely upon Luis Buñuel's 1962 film *El ángel exterminador*, in which the hosts and guests at a high-society dinner party find themselves inexplicably unable to leave the dining room. Initial critical response to the opera too often focused on superficial similarities and discrepancies between the two works at the expense of attending to the specifically musical ways in which Adès presented the drama. This article explores the role that repetition plays in the opera, and in particular how repetitions serve both as a means of critiquing bourgeois sensibilities and as a representation of (loss of) will. I conclude by drawing on the work of Deleuze in order to situate the climax of the opera against the notion of the eternal return, highlighting how the music articulates the dramatic failure of the characters to escape.

Thomas Adès's third opera, *The Exterminating Angel*, is based closely upon Luis Buñuel's 1962 film *El ángel exterminador*, in which the hosts and guests at a high-society dinner party find themselves inexplicably unable to leave the dining room. Having first seen the film as a teenager, Adès was attracted to its operatic potential, 'because every opera is about getting out of a particular situation'.[1] Copyright issues prevented an early realisation of these intentions;[2] but although these were not fully resolved until 2011,[3] work with Tom Cairns on

[1] Christian Arseni, 'Why do we ever do anything?': Thomas Adès and Tom Cairns talk about *The Exterminating Angel*', Programme booklet to *The Exterminating Angel,* Salzburger Festspiele programme booklet (22 July–31 August 2016), pp. 46–57, available online at http://seenandheard-international.com/2016/07/new-interview-with-thomas-ades-and-tom-cairns-about-the-operas-world-premiere/ (accessed 20 November 2016). It is likely that Adès saw the Channel 4 broadcast of the film on 4 April 1984.

[2] Sally Cavender reports that attempts to secure the copyright for the film began in 2001. *Faber Music News* (Autumn 2016), p. 2.

[3] Matthew Erikson, 'Thomas Adès in all his aspects', *Los Angeles Times* (6 March 2011) http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/la-ca-spring-thomas-ades-20110306-story.html (accessed 20 November 2016).

the libretto began in 2009.[4] The opera's commission was formally announced in November 2011,[5] and the final versions of the score and libretto are dated 2015.

Composition on *The Exterminating Angel* thus overlapped with the period in which the interviews between Adès and Tom Service that made up *Thomas Adès: Full of Noises* took place.[6] So it is likely that Adès had *The Exterminating Angel* in mind when he exclaimed: 'You get these people in this situation and then: oh God, how are we going to get out of this? The notes have to do that too. How are we going to get off stage? How are we going to get *home*?'[7] The symphonic ambitions Adès describes for *The Tempest*, 'which means that in theory the evening is driven by the musical logic at least as much as by the logic of the drama itself' applies equally to *The Exterminating Angel*;[8] the (generic) claim that 'music in an opera should be a sort of fate that the characters are going to be subjected to' is repeated almost verbatim in 2016: 'The music is a sort of destiny the characters are subject to'.[9]

Despite the libretto going through a number of drafts, the final version became by Cairns's admission 'much closer to the film' than had originally been intended,[10] with many lines closely following the translation of the film and the ordering of scenes almost exactly following Buñuel (see Table 1 below).[11] This, coupled with the prominence given to the film

[4] Arseni, 'Why do we ever do anything?', p. 48
[5] 'Salzburg Festival Commissions 4 New Operas', CBC News (17 November 2011) http://www.cbc.ca/news/arts/salzburg-festival-commissions-4-new-operas-1.982029 (accessed 20 November 2016).
[6] Thomas Adès and Tom Service, *Thomas Adès: Full of Noises* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012); hereafter abbreviated to *TA:FON*.
[7] *TA:FON*, p. 12.
[8] *TA:FON*, p. 128.
[9] *TA:FON*, p. 14; Arseni, 'Why do we ever do anything?', p. 49.
[10] Ibid., p. 48.
[11] Comparison between the libretto and translations found in *The Exterminating Angel, Nazarin and Los Olvidados: three films by Luis Buñuel*, trans. Nicholas Fry (London: Lorrimer Publishing, 1972) and the DVD release of the film (Arrow Films, 2006) reveal close correspondences and literal repetitions.

in the pre-publicity for the opera,[12] doubtless encouraged critics to make comparisons between the two. Thus, for Andrew Clements, Adès and Cairns's 'treatment tightens the drama and maintains its intensity', but overall he wonders uncharitably 'if the effort has been entirely worthwhile'.[13] Clements, like Anthony Tommasini, observes the loss of much of Buñuel's humour; [14] for Shirley Apthorp, 'like so many operas based on films, Adès's version is a safely aestheticised take on the original: more pleasurable, less disturbing'.[15] In every case, the spectre of 'fidelity criticism' looms large,[16] in which Buñuel's vision becomes a dubious (filmic) yardstick to measure Adès's (operatic) achievement.

Gilles Deleuze's reading of Buñuel's art – and *The Exterminating Angel* is the example to which he keeps returning – places repetition at its core.[17] Yet Adès makes no attempt to replicate Buñuel's peculiarly cinematic language of repetition and difference, developing instead his own musical techniques for doing so. Indeed, although Adès is talking of music when he claims that he doesn't think 'exact *repetition* is possible … it's simply a *different* kind of movement', his comment applies equally to adaptation as both process and product.[18] The invocation of repetition and difference brings to mind Deleuze's reworking of the Nietzschean notion of the eternal return, in which that which returns is 'not the same', but rather, difference.[19] From this perspective, in which the focus is shifted away from material repetitions and representations, and in which identity is grounded in difference ('all

[12] See, for instance, Tom Service, 'Rifles, Bears and Buñuel: Thomas Adès on his new never-ending opera', *The Guardian,* 24 July 2016 https://www.theguardian.com/music/2016/jul/24/thomas-ades-the-exterminating-angel-bunuel-opera-interview (accessed 20 November 2016).
[13] Andrew Clements, 'Adès delivers unmissable operatic adaptation', *The Guardian,* 29 July 2016.
[14] Anthony Tommasini, 'In This Opera, You Can Depart, but You Can Never Leave ', *The New York Times,* 29 July 2016.
[15] Shirley Apthorp, '*The Exterminating Angel*, Haus für Mozart, Salzburg — "Adès's score is brilliant"', *The Financial Times,* 29 July 2016.
[16] Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 6.
[17] See Gilles Delueze, *Cinema 1*: *The Movement-Image* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1986), pp. 125–38.
[18] *TA:FON*, p. 26. Emphasis added.
[19] Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* trans. Paul Patton (London: The Athlone Press, 1994), p. 300.

identities are only simulated'),[20] Buñuel's film becomes displaced, losing its originary status as a benchmark against which to register change in Adès's opera.

Indeed, the greater the emphasis critics placed on the film as a point of departure, the less they sought to engage with the way in which specific media actualise particular meanings. Buñuel, in the face of decades of socio-psychological criticism, wrote that 'I simply see a group of people who couldn't do what they wanted to – leave a room'.[21] Adès develops this notion, giving (musical) voice to the figure of the exterminating angel so that its defining characteristic – 'an absence of will, of purpose, of action […] In this story the force that makes us act has been turned off, like a switch'[22] – has a virtual presence. The inability for characters to act recalls Deleuze's discussion of *Hamlet* (and also Nietzsche's Zarathustra).[23] For Deleuze, Hamlet's initial inaction 'exists in a state of relation to a past that is disconnected from the present'; only later can he exist 'in the moment of the present, where the self becomes capable of acting' and thus will forwards towards the future.[24] Bound up in these states are different processual relationships between past, present and future that Deleuze characterises as syntheses of time.[25] I shall argue below that a metamorphosis similar to Hamlet's eventual ability to will occurs at the climax of Adès's *The Exterminating Angel*, invoking Deleuze's third synthesis of time, in which 'past and present become dimensions of the future'.[26] Until this point of high drama, musical processes that recall Deleuze's first synthesis of time, concerning habit, take priority. Adès is

[20] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. xix.
[21] Luis Buñuel, *My Last Breath,* trans. Abigail Israel (Fontana: London, 1985)*,* p. 239.
[22] Arseni, 'Why do we ever do anything?', pp. 51, 53. Guy Dammann is one of the few critics to focus on this aspect of the score. 'Chilling moments of rupture', *Times Literary Supplement,* 19 August 2016, pp. 24–5.
[23] See Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, pp. 88–91, 298–9.
[24] Henry Somers-Hall, 'Time out of Joint: Hamlet and the Pure Form of Time', *Deleuze Studies* Vol. 5 (2011), pp. 56–76, at pp. 69–70.
[25] For an introduction to Deleuze's three syntheses of time, see James Williams, *Gilles Deleuze's Philosophy of Time: A Critical Introduction and Guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011).
[26] Williams, *Gilles Deleuze's Philosophy of Time*, p. 113.

able through these means to differentiate his opera from Buñuel's film in order to refer *musically* (and thus operatically, as well as critically) to habitual, repetitive bourgeois behaviour as well as to project his more terrifying and significant point: what would happen if we were no longer able to function?

Repetition and difference

Before approaching the temporalities of Adès's *Exterminating Angel*, I shall discuss material repetitions – repetition in its every day sense of recalling and representing identifiable musical ideas and concepts. At its most basic, I shall explore similarities between the opera and the film, beginning from the closest point of superficial correspondence between the two before charting ever-wider divergences. Yet these differences also reveal deeper connections by virtue of their intertextual play and through their medium-specific representations of the repetitive, ritualised habits that govern social interactions.

Adès's *The Exterminating Angel* follows Buñuel's narrative closely, with only one sub-plot from the film (the Masonic affiliations of two characters) failing to make its way onto the stage in some form (see Table 1 for a synopsis of the opera and comparison with the film).[27] By combining certain characters, Adès and Cairns were able to reduce the number of dinner guests from seventeen to twelve (see Figure 1). Thus two of Buñuel's couples, the siblings Juana and Francisco Avila and the married Rita and Christian, are represented operatically by Silvia and Francisco de Avila. The cancer patient Leonora exhibits a religious devotion to the Virgin Mary in both film and opera, but in the latter she is also given the Kabbalistic tendencies of the film's Ana Maynar; Blanca is made the wife of Mr. Roc, the conductor, rendering superfluous the otherwise minor figure Alicia. These changes have the

[27] Bar numbers in this table and throughout the article refer to the vocal score of the opera produced prior to the premiere.

practical value of making the staging less unwieldy; they also allow certain themes within the opera (an incestuous subtext between the de Avilas and the use of religion to combat problems) to be intensified.

Table 1 Thomas Adès, *The Exterminating Angel*, Formal Overview

Section	Bars	Comments	Corresponding Scene(s) in Buñuel (1962/2006)
Prologue	1–8	Asynchronized church bells (see Example 5), overlapping orchestra tuning and conductor's entrance. Sheep stand on stage.	[0:00] Opening credits; shot of cathedral at night. Choir singing *Te Deum*. Outside view of house.
Act I Scene 1	9–36	Night. Julio tries to prevent Lucas the footman from leaving. Motif x introduced ('I wish I didn't have to leave', bars 17–20).	[1:21] As in opera; followed by sequence in which Julio talks to staff who are setting the dinner table
Act I Scene 2	37–49	Kitchen. Meni and Camilla, two maids, discuss leaving; accompaniment foreshadows Act I Scene 5.	[2:36] As in opera.
	50–64	Kitchen. Pablo the cook prevents Enrique from also leaving.	[3:05] As in opera. Outside shot of house.
Act I Scene 3	65–135	First Entry of the Guests. Passacaglia. Guests are introduced to one another (see Example 2)	[4:07] Party arrives.
	136–162	Tempo di Scene 2. As servants escape, Meni and Camilla make further plans to leave. Reworking of bars 37–64.	[4:37] Meni and Camilla sneak out
	163–244	Second Entry of the Guests (varied repetition of bars 65–135), followed by orchestral continuation (bars 217–44).	*[Second entrance of guests cut from print of film released on DVD]*
	245	Tempo di Scene 2. Meni and Camilla run away.	[4:59] Pablo fills glass swan with caviar
Act I Scene 4	246–284	Dining Room. Blanca and Colonel converse; chaconne-like harmonic pattern. Lucia hushes the guests for Nobile's toast (bars 282–24).	[5:05] As in opera
	285–300	Nobile's First Toast (bars 285–95). Guests raise glasses to Leticia (bars 296–300)	[5:43] As in opera (glass raised to Silvia)
	301–312	Raúl, Silvia, and Francisco discuss Leticia; begins with variation of bars 282–24.	[5:58] Ana Maynar and Leandro discuss Leticia
	313–25	Nobile's Second Toast.	[6:19] As in opera
	326–394	Ragoût-Aria. Lucia announces meal will begin with ragoût (bars 326–359; Example 3a); guests sing its praises (bars 360–384). Enrique arrives with food and trips over (bars 385–394).	[6:45] As in opera
	395–430	Lucia announces it was a joke (bars 395–412); the guests find it droll, save for Russell (bars 413–425). Lucia rushes out to a distorted version of 'Sheep may safely graze' (bars 426–430)	[7:15] As in opera
Act I Scene 5	431–452	Julio appears with a bear handler and bear; Lucia asks that the bear, and some lambs, are released in the garden.	[7:58] As in opera
	453–503	Julio announces strange things are happening (bars 453–455). Pablo states he is leaving (bars 456–461), lying to cover his actions (bars 462–467). Lucia fires him, along with Enrique and servants who also are trying to leave (bars 468–503; recalling intervallic patterns of bars 456–61).	[8:10] The Butler announces strange things are happening; Pablo and Enrique announce they are leaving; Lucia fires them. Servants in the kitchen plan to leave.
Act I Scene 6	504–516	Drawing Room. Blanca is playing the piano. Leticia throws an ashtray through the window, then joins with Blanca's piano playing to sing a fragment of the song	[9:58] A piano is playing in the background. Leticia throws an ashtray through the window; Leandro claims it was a

		'Lavaba la blanca nina'. Theme.	passing Jew.
	517–528	Var 1. Eduardo and Beatriz dance and talk.	[10:25] As in opera
	529–594	Var 2 and 3. Leonora and the Doctor converse; Leonora kisses him	[10:51] As in opera
	595–625	Var 4. Silvia checks that Francisco has his pills; Leonora asks if the Doctor is going to listen to Blanca play	[11:22] Rita checks that Christian has his pills;
		[no equivalent]	[11:32] Raúl introduces Leandro to Christian;
	626–641	Var 5. Raúl asks the Doctor why Leonora kissed him; they discuss her cancer. Leonora reveals the chicken legs in her bag.	[11:45] Leonora asks if the doctor is going to listen to Blanca play; Raúl asks the doctor why Leonora kissed him; they discuss her cancer
		[repeated greetings in film replaced by introductions in Act I Scene III]	[12:05] Christain and Leandro continue their discussion; they know each other. Russell eavesdrops. Christian and Mr Roc exchange masonic signs of recognition. Ana Manyar is listening to the music. She has chicken legs in her bag.
	642–729	[End of variations] The group praise Blanca and discuss the performance; Raúl asks for something by Adès (bars 642–664).	[13:32] The group praise Blanca and discuss the performance; Raúl asks for something by Scarlatti.
		[see above]	[14:01] Christian and Mr Roc discuss their lodges Leandro and Christian are introduced to one another again
		The group call for a song from Leticia, claiming they will not leave until she sings (bars 665–675)	[No equivalent]
		The group begin to make plans to leave; Roc lies on a sofa (bars 676–680). Blanca and Nobile discuss Roc (bars 681–704). Guests begin to make excuses to stay (bars 705–729).	[14:42] The group begin to make plans to leave; Mr Roc lies on a sofa; Alicia and Nobile discuss Mr Roc's stamina; more and more people are settling down
Act I Scene 7	730–755	Cloakroom Area. Lucia and Colonel kiss. Opens with reworking of material from Lucia's laughing (bars 395 ff).	[16:24] As in opera
Act I Scene 8	756–788	Drawing Room. Nobile and Lucia discuss the fact no-one is leaving; Nobile invites people to stay.	[16:51] As in opera
	789–808	Colonel, Leticia and Russell make futile attempts to leave; increasing prominence of motif *x* in orchestra (see Example 7).	[17:39] As in opera
	809–843	The Doctor and Russell observe the lights going off and state they are going to leave (bars 809–817). People begin to settle down and go to sleep (bars 818–843)	[18:03] As in opera
	844–853	The clock strikes five.	[18:24] Leandro mentions it is five o'clock
	854–906	Berceuse. Beatriz and Eduardo sing of their first night together.	[20:12] As in opera
Interlude	907–973	Orchestral interlude. Sequence of free variations on material of bars 907–913.	[No direct equivalent; military overtones of interlude

		Prominent brass and percussion.	reflected in hints of revolution at end of film]

Section	Bars	Comments	Corresponding Scene(s) in Bunuel (1962)
Act II Scene 1	974–981	The party dress themselves again; Lucia and Nobile discuss arrangements. The accompaniment is based on a semitone transposition of bars 462–467.	[21:51] Outside shot of the house in morning.
	982–996	Blanca, Leonora and Silvia discuss their sleep (bars 982–989). Silvia describes a train crash (bars 990–996).	[22:30] Ana, Rita and Silvia discuss how they slept; Lucia and Nobile plan breakfast; Ana describes a train crash
	997–1011	Leticia announces she is hungry (bars 997–1002). Silvia arranges herself and tries to tidy Francisco's hair (bars 1003–1011)	[23:22] Letitica says she's hungry. Juana and Eduardo describe Francisco's and Beatriz's appearances.
	1012–1030	Leticia, Leonora and the Doctor discuss Russell's declining health	[24:32] Leticia, the Doctor and Nobile discuss Russell's deteriorating health
	1031–1054	Lucia tells Julio to provide breakfast. Waltz-like material.	[25:24] As in opera
	1055–1062	Leticia, Silvia and Blanca ask Lucia if there is a place they can arrange themselves; still waltz-like.	[25:48] Rita and Ana ask Lucia if there is a place where they can tidy up
	1063–1090	Tempo di valse. The Colonel rightly predicts to Raúl and Eduardo that the women won't leave the room.	[26:01] As in opera
	1091–1194	Members of the group discuss the fact that they are not leaving; increasing panic. Opens with figure from Act I Scene 4 (bar 395); waltz eventually breaks down into oscillation of chords (from bar 1108). Doctor questions why breakfast was served in dining room to accompaniment that incorporates motif *x* (from bar 1177).	[26:15] As in opera
	1195–1265	Blanca worries about her children; her and Roc resolve to leave but fail. Silvia uses social decorum as a reason not to leave (bars 1207–1220); Blanca appeals to her as a mother (bars 1221–1228), but Silvia and later Francisco sing of the children's tutor, Padre Sansòn (1229–1265)	[27:34] Blanca worries about her children; Rita discusses her children's tutor
	1266–1273	The party make an attempt to escape; Lucas brings the breakfast trolley. Leticia tries to stop him from entering.	[28:16] Every attempt to leave the room fails as the party get distracted
	1274–1303	Julio serves breakfast; the guests remain to eat and drink. Vocal (bars 1274–1281) and then orchestral (bars 1282–1287) material based on motif *x*. Raúl notes he has been to other parties where he has been up at 8 the following morning (bars 1288–1299)	[28:42] As in opera
	1304–1321	Spoons Aria. Francisco asks for spoons (verse 1, bars 1304–1313); Lucia asks Julio to get them (verse 2, bars 1314–1321).	[28:53] Alicia asks for spoons.
	1322–1351	Julio unable to leave the room; to material based on motif *x*, and Lucia's annoyance, Julio offers guests food instead (bars 1322–1339). Lucia asks Julio	[29:04] As in opera

		and Blanca, who is crying, what is wrong with them (bars 1340–1351). The Colonel drily asks for the Doctor's opinion (bars 1349–1350).	
	1352–1365	The Doctor realizes no-one is able to leave (cf Act I Scene 5, bars 453–455)	[29:58] As in opera. Outside shot of the house to establish time passing
	1366–1429	Piano Interlude; Blanca plays the piano and sings 'Over the Sea'. Bars 1366–1374: Introduction. Verse 1 begins bar 1375; Verse 2 bar 1392. Cadenza bars 1408–1409. Verse 3 begins bar 1410, but ends with obsessive repetition of phrase 'tell me'. Leticia bangs the lid down lid as Russell is ill. Colonel asks for Doctor's opinion (varied repeat, down a semitone, of bars 1349–1350).	[30:29] Blanca plays the piano idly; Leticia closes the lid. Mr Roc asks the Doctor how Russell is.
	1430–1456	The Doctor announces Russell has fallen into a coma	[31:16] As in opera
	1457–1539	Fugue of Panic. Silvia tries to calm Francisco; Eduardo gives Beatriz water from a vase; Leticia threatens to break another window; Raúl asks why no-one goes through the door; Roc connects it to the servants leaving (see Example 4)	[31:53] Juana tries to calm Francisco; otherwise, as in opera
	1540–1558	The Doctor's Fit: The Doctor calls for calm and rational thought (based on Act I Passacaglia).	[33:57] As in opera
	1559–1565	The guests are extremely agitated, repeating the doctor's diagnosis of abulia	[no equivalent]
	1566–1624	Nobile tries to restore order; vocal line repeats passacaglia theme from Act 1 Scene 3. Raúl blames Nobile for the situation (bars 1575–1624, Tempo di Fuga, from bar 1605). Leticia sides with Nobile and slaps Raúl (1616–1624).	[34:15] As in opera
	1625–1646	Silvia tries to calm Francisco; Russell's breathing becomes laboured. Francisco storms away.	[35:40] Juana tries to calm Francisco; otherwise, as in opera
	1647–1659	Russell speaks (cf Act I Scene 5, bars 453–455) before lapsing back into a coma	[36:14] As in opera
	1660–1693	Beatriz and Eduardo discuss a way to be on their own.	[36:26] As in opera
	1694–1723	Witches' Trio. Blanca, Silvia and Leticia discuss the visions they had in the walk-in cabinet	[37:00] Silvia, Ana and Rita discuss the visions they had in the walk-in cabinet
	1724–1734	Clock strikes 2. Russell dies.	[37:28] As in opera
	1735–1777	Doctor and Colonel discuss Russell's death.	[38:56] Eduardo and Beatriz lie together hidden while the Colonel and Doctor move Russell's corpse
	1778–1808	Eduardo and Beatriz lie together hidden (bars 1778–1798) while the Colonel and Doctor move Russell's corpse (1799–1808)	
		[no equivalent]	[40:23] Ana Maynar sees Russell's hand; she tries to raise Leticia but faints

Section	Bars	Comments	Corresponding Scene(s) in Bunuel (1962)
Act III Scene 1	1–38	Outside the House. Chorus wants to go into the house (bars 1–16). Police prevent them from going in; conflict (bars 17–38).	[41:00] As in opera

Act III Scene 2	39–87	The Salon. Julio bursts a water pipe (bars 39–41); the ensemble celebrates when water is released (bars 42–50). Doctor warns against drinking too quickly (bars 51–68). People drink (bars 69–87).	[42:32] As in opera
	88–142	Obsessive compulsive ballet. Rhythmic ostinato. Blanca, Roc and Leonora ask Julio for food. Julio says there isn't any; he is eating paper.	[45:02] The Butler eats paper
	143–201	The storm breaks. Francisco and Silvia complain about Blanca's hair combing (bars 143–153; chord progressions rich in hexatonic progressions); Francisco asks Lucia if she knows where his box of ulcer pills are (bars 154–182, reworking harmonic content of 143–153); Francisco and Raúl argue whilst Nobile tries to restore order (bars 183–201, similar harmonic content again).	[46:03] Franciso complains about Silvia combing her hair. Rita asks Beatriz if she has seen Christian's box of pills; Rita and Christian worry about their children; Raúl suggests Rita and Christian are having marital problems
	202–213	Nobile protests his innocence	[49:19] Raúl suggests the party are Nobile's victims; he protests his innocence
	214–271	People begin to take place faith in others: Lucia talks about her and Nobile's intention to celebrate Requiem (bars 214–229); Blanca and Silvia sing of their children (bars 230–240); Leonora makes the Doctor promise to take her to Lourdes (bars 241–268). Leticia announces again she is hungry (bars 269–271).	[50:12] Lucia talks of her plans to celebrate Te Deum; attempts are made to contain the smell of Russell's body; Raúl throws Christian's pill box into the sitting room; Blanca is pulling her hair out; Leonora makes plans to go to Lourdes
	272–277	The Doctor sings of the need for painkillers	[53:20] Nobile shows the doctor his recreational supply of laudanum, codeine and morphine; Francisco overhears
	278–310	Francisco insults Blanca; the Colonel defends her (bars 278–283). Francisco's tantrum (bars 284–298). Nobile responds (bars 299–310; from 301 there is a reworking, down a semitone, of bars 202–213)	[54:45] As in opera
Interlude	311–360	Guitar introduction, with gunfire in the background; a dismembered hand floats in front of Leonora's eyes (bars 311–316). Leonora sings a hallucinatory aria (bars 317–340). She stabs Blanca's hand (bars 341–343); the rest of the group react (bars 344–348). The Doctor explains her actions (bars 349–360, (cf Act I Scene 5, bars 453–455).	[55:49] As in opera
Act III Scene 3	361–424	Eduardo and Beatriz in the cabinet. Introduction (bars 361–363); duet part 1 (bars 364–380) and part 2 (bars 381–418). Clock strikes two (bars 419–424)	[58:45] As in opera
Act III Scene 4	425–455	Roc glides through the air 'like a vampire' and attempts to molest Leticia; material based on Act II Scene 1 bars 1031ff.	[1:00:00] Mr Roc kisses both Leticia and Rita as they sleep; Rita wakes.
	456–481	Raúl claims it was the Colonel who attacked her; accusations fly around	[1:01:07] Christian accuses the Colonel of taking advantage of Rita; hubbub in which the Colonel throws Alicia to the ground
	482–513	Nobile suggests men and women sleep on opposite sides of the room; music recalls his hospitality towards guests (Act I Scene 8 bars 789 ff.; motif *x* in the	[1:02:41] As in opera

		accompaniment)	
	514–536	Lambs enter the room	[1:03:16] As in opera
Interlude	537–572	The guests surround the lambs (bars 537–546; music develops parody of 'Sheep may safely graze' from Act I Scene 5). The bear roars three times (bars 547–552). Transition to Scene 5 (bars 553–572) based primarily on descending semitone cycles.	[1:03:49] As in opera
Act III Scene 5	573–592	Outside. Introduction (bars 573–576). The chorus comments on the quiet (bars 577–580, developing material from the start of Act 3); Lucas and the other servants speculate on reasons (bars 581–588; material in accompaniment largely hexatonic); varied reprise of chorus material (bars 589–592).	[1:04:04] As in opera
	593–642	Padre Sansón brings Yoli, Silvia's son; the crowd encourage him to try to enter (bars 593–631). Yoli fails, to the disappointment of the crowd and Sansón (bars 632–642; motif *x* in the orchestra)	[1:05:07] As in opera
Act III Scene 6	643–651	The guests prepare a fire; they are gnawing on sheep remains.	[1:05:33] The guests prepare a fire; the doctor is concerned about hygiene
	652–660	Nobile has a bandage on his head; the implication is that guests have attacked him.	[1:06:26] As in opera
	661–689	The guests eat the lamb (see Example 3b). The Doctor worries about hygiene (bars 674–685). Nobile and Lucia eat (bars 686–689).	[1:06:46] The guests eat the lamb
	690–710	Leonora recalls a Kabbalistic premonition about keys that unlock the unknown (bars 690–701); she attempts to read the chicken claws for a message (bars 702–710; motif *x* in the accompaniment).	[1:06:50] Ana recalls a Kabbalistic premonition; she cannot read the chicken claws and requires blood
	711–744	The Witches trio call for blood (bars 711–726); Silvia sees blood on Francisco's shirt (bars 727–736); the party discover Eduardo and Beatriz's corpses (bars 737–744).	[1:08:18] The party discover Eduardo and Beatriz's corpses
	745–759	Francisco contemplates pushing Raúl out of the room; Raúl threatens to throw Francisco's pills out. Passage based on varied repetitions of bass in bars 745–750.	[1:09:45] Francisco contemplates pushing Leandro out of the room; Christian and Mr Roc use secret freemason codes to try to summon help
			[1:11:40] The bear is seen. Francisco tries to push Leandro out of the room; Leandro punches him in the face
	760–779	Berceuse macabre. Silvia sings a lullaby to a lamb, as if it were her son (Intro, bars 760–761; verse 1 bars 762–767; verse 2 bars 768–773; sings 'good night' bars 774–779)	[1:12:15] Night: a sequence of nightmarish visions and sounds .The sequence ends with Rita wishing her child goodnight; we hear a child's voice replying
	780–790	The bear is seen in the next room (bars 780–790).	[1:14:43] Outside; the servants speculate on what happened. The bear is wandering in the courtyard
	791–830	The offstage chorus sing a Requiem (bars 791–797, see Example 6). Over	[1:16:08] As in opera [save for Requiem]

		repetitions of the requiem, the witches' trio plot Nobile's death; the Doctor begs for reason.	
	831–874	Nobile offers to sacrifice himself (bars 831–832); Leticia realises everyone is in the same place as they were during Blanca's piano performance (bars 833–859). The guests one by one agree, and encourage Blanca to play the piano (bars 860–874).	[1:18:04] As in opera
	875–911	Blanca plays the piano (bars 875–879); the guests re-enact the evening (bars 880–903). Renewed calls for Leticia to sing (bars 904–911). The entire passage is a compressed variation of Act I Scene 6, bars 638–670).	[1:21:10] As in opera
	912–975	Leticia's Song. Verse 1 bars 912 – 930 (see Example 1); Verse 2 bars 931 – 949; Verse 3 bars 950 – 975.	[no direct equivalent]
	976–1023	The guests escape. Orchestral Postlude to Leticia's song.	[1:22:48] As in opera
	1024–1051	The crowd greet them (humming the harmonic cycle of Example 5).	[1:23:30] As in opera
	1052–1072	Solemn High Requiem. To repetitions of the earlier Requiem, the guests and crowd are unable to leave the opera stage. Lambs appear in the crowd (from bar 1059)	[1:24:43] The group attend church; everyone is trapped inside. Outside: police fire on a crowd. A flock of sheep run into the cathedral

Figure One Comparison of characters in Adès and Bunuel's versions of *The Exterminating Angel*[28]

Adès	**Bunuel**
LUCIA Marquesa de Nobile (hostess)	Lucia (hostess)
LETICIA Maynar (an opera singer)	Silvia (opera singer)
	Leticia ('the Valkyrie')
LEONORA Palma	Leonora [cancer patient]
	Ana Maynar [Kabbalist]
SILVIA de Avila (a young widowed mother)	Juana Avila [sister of Francisco]
	Rita [wife of Christian]
BLANCA Delgado (pianist, wife of ROC)	Blanca
	Alicia [wife of Mr. Roc]
BEATRIZ (fiancée of EDUARDO)	Beatriz
Edmondo, Marqueès de NOBILE (host)	Nobile
Count RAÚL Yebenes (explorer)	Raul
	Leandro [lives in the United States]
COLONEL Alvaro Gomez	The Colonel
FRANCISCO de Avila (brother of Silvia)	Francisco Avila [brother of Juana]
	Christian [husband of Rita]
EDUARDO (fiancé of BEATRIZ)	Eduardo
Senor RUSSELL (elderly man)	Russell
Alberto ROC (a conductor)	Mr. Roc
DOCTOR Carlos Conde	The Doctor
JULIO - Butler	The Butler
LUCAS - Footman	Lucas, a servant
ENRIQUE - Waiter	Enrique
PABLO - Cook	Pablo
MENI - Maid	Meni
CAMILLA - Maid	Camilla
PADRE Sansón	Padre Sansón
YOLI (son of SILVIA)	Yoli [Rita and Christian's son]
CHORUS	

But it is with Adès and Cairns's elision of Buñuel's Silvia (the opera singer) and Leticia, the wild, virginal so-called 'Valkyrie' that significant narrative differences begin to emerge. Unlike Buñuel's relatively peripheral Silvia (whose performance of the titular role in *Lucia di Lammermoor* was the pretext for the gathering), the operatic Leticia served to align the symbol of music with a quasi-primordial instinct that exists at some remove from

[28] Character list from Buñuel's *The Exterminating Angel* adapted from *Three films by Luis Buñuel* trans. Fry, p. 17.

bourgeois courtesy. Crucially, it is with the performance of a long-evaded aria, 'My home, do you ask of my peace', for Leticia that the guests find themselves able to leave the dining room (the opening is given in Example 1). Inspired by a casual anti-Semitic remark made in the film (but not the opera) after Leticia throws an ashtray through the window, the aria sets an adaption of Yehuda Halevi's twelfth-century text 'Zion, do you ask of my peace'.[29] The longing for Jerusalem expressed by the Spanish-born Halevi mirrors Leticia's desire to go home, as well as, Adès suggests, providing an echo of Buñuel's own exile from Francoist Spain.

Example One Thomas Adès, *The Exterminating Angel* Act III Scene 6, bars 912–17

One response to the spectre of fidelity might therefore be to view the opera as a 'palimpsestuous' work that is experienced through 'our memory of other works that resonate through *repetition with variation*'.[30] Thus the variations that arise through the overlaying of texts such as Halevi's, as well as those that emerge through the merging of multiple characters into one, become a means of opening up a discursive space between film and opera, in which the latter is simultaneously a work in its own right and a suggestive commentary on the former. In this light, a more extended study of the opera than the present article would devote greater space to such added layers, including the use of Johann Strauss's waltzes (and more generic waltz topics); ironic allusions to Bach's 'Sheep May Safely Graze'; the amplification of the Jewish subtext mentioned above through a setting of

[29] Arseni, 'Why do we ever do anything?', pp. 54–5.
[30] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, p. 8 (emphasis added).

Chaim Bialik's poem 'Over the Sea'[31] and variations upon the traditional Sephardic song 'Lavaba la blanca niña'[32]; and the nod to Buñuel's film *Drums of Calanda* (1964).

One of the opera's most palimpsestuous devices is the use of Buñuel's early poetry as a means of commenting on both the action and the mental states of the characters. Leonora's aria (Act III Interlude, bars 311–40) sets all but two lines of Buñuel's 1927 poem 'It Seems to Me Neither Good Nor Evil'; the surrealist imagery is entirely appropriate for the depiction of a character losing her grip on reality, unhinged by her situation and declining health. The close of the aria, with its reference to 'the beasts copulating in the late afternoon', dovetails neatly with the next scene, Eduardo and Beatriz's duet; one wonders if Leonora overheard them making love at the close of the previous Act. The two lovers consistently remain apart from the bourgeois concerns that govern the actions of the other guests; although as an architect Eduardo belongs within the same social milieu as the assorted company, his only desire appears to be Beatriz, and hers Eduardo. Less bound by formal convention, the two provide an early acknowledgement that something untoward is happening (Act I Scene 8, bars 854–900); here, Eduardo quotes lines from Buñuel's 1927 'Upon Getting into Bed' (apt, as the guests have settled down for the night).[33] Buñuel is quoted again in the second half of Eduardo and Beatriz's final duet, in which the second and fourth verses of 'Bird of Anguish' (1929) provides the material for their claustrophobic and closeted *Liebestod* (Act III Scene 3, bars 381–418).

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[31] Adès has commented that 'I'm not Jewish, but I carry a name of immemorial Jewish origin, and that awareness of the transitoriness of place – it may not be unrelated.' *TA:FON*, p. 67.

[32] The basis of the first two-thirds of Act I Scene 6 is that of Adès's *Variations for Blanca* (2015) for solo piano, over which vocal lines are added.

[33] Adès has suggested that the further removed a character is from bourgeois pretensions, the more they are able to understand the 'power of the exterminating angel', citing Leticia, Eduardo and Beatriz (Ibid., p. 51). Later on, he includes in this list Blanca (as a musician, Jewish exile and non-aristocrat) and Leonora, with her Kabbalah obsession (Ibid., p. 55). It is significant, therefore, that these are the five characters who sing to texts external to Buñuel's *The Exterminating Angel*.

Yet the film is just as intertexturally promiscuous as the opera. To take just two examples, mirroring Adès's invocation of ancient Jewish texts, Buñuel alludes to early Spanish verses by Jorge Manrique (c. 1440–79) in the dinner table conversation between Blanca and the Colonel,[34] and the entire scenario of the film has its roots in the Passover.[35] Closer to home, Buñuel reprises themes and imagery essayed in (amongst others) his *Un Chien Andalou* (1929) *L'Age d'or* (1930) and *Viridiana* (1959);[36] his casting of Silvia Pinal as Leticia (having worked with her previously in *Viridiana*) enabled him to draw on her public persona(e) to construct further meanings for the film.[37] The list could be extended further, but the point is that Buñuel's *Exterminating Angel* is no less subject to the principle of repetition with variation than Adès's: it just doesn't announce its precursors so baldly.

The Discreet Impropriety of the Bourgeoisie

Repetition and difference occur not just between texts; they occur within them too. On the one hand, internal repetitions of material in the opera fulfil traditional operatic functions of establishing musical and dramatic relationships. On the other, they offer a musical shorthand for the 'thousands of habits of which we are composed' that belong to Deleuze's first synthesis of time, the *passive* contraction of innumerable past iterations into the 'present which passes'.[38] Here again, the principle of eternal return lies behind the synthesis: habitual gestures and actions are never repeated exactly but through the return

[34] Translation from Fry, *Three films by Luis Buñuel*, p. 24. The connection to Manrique was made by Nancy J. Membrez, 'El angel exterminador de Luis Buñuel: auto sacramental cinematogáfico', *Significação: Revista de Cultura Audiovisual*, Volume 35, Issue 29 (June 2008), pp. 29–43, at p. 29.
[35] Agustin Sánchez Vidal, *Luis Buñuel* (Madrid: Cátedra, 1991), pp. 237–8, cited in Robert J. Miles, 'Virgin on the edge: Luis Buñuel's transnational trope', *Studies in Hispanic Cinemas* Vol. 2 No. 3 (2006), pp. 169–88 at 173.
[36] See Gwynne Edwards, *The Discreet Art of Luis Buñuel: A Reading of His Films* (London: Mario Boyars 1982), pp. 171–92.
[37] See Miles, 'Virgin on the Edge'.
[38] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition,* pp. 78, 79.

of difference, they gradually (if passively) transform and metamorphose over time.[39] Nor is there an originary action from which subsequent gestures are derived; all is process, all is in a state of becoming. Although the two-hour duration of the opera does not allow sufficient time for Adès's inexact repetitions to assume the same function as Deleuzean habits, their exaggerated differences, as well as their deliberate oddities (as in Buñuel) becomes, in part, a means of drawing attention to and commenting on the recurring ritual-like behaviour that structures daily existence and social interaction. Moreover, this flooding of the (musical) present with the (musical) past dampens the characters' inability to act non-habitually, for, like Hamlet, they are too concerned with the passive restaging of past actions to summon up the will to escape their present situation. And, although both film and opera are intimately concerned with the presentation of this passing present, the means by which they do so varies according to the medium. For Buñuel (at least according to Deleuze), this arises through the deployment of movement- and time-images. For Adès, musical repetitions are bound up with the way in which 'a musical image moves through time'.[40] In the sections that follow I shall therefore focus on the role that repetitions play not just in structuring the material, but firstly in providing a means of representing musically and critiquing the bourgeois norms that are enacted on stage, and secondly in depicting the characters' inability to act.

Adès and Service's discussion of style ended with the following exchange:

> Service: [W]hat defines the proper?
> Adès: Something that goes over familiar ground in a reassuring way, obeying the approved pieties of the day. That's a waste of time.[41]

[39] Williams, *Gilles Deleuze's Philosophy of Time*, p. 116.
[40] *TA:FON,* p. 26.
[41] *TA:FON*, p. 91.

There is a clear parallel to be made between this sentiment and the way in which Buñuel subjects to scrutiny bourgeois niceties in his films. Although the characters, even in the midst of their degradation, seek to maintain the outward visage of respectability, Buñuel injects a subversive element through the use of inexact repetition, of excessive repetition, of non-sequiturs, and of misplaced inappropriate comments.[42] These (material) repetitions don't so much suspend the production of meaning (as Ian Olney suggests) as bring to the fore the excess at the margins of identity that makes critique possible;[43] they summon significations only to displace and unmoor them. In Adès's *The Exterminating Angel* recurring musical ideas, often welling up unexpectedly, are not so much reassuring traversals of familiar ground, as improper challenges to 'approved pieties'.

Formal repetition, almost always varied in some respect, occurs with far more frequency in the opera than in the film.[44] Echoing the bookending of the film with images of a cathedral, the bells that open the opera return at its close. The (repeated) entry of the guests (also a device borrowed from the film) in Act I Scene 3 is built over a passacaglia, so designed that each statement begins a fifth lower than the previous (in Example 2a, the second statement begins in bar 73). Here the irrational rhythms disrupt the march-like character of the material as the first and second comings of the guests slouch not so much to Bethlehem as to Bedlam. Later iterations (as with the sixth statement of the theme, Example 2b) follow the theme closely, albeit with slight distortions to the rhythmic profile; to facilitate comparison, the orchestral reduction in Example 2b is underlaid with the

[42] Edwards, *The Discreet Art of Luis Buñuel*, pp. 176–7.
[43] Ian Olney, 'Repetition (with difference) and Ludic Deferral in the Later Films of Luis Buñuel', *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* Vol. 18(1), pp. 71–82, at pp. 71, 75–6.
[44] Edwards suggests that there are 'some twenty' formal repetitions in the film that serve to 'underline the repetitive nature of human lives and actions as a whole, formalized into rites and rituals of the bourgeoisie'. *The Discreet Art of Luis Buñuel*, p. 175.

rhythm of the theme in Example 2a, making clear the extension at the end of the statement prior to the return to C major in bar 126.

Example Two Thomas Adès, *The Exterminating Angel* Act I Scene 3, (a) bars 65–73; (b) bars 112–26

The majority of Act I Scene 6 is built over the Variations on 'Lavaba la blanca niña', gently suggesting perhaps that the polite discourse of post-dinner conversation can similarly be considered variations on a theme. In fact, much of this scene focuses on Leonora's terminal illness, which causes Eduardo and Beatriz's conversation during Variation 1 to retrospectively have a much darker quality as the musical association foreshadows their own deaths.[45] Much of Act III Scene 6 is a chaconne based on a fragment from the Requiem (here making much of 'aeterna'). Faster-moving conversational passages are frequently based on varied treatment of an underlying chord progression, as in the exchanges between Blanca and the Colonel in Act I Scene 4 (bars 246–281) or in Francisco's sequence of volatile actions in Act III Scene 2 (bars 143–201 and again, in a different form, in bars 745–759); in such cases, changes to harmonic rhythm, texture and orchestration often serve to kick over the traces of the repetitions whilst nevertheless commenting on the habits that structure our social interactions (respectable or otherwise). The Interlude between Acts I and II can be understood as a sequence of variations of its opening seven bars. The use of varied strophic forms in the majority of the arias, along with numerous pedal points and rhythmic ostinati, provide further opportunities to present being (stasis) and becoming (development).

The self-contained nature of many of these devices contributes to the symphonic quality that Adès was striving for: 'Good symphonies are often in some ways an unfolding

[45] The text of 'Lavaba la blanca niña' belongs to the genre of the 'faithful wife', which creates a further loose thematic link with Eduardo and Beatriz.

sequence of miniatures. They have to go through miniature forms as they go along, and what bothers me with Wagner's music is that there's a pretence of some kind of symphonic thought where there actually isn't any'.[46] But formal repetitions (on various scales) such as these also provide vivid musical metaphors for the motion without movement that will come to characterise the guest's actions, as well as for the continual habits that underscore our daily actions.

Standing apart from these habits is the sound of the Ondes Martenot, which for Adès 'becomes a symbol, the voice of this exterminating angel'.[47] Adès's equation of the exterminating angel with the inability to act runs counter to bourgeois notions of teleology and self-perpetuation. The electronic tones of the Ondes Martenot stand in a similar opposition to the acoustic instruments of the orchestra that can be understood collectively, like the external form of the opera itself, to be a symbol of bourgeois society. (I shall also argue below that the repeated use of the Ondes Martenot also invokes the Deleuzean notion of simulacra.) Beyond this simple symbolic association, the Ondes Martenot, like the bells that open and close the opera,[48] plays a pivotal role, marking out through timbre the musical repetitions that happen when it sounds.

The proper begins to be challenged through the treatment of musical topics. On the one hand, the pervasive use of waltz and waltz-like material throughout the opera shares one of the functions of the waltz in *Der Rosenkavalier*: to index a particular social and cultural world. Adès draws attention to the 'seductiveness' of the waltz, which he relates to a sense of lingering, of refusing to go outside;[49] something of its more seditious nature can

[46] *TA:FON*, p. 16.
[47] Arseni, 'Why do we ever do anything?', p. 54.
[48] The bells 'function as a sort of herald for the exterminating angel'. Arseni, 'Why do we ever do anything?', p. 54.
[49] Arseni, 'Why do we ever do anything?', p. 50

be detected as Mr. Roc swoops over the female guests in order to molest them (Act III Scene 4, bars 425–455). But it also serves as a mode of self-presentation, a means of defining identity (which might well involve aspects of seclusion from the world beyond the bourgeois sphere of influence). For instance, much of Act I Scene 4 – characterised by the typical small talk and obsequious toasts of a formal meal – is based on fast triple time conducted in 1, and teeters on the brink of flowering into an actual waltz, most notably in Lucia's ragoût-aria (see Example 3a). This material recurs, in distorted form, as the guests cook lamb over a fire made from a cello, in a brief and all-too-futile attempt to re-establish social norms (Act III Scene 6, bars 661–73; see Example 3b). Yet the inexact repetition functions, on the other hand, to highlight the distance between the effortless staging of conventions in Act I and the forced, arbitrary reinforcement of these conventions in Act III. In this sense, the repeated failure of the waltz-like material to ever coalesce into a 'genuine' waltz (for instance through the use of rhythmic and phrasing irregularities or the overlaying of harmonic processes at odds with the tonal expectations of the Viennese waltz) serves to blur and critique the stability of its topical identity: there is no such thing as an originary waltz, for 'genuineness' is merely a function of repetition in a particular context.[50] Simultaneously, this act reveals the illusory foundations of the bourgeoisie for which the waltz stands.

Example Three Thomas Adès, *The Exterminating Angel* (a) Act I Scene 6, bars 327–31; (b) Act III Scene 6, bars 660–4

Nowhere is this more obvious than in the Fugue of Panic in Act II Scene 1 (bars 1457–1539), in which Adès 'layered motifs derived and distorted from various [Johann] Strauss waltzes'.[51] By this point the tension between maintaining appearances and giving over to their fear are at their height. In the first instance, within this minute of frenzied activity,

[50] My thanks go to Martin Iddon for this observation and other useful suggestions in this article.
[51] Arseni, 'Why do we ever do anything?', p. 50.

attempts are made to calm Francisco, order coffee (Beatriz, bars 1470–3; Eduardo brings her water from a vase instead), and to understand their predicament. Yet at the same time, Francisco gives voice to the collective fear ('we are lost'), Leticia threatens to smash another window, and Leonora sobs. Example 4 indicates how this is realised musically. Much of the material is governed by linear motion in various contrapuntal voices; in this respect, it is of a piece with the bulk of the opera (see below). Yet at the same time, weaving through the texture within this example, there is what appears to be an inversion of the turn figure from the famous waltz from *Die Fledermaus*, repeated through upward transpositions of a third (rather than downwards, as in the original) not just once, but multiply; the grouping is then compressed from four- to three-bar phrases in order to both amplify the distance from the original as well as dramatise the growing sense of panic. Above all, the use of the waltz here signifies the fact that the bourgeois sense of propriety has been brought to a crisis; we see clearly beyond the artifice to the unmediated emotions behind it.

Example Four Thomas Adès, *The Exterminating Angel* Act II Scene 1, bars 1485–96

Smaller-scale repetitions abound, as in the reminiscences of the passacaglia (Example 2a) in Act II (bars 1540–58 and 1568–1575) when the Doctor and Nobile respectively try to restore logic and the impetus to leave. Repetitions that involve tritone or semitone transpositions are more common than those that preserve pitch identity, as in Nobile's two toasts at dinner to Leticia, that preserve (enharmonically) the pitches in the vocal line whilst harmonising them respectively with material based on E<flat> (Act I Scene 4, bars 285–296) and A (bars 313–324). Such slight differences serve to highlight the artificial, enacted nature of the dialogue as the characters strive to define themselves through their actions. A slightly different dramatic situation connects four varied repetitions of a sombre, brass-heavy progression in which the upper line is based on a descending

whole-tone scale (Act I Scene 5, bars 453–455; Act II Scene 1, bars 1355–1365, and 1647–1659; Act III Interlude, bars 349–360. See Table 1 for details). Here, the connecting thread appears to that of 'recognition'.

Most significant are those repetitions in which pitch is largely preserved; here, difference is expressed through a variety of means. The sinister rescoring of the clock chimes heard at Russell's death (Act II Scene 1, bars 1724–1734) at the end of Eduardo and Beatriz's Act III Scene 3 duet (bars 419–424) would appear to signal their suicide. In the second of the two entries of the guests (Act I Scene 3, bars 163–244), vocal entries occur earlier than they did in the first, often overlapping in their haste to reprise material. Nobile, for instance, enters halfway through the first statement of the passacaglia theme rather than at the start of the second (as in the first entry); the result is to compress the material so that one fewer statements of the passacaglia theme are necessary for all the introductions to be made. The 'wrongness' of the alignment between passacaglia and vocal lines in the second entry of guests heightens the sense that something improper is happening; the appearance of the Ondes Martenot (in the guise of the exterminating angel) at the end of the first entry and then, extended, at the end of the second strengthens this reading.

An Underground River of Meaning

In all of the previous examples, the repetitions are to be heard as such, as instances of the same. At the same time, the many overt changes that occur within these repetitions – alterations to grouping structures, rhythms, orchestration, texture and pitch – ensure that material differences are audible too. As with formal repetitions, such devices provide clear aural equivalents to the (passive) habitual repetitions that structure our (social) lives. But all

told, these consist of the *actualised* repetitions and actions that were chosen (passively or actively) from the wealth of *potential* repetitions that were available. For Deleuze, a full(er) representation of time would take into account the *virtual*: the state of pure recollection that 'exists outside of consciousness, in time'.[52] In Adès's *The Exterminating Angel*, one of the ways in which the virtual exists is through the presence of a number of intervallic patterns. These frequently emerge from the musical continuum, assuming concrete form for a short space of time in order to create specific gestures and ideas, before dissolving back into a state of potentiality. This is, I would argue, one of the primary ways in which Adès realises musically the idea he associates with the film of an 'underground river of meaning which is not exactly what the people are saying. This river links the spoken lines and runs through the entire situation, but only occasionally surfaces'.[53] Insofar as the music 'is a sort of destiny', it lies in the fact that the virtuality it creates transcends simple replication of intervallic patterns, avoiding or rendering partial particular determined paths and instead hinting at a multitude of possible realisations and futures.

For instance, the opera opens with the clamour of church bells. Although uncoordinated, they gradually introduced pitches that fan out from a central G, tracing out an ascending {+1} semitone cycle and a descending {-2} whole-tone cycle. Schematised as in Example 5, the pattern suggests a fairly uniform expansion of intervals, but in performance the aleatoric texture results in a far less systematic exploration of the wedge-like expansion of pitch space. The distance between the abstraction of Example 5 and the improvisatory manner in which the church bells wind their way through its possible configurations

[52] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolos: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p. 80.
[53] Arseni, 'Why do we ever do anything?', p. 47.

provides a succinct model for understanding how the actualised musical foreground of *The Exterminating Angel* relates to the patterns of its virtual background.

Example Five Thomas Adès, *The Exterminating Angel* Act I Prologue, bars 1–8 (schematisation)

These simple patterns can be found underpinning much of the musical material. The annotation underneath Example 2a demonstrates how the passacaglia theme is derived from a continuous {-1} cycle that is interlocked, Berg-like, with shorter, predominantly {+2} cycles. There is a genetic resemblance with the cycles of Example 5, but the realisation of this intervallic inheritance in Example 2a is radically different. Similarly, the Requiem that underpins Act III Scene 6, bars 791–830 and 1048–68 can be derived from four streams of descending semitone cycles, disguised by means of octave doublings, anticipations and overlapping of pitches (Example 6).

Example Six Thomas Adès, *The Exterminating Angel* Act III Scene 6, bars 798–804

A reminiscence of Example 5 precedes the second statement of the Requiem, with which the opera ends. The juxtaposition highlights the intervallic relationship between the two but also their shared semantic associations, which is to say, images of eternity. Given the profusion of harmonic progressions based on descending semitone streams throughout the opera (for instance, in the accompaniment to Act I Scene 6, bars 638–70, and its repetition in Act III Scene 6, bars 875–911), one should be wary of assigning too rigid a signification for such cycles: on the one hand, the progressions contribute to the sense of endless return that characterises the opera, but they are also typical of Adès's musical language more generally.[54]

[54] See, for instance, my *Thomas Adès:* Asyla (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), pp. 16–22 for a discussion of Adès's use of intervallic cycles, which I argue are 'semantically and expressively neutral', requiring 'specific musical realisation in order to come to life' (p. 22).

However, one intervallic pattern does appear to have certain semantic associations. Alex Ross has drawn attention to the way in which 'the motif for Julio's crossing of the threshold [Act II Scene 1, bars 1271 ff.] contains a fifth, a tritone, a fourth, and a tritone—intervals that narrow and then widen again'.[55] This pattern (in its most neutral form, an alternation of perfect fourths/fifths (ic5) with tritones (ic6), labeled as motif *x* in Example 7 and Table 1), like the use of the Ondes Martenot, has a loose referential function, occurring whenever characters refer to (or prevent themselves from) leaving. But it should be stressed that this intervallic pattern occurs in both melodic and harmonic formulations: its repetitions are not necessarily as aurally prominent as those outlined in the previous section. Thus, the harmonies of the Berceuse that concludes Act I (bars 854–906), in which Beatriz asks 'But why are we still here, Eduardo?', contain verticalisations of the intervals of motif *x*, often oscillating back and forth between pairs in a dramatic representation of the immobility of the guests. (A further instance of motif *x* used melodically can be found in Example 4.)

Example Seven Thomas Adès, *The Exterminating Angel* Act I Scene 6, bars 789–97

Motif *x* can be related (albeit loosely) to the Deleuzean notion of simulacra. In Williams's formulation,

> Eternal return works by setting off differences within series thanks to simulacra […] These simulacra are not identified objects, but rather […] empty places and placeless occupants, that is things working within something else, either as a place for something absent or as a thing but with no assignable place.[56]

In that motif *x* consists of a pattern rather than a distinct thematic idea (as such), it is an empty (musical) place, something that works within other musical patterns, as in the

[55] Alex Ross, 'An Explosive Opera of "The Exterminating Angel"', *The New Yorker,* 22 August 2016. http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/08/22/thomas-ades-the-exterminating-angel (accessed 20 November 2016)

[56] Williams, *Gilles Deleuze's Philosophy of Time*, pp. 127–8.

manner in which in Example 7 it impels the semitone intervallic cycles that enclose it to generate new, unforeseen, harmonic content. In this sense, motif *x* has the capacity to function as a force that acts upon, and constrains, the (musical) will of the processes that it encounters.

In the film, at the point Leticia realises the guests had reassembled themselves to replicate the arrangement of the first night, she exclaims 'think of the thousands of combinations which we've formed, like pawns on a chessboard'.[57] There is a similar ludic quality to the ways in which Adès reworks and bends his intervallic patterns to fit the dramatic situation, continually trying out new ways of combining and ordering his material. In other contexts, Adès has described this probing of materials in terms of doors. Discussing repetition in Janáček, Adès suggests that 'in that last piece, *In the Mists*, nothing changes, but you're aware that every time the silence comes back, and he tries another doorway, it transforms from being a phenomenon that opens a new possibility to something that closes the structure'.[58] The same is true for the opera, in which the musical conditions had to be just so in order that the characters might break the cycle of passive repetitions in order to assert their will.

Deleuze (and Olney) note that is through *exact* repetition that the guests find themselves able to leave. Yet this exact repetition contains a difference: for Deleuze, 'the repetition of the past is possible materially, but spiritually impossible in the name of Time: on the contrary, the repetition of faith, directed towards the future, seems to be materially impossible, but spiritually possible, because it consists in beginning everything again, in ascending the path which is imprisoned by the cycle, by virtue of a *creative instant* of

[57] Fry, *Three films by Luis Buñuel*, p. 96.
[58] *TA:FON*, p. 21. Adès and Service return to the theme of doors when discussing *The Exterminating Angel* on pages 176–9.

time'.[59] Olney notes parenthetically that it is through 'recognition, recollection, and repetition *with difference*' that they are able to leave.[60] The contrast between a consciously repeated, creatively staged repetition (with all of its spiritual and practical differences to the previous version) and repetitions with difference that arise from habit, from learned convention, is significant. We are faced here with Deleuze's third synthesis of time, 'the condition for any particular drama, that is, the conjunction of an effort towards numbered circular time, in which worlds can return, and its fracturing'.[61] Eternal return is not the restoration of a previous state, but the return of difference. In short, the conscious, creative act of repetition creates a caesura in time, dividing it into a before (the circular repetitions of the trapped guests) and an after (the motion outside of the house) 'that creates the possibility of a temporal series';[62] it is a synthesis that is thus projected into the future. Significantly, for Deleuze the third synthesis involves the fracturing of the self, and in *The Exterminating Angel* the possibility of the release comes from Leticia giving up her virginity (off-screen, in the film)[63] or accepting that she must sing (in the opera). It also carries with it the potential for the guests to reflect on their own bourgeois selves, and through it finally to act, though the end of the film witnesses a regression (as the characters seek solace in the passively enacted rites of the church) and a return to the endless cycle of entrapment.

The music that supports the circular repetitions of the trapped guests studiously avoids D as a tonal centre. When the guests first request that Leticia sing, the music expands in a wedge-like formation to arrive on D in the outer voices (Act I Scene 6, bar 675), but Leticia's refusal coincides with a rapid harmonic sliding away from this centre. Brief allusions

[59] Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, p. 132 (emphasis added).
[60] Olney, 'Repetition (with difference)', p. 76.
[61] Williams, *Gilles Deleuze's Philosophy of Time*, p. 90.
[62] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 89.
[63] See, for instance, Raymond Durgnat, *Luis Buñuel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967) p. 129.

to D major in Act I Scene 7 do nothing to establish it; and conversely, Leticia's two interjections announcing her hunger, both in D (Act II Scene 1, bars 997–1002 and Act III Scene 2, bars 269–272), intrude upon the musical discourse rather than cadentially confirming a key area. The permutations and reworkings of intervallic patterns, and their coalescing into surface repetitions, probe various 'doors', but none provide an exit. It is only with the second call for Leticia to sing that D emerges as a definitive tonal centre (Example 1); the orchestral postlude to this aria concludes with a unison D (Act III Scene 6 bars 1012–19). Here is the musical (and dramatic doorway) by which the characters might escape their confines, a consciously achieved caesura that fractures the circular repetitions and projects forward to a potential structural close.

Yet in the opera and film alike, the escape is illusory. Each verse of Leticia's aria is based on repetitions of a 47-note pitch cycle; variations to the duration and accentuation ensures that the repetitions contain material differences. The cycle itself is constructed from ic5 leaps (in Example 1, between the opening D and A, and then between C<sharp>, F<sharp> and B in bars 913–4) interspersed between wholetone segments (in Example 1, A–B–C<sharp>, B–A–G). Despite the tonal centre and the novelty of the arrangement of intervallic patterns, Leticia is no less bound by habitual repetitions than any other character. The unison D at the end of the postlude leads to a unison G for the reprise of Example 5. Whilst it is difficult (at least initially) to hear the strongly conclusory D as a dominant, that is effectively how it functions, or at the very least, the shift to G as a tonal centre undermines the hard-won, if provisional, stability of Leticia's aria.[64]

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[64] For Adès, 'To arrive at a real musical resolution, the patterns and cycles have to be subdued, recombined by the composer's hand to produce a new doorway, if you like. Ant that's exactly what Leticia does at the end, but of course then her aria just becomes another dominant waiting for resolution'. Arseni, 'Why do we ever do anything', p. 56.

The eternal return 'is not only about the return of the new and a difference to be affirmed; it is about violence, death and the most difficult tests put to living beings'.[65] It would seem that in the close of *The Exterminating Angel*, the temporary victory gained through the assertion of will, of projecting a new future, collapses around the characters as they obsessively repeat material, potentially infinitely. For Deleuze, such failure is absolute: 'those who repeat negatively, and those who repeat identically will be eliminated'.[66] This proves to be the fate of the characters of the opera, who ultimately yield to its musical force. 'Once the exterminating angel has taken possession of the guests', notes Adès, 'the only possible outcome is the complete breakdown of society and the imposition of martial law – and ultimately the end of the world'.[67]

[65] Williams, *Gilles Deleuze's Philosophy of* Time, p. 118.
[66] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 298.
[67] Arseni, p. 53.