Exterminating the Recording Angel

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> If the film that you are about to see seems to you enigmatic or incongruous, that is how life is also. It is repetitive like life, and, like life again, subject to many interpretations. The author declares that it was not his intention to play with symbols, at least not consciously. Perhaps the best explanation for *The Exterminating Angel* is that, rationally, there is none.[1]

In *The Recording Angel: Explorations in Phonography*, Evan Eisenberg claimed: "It seems to me that recorded opera is a less artificial act than live opera."[2] He was responding, in part, to a spat between opera critic Conrad L. Osborne and producer John Culshaw, over the latter's 1967 recording of Strauss's *Elektra*; such were Culshaw's studio interventions, Osborne complained, "the recording stands in relation to a live presentation much as a movie stands in relation to a stage original: it … must be conceived on its own terms." Culshaw's view was that producers who attempted to capture the sound of an opera house (Osborne's preferred mode), rather than acknowledging that recordings were devised for consumption in the home, were deceiving listeners to a greater extent than those who used the studio to realize the score's complexities so that it "hurt" or "involved" them, as they thought the composer intended. It is difficult to imagine a similarly heated debate taking place between critics and producers today; in the era of the MP3, recordings are more likely to be discussed in the diminishing terms of compression rather than hi-fidelity.[3] Yet the relationship between live and recorded performance continues to be tested within opera studies, through discussions of DVDs, simulcasts, films, and productions that take opera as a starting point to explore transmedial relationships.[4] What happens, though, when a composer reverses the usual—or at least, classical—sequence of live rendition to recording and creates an opera from a film, as

is the case in British composer Thomas Adès's *The Exterminating Angel*? Must it be conceived "on its own terms," as Osborne claimed of a movie version of a play? Does recasting cinematic characters in live human form threaten to destroy the "recording angel" Eisenberg celebrates?

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Thomas Adès's *The Exterminating Angel* was premiered in Salzburg in 2016 and has since been performed at Covent Garden and the Metropolitan Opera House (from where it was broadcast to cinemas around the world in November 2017). The libretto, by director Tom Cairns, derives from a 1962 film by Luis Buñuel, *El ángel exterminador*. Buñuel explained the plot very simply: it is "the story of a group of friends who have dinner together after seeing a play, but when they go into the living room after dinner, they find that for some inexplicable reason they can't leave."[5] Adès apparently saw the film as a teenager and was struck by its operatic potential. There are numerous reasons why *El ángel exterminador* would attract a composer: the "play" the dinner guests have been to see is in fact Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* and the singer of the title role is among them, along with the conductor and his piano-playing wife. It is a moment of musical potential—a performance evaded—that traps and then, by its eventual realization, liberates the guests. Beyond those possibilities for diegetic music, there are opportunities to see reflected in the guest's situation something of the operatic spectator's experience. Cairns claimed:

> Opera isn't so much like this anymore, but it has a reputation for being a glittering elitist activity. [Buñuel's characters] have just all been to the opera, so there are all sorts of connections with the opera house. The main thrust of what we want to do is to let people see that it could be them.[6]

Or, as Adès put it, somewhat ambiguously: "every opera is about getting out of a particular situation."[7] By "situation," Adès may have meant simply a plot's dénouement: comic opera

that ends in marriage (*Così fan tutte*, *La Cenerentola*, *Der Rosenkavalier*), failed romantic relationships ending in death (*Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Tristan und Isolde*, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, *Madama Butterfly*), political intrigue ending in death (*Don Carlos*, *Tosca*), marriage, love, and politics gone wrong ending in death (*Salome* and, perhaps, *The Exterminating Angel*).[8] Another "situation" might be being the different levels of immersion expected of opera rather than cinema audiences. On a prosaic level, you might slip out of an opera during the intermission, but leaving while the lights are down is strongly discouraged in the post-Wagnerian theater.[9] In the cinema, there isn't the same degree of enforced attention, however hard the film score and surround-sound system might try: moreover, if you feel like getting a soda or playing computer games midway through a movie you can even leave and return.

Finally, in terms of the "operatic potential" of *El ángel exterminador,* its adaptation allows for a consideration of how we characterize live performance of its narrative in the theater in tension with the formal properties of Buñuel's film, which explore the unsettling consequences of repetition in a way which seems quasi-musical. Yet this cuts across questions and liveness and fixity too. Although Adès's composition is the medium through which *The Exterminating Angel* is brought to performance, as always with opera the music is part of a collaboration between the textual, visual, spatial, and bodily.

Opera has habitually taken its sources from elsewhere—Linda and Michael Hutcheon point out that "[c]anonical texts in traditional literary genres (epics, novels, short stories, plays, poems) continued to be used" in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries as well as other art forms, such as paintings, comic strips, television series, press cuttings, celebrity coverage, and films.[10] "The audience's memory and experience, in other words, remain central to opera as adaptation," according to the Hutcheons, because all adaptations of familiar sources produce "a doubled response, as they oscillate between what they remember

and what they are experiencing onstage."[11] Viewing pleasure comes from the frisson of the palimpsest, while those who do not know the original interpret it as if it were any other work.

The "adapter is both an interpreter of a previous work and the creator of a new one," the Hutcheons continue. This seems uncontroversial. However, Cairns's libretto for *The Exterminating Angel* is remarkably faithful to the film's plot. As Edward Venn has detailed, by combining certain characters Adès and Cairns managed to reduce the number of dinner guests from seventeen to twelve, but the main events are the same.[12] What is more, Cairns's libretto repeats the words of the English subtitles of Buñuel's movie almost exactly. Much of the subtlety and the irony of the Mexican-inflected Spanish dialogue is lost, flattened into the provisional text typical of quickly produced translations of films, with occasional inserted self-referential jokes.[13] The challenge of this adaptation is less its very obvious differences from the film—from no soundtrack to all that music—than that it cleaves so closely to its source.[14] Critic and musicologist Mark Berry blogged:

> I cannot answer the question "why an opera?" To my shame, I had not seen Buñuel's film before, but seeing the opera has sent me back to watch it. Even from a single viewing, it seems fully to merit its hallowed status. It is far less clear to me that it merits the transformation into an opera. In a sense, the answer to my question is simply, "because its creators wanted it to be." It seems to me, though, that a great deal is lost and the work that emerges is, in some respects, not entirely free of sprawling self-indulgence. The cast is huge: in this case, a line-up of many of Covent Garden's finest regular singers. […] If one is going to transform a film into an opera, is it perhaps not better to offer more radical surgery?[15]

Berry's notion that much is lost and that what is gained is perhaps unnecessary raises larger questions about what is at stake in the conversion from film to opera and what, in turn, Adès and Cairns might be responding to in the Buñuel that warrants such fidelity to the text. In

particular I am interested in the tension between the fixity of the filmic medium and the "liveness" of the opera.

In so far as Adès's opera uses a film as its source, it might be considered what Yuell Chandler defines as "cinemopera," [16] but beyond that *The Exterminating Angel* shares little common ground with film music more broadly (though there are passages—mostly thanks to the prominent use of ondes martenot – where the orchestral timbres are reminiscent of a 1950s horror soundtrack). As already indicated, there are tensions in the conversion from film to opera that have to do with the relationship between fixity to liveness, which Adès's score highlights—deliberately or not is hard to say—by recourse to some familiar musico-dramatic tropes. There are three aspects of the opera's sound-world that it will be helpful to explore further: its immersive qualities, the emphasis on repetition, and the moment of release enabled by phenomenal song.

Immersion

Before the conductor reaches the podium, bells ring out—both to call the audience into the auditorium and to immerse them, immediately, in the opera's musical world. Once there, Adès argued, there was no escape (recall his explanation that "every opera is about getting out of a particular situation").[17] Yet, while the musical world the audience was entering was potentially hypnotic, onstage there was the alienation of seeing live sheep—three or two, depending on the night. Animals on stage are fascinating for their unpredictability: Would the sheep bleat? Would they defecate? (They did urinate.) Would their minders manage to shepherd them offstage at the appropriate moment? Their presence thus emphasised the artificiality and the liveness of the operatic setting. Perhaps, as film scholar Marsha Kinder argued of the Buñuel, the presence of the animals was to suggest that the guests were no less bestial; even, that they were worse behaved.[18]

The cinematography of Bunuel's *El ángel exterminador*, by Mexican Gabriel Figueroa, is expert in the way in conveys spatial entrapment.[19] However grand the house, its rooms become claustrophobic. The camera often observes the guests from a distance, to show the ways in which they jostle and bristle against each other but cannot escape from company. It also revels in close-ups, with guests seeming to pile up on top of each other (Figure 1).[20] There remains a sense of "beyond"—a darkened space in which trash can be thrown and where the bear originally brought to entertain the guests now prowls—and the guests retreat into closets to take care of bodily functions from ablutions to sex to death.[21]

<INSERT FIGURE 1 AROUND HERE.>

Caption: *The Exterminating Angel*, Silvia Pinal, Xavier Loya, 1962

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There have been many political readings of Buñuel's film, focusing on the theme of inclusion/exclusion, analysing the symbolism of the house's location on "Providence Street" (the film's original title was *Los náufragos de la calle Providencia*) or considering the scenario as an allegory for the exiled director's relationship with Marxism.[22] Those political interests do not necessarily translate into Adès's adaptation, beyond Cairns's above-cited comment about the opera revealing the audience to itself.[23] The reason for the apolitical character of *The Exterminating Angel* no doubt has to do with the very different age and country of its creation; much as the political allusions of the film may be lost to later generations of viewers. The conversion of the Mexican post-show supper into a very English dinner party makes Adès's work more a comedy of manners and, even then, its critique is perhaps more aesthetic than social. Although opera can certainly be political—both as work and in performance—in this instance its critical capacity is diminished by the immersion of

Buñuel's rhetoric in a musical realm. Somewhat more surprising is the way in which the spatial confinement of the setting proves so hard to convey on the operatic stage. In Hildegard Bechtler's set design, the singers cluster around a dining table and sofas stage right, around which loom tall walls that house the "offstage" closets. The cavernous darkness of the opera stage hovers behind them. (Figure 2)

<INSERT FIGURE 2 AROUND HERE>

Caption: Thomas Adès, *The Exterminating Angel*, Metropolitan Opera House, New York City. Photo: Jonathan Tichler / Met Opera

Subsequent stagings of *The Exterminating Angel*, or conversions of Bechtler's design for smaller houses, may convey a stronger sense of physical claustrophobia. In its absence, the oppressive atmosphere of *The Exterminating Angel* is conveyed less through space than through time. Visually that can be conveyed by the characters looking increasingly dishevelled, evening dress crumpled, make-up and hair in disarray. Temporal suspension is also written into the music. For Guy Dammann, the self-reflexivity of the score—from its allusions to Bach's chorale "Sheep may safely graze" to the pianist's refusal to play "something by Adès" to entertain the guests—is:

> powerfully significant of the fact that post-modern cosmopolitanism's lack of anything like a "natural" musical style—and its need for habits of thinking and listening to be refreshed and re-established with every work—answers very directly and poignantly to the suspended condition in which Buñuel's characters find themselves.[24]

The "lack of anything like a 'natural' music style" and the "suspended condition" of the characters is felt particularly strongly in a lullaby sung by Silvia in scene 6 of act 3. It is a

response to a moment—or a series of moments—of trauma. The guests have found brief succour in cooking and eating the sheep. Leonora reveals that she had a premonition about keys, which, she explains, in the Kabbalah open the door to the unknown. She, Blanca, and Leticia attempt to read chicken claws and decide that they need the blood of an innocent. Silvia sees blood on her brother, Francisco's shirt. She thinks he has been injured but he has not been; it has leaked from the hidden corpses of the betrothed couple, Eduardo and Beatriz. A squabble ensues between Raúl and Francisco—a musically repetitive tussle—which breaks off when Francisco runs to his sister. Silvia is cradling a lamb's carcass and sings to it a lullaby addressed to her absent child, Yoli.

The song consists of two verses, each a quatrain with a closing couplet. It is marked in the score as a *berceuse macabre*. As is traditional of a berceuse, it is in triple time and with the generic reassurance of a pedal in the bass and a slow-moving accompaniment. The vocal melody itself loops sequentially; it is unusually triadic for Adès's score, though it ends on a dissonance (see Ex. 1).

<INSERT EXAMPLE 1 HERE>

Caption: THE EXTERMINATING ANGEL

All these topical markers of the lullaby, however, are thrown askew and made macabre by the tessitura in which Silvia sings. It is eye-wateringly high, particularly for melodic rather than ornamental bel canto or coloratura singing. As a result it is even more estranging than Letitia's aria. While the first verse, as is conventional, tells Yoli to go to sleep and not to be afraid of the man with the goat beard, who is his guardian angel, the second verse advises

him to close the windows and his eyes because otherwise millions of flies will swarm inside. I'll tuck you in, she ends, but I'll never see you again.

At the end of Silvia's lullaby, Yoli's voice is heard from offstage, wishing her goodnight. Hypnotized by Silvia's song, the guests are surprised by the bear lumbering into the dining room. Adès's musical number replaces a scene in the Buñuel in which nightmarish sounds and visions end with the character Rita wishing her distant child goodnight; there is then a cut to the servants outside the house, who see the bear wandering in the garden and speculate about what could be happening within. Afterwards opera and film coincide more closely, with the exception of Leticia's aria, which exceeds what Silvia produces.[25] Still, the repetitive, extreme-register music of Silvia's lullaby is provocative for it suggests that in this situation the maternal voice—typically a source of connectivity and comfort—is an empty gesture. That undermining of the mother-figure, who mistakes a sheep's carcass for her child, and still cannot console it, perhaps is the stuff nightmares are made of.

Repetition

As Gilles Deleuze recognised, repetitions were fundamental to Bunuel's conception of *The Exterminating Angel*. (The director stated that "There are around twenty repetitions in the film, but some are more noticeable than others.") For Deleuze, there are two types of repetition in the film, good and bad:

> In Buñuel, bad repetition appears in the form of inexactitude or imperfection: the introduction of the same two guests in *The Exterminating Angel* is on one occasion warm, and on the other frigid; or take the host's toast, which is made once in an atmosphere of indifference, the other time in one of general attention. However, repetition which saves appears to be exact, and only that which is exact: it is when the

> virgin has offered herself to the God-host that the guests rediscover exactly their first position and at last find themselves free.[26]

Buñuel's repetitions are repeated and even extended in the Adès.[27] The opening scene of the guests' arrival is re-run immediately, for example. And, at the end, the offering of the virgin is given fuller voice, in the form of Leticia's aria—of which more shortly. However, the notion of exact repetition is problematic. Deleuze continues:

> But exactitude is a false criterion, standing in for something else. The repetition of the past is possible materially, but spiritually impossible, in the name of Time: on the contrary, the repetition of faith, directed toward 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 time. Are there thus two repetitions which confront each other, like a death impulse and a life impulse? Buñuel leaves us in a state of the greatest uncertainty, beginning with the distinction or the confusion of the two repetitions. The Angel's guests want to commemorate, that is, to repeat the repetition which has saved them; but in this way they fall back into a repetition which ruins them.[28]

The uncertainty Deleuze detects in the Buñuel is exacerbated in its musical adaptation. Venn borrows from Linda Hutcheon's *Theory of Adaptation* to explain that the process captures "our memory of other works that resonate through repetition with variation."[29] Yet according to Venn:

> [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.

Venn turns to Deleuze's reworking of the Nietzschean eternal return, which privileges difference over similarity, to argue that "Buñuel's film becomes displaced, losing its 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."

Venn's final phrase, about "the way in which specific media actualise particular meanings," points to the contrasting ways in which repetition might work in operatic music rather than film. What might, in the cinema, be assumed to be an editorial mistake—such as was supposedly the case with the repetition of the guests' arrival in Buñuel's film—is less surprising at the opera for, after all, repetition is music's stock in trade (if to a lesser extent in some branches of contemporary composition than in others). The reference to specific media also raises the question of liveness. Buñuel's characters are trapped in the house, and trapped on celluloid. They cannot but repeat themselves, forever. By giving their words—or at least their subtitles—to singers, and having sheep wandering about the stage, Adès breathes into them all the fallibility and flexibility of performance. There can be no exact repetition.

The angel's relationship to repetition in Buñuel and Deleuze is thus configured differently to that of the recording angel with which this essay began. The recording angel documents all acts, good or bad. In that sense it is mechanical; there is no agency to its recordings, they are simply there. Its exactitude may be "good repetition" according to Deleuze's criteria; the value judgement has to do with the process of repetition, not what is being repeated. Musical repetition, though, risks being "bad repetition," because while it might reiterate the same material the element of liveness can only bring inexactitude. By transforming the mechanically reproduced film into operatic performance the recording angel may be exterminated.

Phenomenal Song

Adès and Cairns developed the role of the opera singer who had performed Lucia prior to the fateful dinner party by eliding Buñuel's singer, Silvia, with the wild "Valkyrie" Leticia, whose name the singer now takes. In the first act, she throws an ashtray through a window, seemingly for no reason, and then, after Blanca has entertained the guests by playing Paradisi on the piano, refuses to sing. Raúl entreats her, declaring: "I will not leave this house until she sings!" which the guests repeat. Yet Roc, the conductor, points out that she has already sung quite enough for the evening. It is Leticia's refusal to sing that seems to entrap them in the house. Only much later do they realise that, in order to break free, they need to re-enact that moment. Now, though, the act of her singing, her cooperation, will liberate them.

Leticia's aria, "My home, do you ask of my peace," reworks Yehuda Halevi's twelfth-century text "Zion, do you ask of my peace," expressing a longing to return home, that may also reflect Buñuel's own exile from Francoist Spain.[30] From an operatic perspective, it fulfils several generic clichés: the soprano shall be sacrificed (Deleuze's virgin offering), in the sense that she performs against her will for the general good. Adès's writing for the female voice, again, is extreme—you might even say unsympathetically caricatured. The tessitura makes the soprano seem perched on a high altitude tightrope, with the possibility of falling all too apparent.[31] The characters and audience may have waited a long time for her song, but there is little sense of musical release here.

> Heather Wiebe, writing about Adès's 2004 opera *The Tempest*, described it as:
>
> a rather cynical catalog of successful operatic devices circa 1945–1996. This is how you write a "modern" opera for a large house, Adès seemed to have decided, and in a sense he was probably right. There was the androgynous mechanical high-coloratura soprano, recalling Ligeti's Gepopo in *Le Grand Macabre* and Messiaen's Angel in *Saint François d'Assise* […]. There was the expendable countertenor part, which

> made sense primarily as a fulfillment of some genre requirement. The culminating quintet, a passacaglia, recalled the passacaglia finale of *Le Grand Macabre*. And the "singing" moment came by way of Britten in the alienated, monstrous Caliban's meditative aria, palpably recalling Grimes's "Now the Great Bear and Pleiades" in both sound and situation.[32]

Similar figures recur in *The Exterminating Angel*: the high sopranos have multiplied; the gay-brother countertenor seems expendable but in fact lasts the duration; there is no passacaglia finale (even if repetitions of the Requiem fragment function similarly). Now, though, the prima donna sings. Such clever referencing, for Wiebe, leant to *The Tempest* a "sense of claustrophobia, of an operatic world that was too closed off and perfectly formed." There is an interesting tension here between Wiebe's discomfort about the principle of Adès's "cynical catalog" and Venn's fascination with the intertextuality of *The Exterminating Angel*, which digs at the roots of the cinemopera conundrum. Although Linda and Michael Hutcheon suggested that, if one does not know the source of an adaptation one just takes a work "on its own terms," it is almost impossible to conceive interpreting Adès's opera without reference not only to Buñuel's film but also, and perhaps more significantly, to operatic conventions—specifically the trope of a magical performance by one of the characters saving the day.[33] Both "origins" are impossible to escape; Adès is read against Buñuel—he supplies musical voices where previously they were silent—and the voices he provides are heard against genre requirements.

Escaping the Medium

The impossible, inescapable situation of Adès's *Exterminating Angel* becomes a means to think once more about the ways in which opera and film intersect. Jeremy Tambling, reviewing Martha Citron's *When Opera Meets Film*, observes that "opera productions have

themselves moved closer and closer to film; opera as metaphor (like theatre) has become more comparable to film." He continues:

> It is now almost standard, too, for opera productions to use film projections, or to involve filmic moments. Indeed, Stanley Cavell's sense of film as the successor to opera, after Gramsci, […] now needs to be rethought: if cinema succeeds the novel, which seems more likely, in terms of popularity, narrative, and pace, then opera has something more like a chiasmic relationship to film, with only a qualified ability to convey a narrative; even many nineteenth-century operas require the audience to be familiar with the text from which the opera derives—say Scott, Schiller, or Shakespeare—the exception being, as so often, Wagner. The opposites cross over each other's territory.[34]

The example of Adès's *Exterminating Angel* might be used to query Tambling's claim that opera has only "a qualified ability to convey a narrative"; the diegetic songs added to the original tale clarify and communicate the characters' emotional states. It might also be said that while audiences have a vague notion that an opera is derived from a classic play they are typically unconcerned about the details of the adaptation. The notion that the relationship between cinema and opera is chiasmic, however, is helpful, not least because these days an opera—even a new one—does not necessarily remain in the confines of an opera house but can be broadcast live to cinemas, around the world.

The Exterminating Angel was presented from the Metropolitan Opera House as part of its cinecast season in the fall of 2017. Transferring an opera based on a film back into the cinema might upset any neatly laid schemata for the relationship between source and adaptation, and across media. What became clear, though, was that there is nothing terribly filmic about Adès's opera or especially about operatic performance. It may be the case, as Tambling says, that opera productions borrow techniques from films, but that was not the

case with the staging of *The Exterminating Angel*, beyond some projected images. When filmed, the spectator gained the close-up view so readily provided by a camera and so rarely attained in the opera house. But that did not mean that the performers tempered their acting or singing—and why would they, as they were singing to a live audience as well as a film crew? There was little intermedial tension, in other words, on watching Adès's opera at the cinema; it was, very evidently, a stage work that happened to have derived its narrative from a film. The live cinebroadcast does not provide works with an "afterlife" in the same manner that Citron and Michal Grover-Friedlander claim of recordings, in which a film's "aural remains" persist beyond its diegesis.[35] It is, like all performance, a "bad" repetition, to borrow Deleuze's terminology—imperfect but because of that eminently repeatable—suggesting that the "life impulse" has not yet been exterminated.

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[1] This is the text Buñuel provided to be screened before the first Parisian showings of *El ángel exterminador* in 1963: quoted in Robert J. Miles, "Virgin on the Edge: Luis Buñuel's Transnational Trope," *Studies in Hispanic Cinemas*, 2:3 (2006), 169–88 (p. 179, n. 15).

[2] Evan Eisenberg, *The Recording Angel: Explorations in Phonography* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1987), 98-99.

[3] See Jonathan Sterne, *MP3: The Meaning of a Format* (Chapel Hill, NC: Duke University Press, 2012).

[4] Almost any recent issue of this journal illustrates this point: for example, "Opera in Transition," edited by Gundula Kreuzer and Clemens Risi gathers together essays on the theme; *Opera Quarterly* 27: 2-3 (2011).

[5] Quoted in Marsha Kinder, "*The Exterminating Angel*: Exterminating Civilization," February 10, 2009 https://www.criterion.com/current/posts/1012-the-exterminating-angel-exterminating-civilization accessed 22 June 2018.

[6] Quoted in Jonathan Romney, "How Buñuel's *The Exterminating Angel* became opera's most surreal soiree," *The Guardian* 1 April 2017.

[7] "Insights into Thomas Adès' *The Exterminating Angel* (The Royal Opera)," published 27 March 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kMsHvvEi-G8 Of Robert Lepage's production of Adès's *The Tempest*, Heather Wiebe wrote that it captured that opera's "sense of enclosure, its airless and oppressive character"; she also notes Tom Service's observation that Adès's operas tend to deal in hermetic situations, concerning "a certain kind of entrapment." See her "Prospero's Ossified Isle: Thomas Adès's *The Tempest*," *Opera Quarterly* 30 (2014): 166-168; here 167.

[8] On operatic plot schema see among others Catherine Clément, trans. Betsy Wing, *Opera, or, the Undoing of Women* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

[9] For more, see Gundula Kreuzer, *Curtain, Gong, Steam: Wagnerian Technologies of Nineteenth-Century Opera* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018).

[10] Linda Hutcheon and Michael Hutcheon, "Adaptation and Opera," in *The Oxford Handbook of Adaptation Studies*, ed. Thomas Leitch (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 305-323.

[11] Hutcheon and Hutcheon, "Adaptation and Opera," 307.

[12] One pair of siblings and one married couple became the characters Silvia and Francisco de Avila; Blanca is made the wife of the conductor Mr Roc, subsuming Alicia. See Edward Venn, "Thomas Adès's *The Exterminating Angel*," *TEMPO* 71 (2017): 21-46.

[13] Translation into English seems to be common practice in theatrical adaptations of films—for example in Belgian director Ivo van Hove's *Obsession*, based on Visconti's 1943 film—implying a sonic deracination of the original, facilitated by the gestural language of staged performance.

[14] Helen Abbott has a proposed gauging "adhesion strength" in text-setting as a means to judge the degree to which composers relate poem and music in song form, which she considers to be a type of adaptation; see her *Baudelaire in Song, 1880-1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 36-40. In this instance it would seem that there is strong adhesion to the English words of Bunuel's subtitled film but abhesion musically.

[15] Mark Berry, "Salzburg Festival (1) - Adès, The Exterminating Angel, 5 August 2016" http://boulezian.blogspot.co.uk/2016/08/salzburg-festival-1-ades-exterminating.html?spref=tw posted Monday, 8 August 2016.

[16] Chandler explains: "This term simply refers to operas which share significant affiliation with film either *via* their composer, original producer, or source material. Moreover, certain operas can be considered cinemopera either due directly to intertextuality with film, in the case of operas based on film, or to one or more of the members of their maiden creative team, most

often the composer, having strong ties to the film music industry as those ties significantly affect productions and scores." Yuell "Chuck" Chandler IV, "Opera and the Modern Culture of Film: The Genesis of Cinemopera, its Intertexuality and Expansion of Operatic Source Material" (PhD University of Kentucky, 2012), 4.

[17] "Insights into Thomas Adès' *The Exterminating Angel* (The Royal Opera)," published 27 March 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kMsHvvEi-G8

[18] Marsha Kinder, "*The Exterminating Angel: Exterminating Civilization,*" posted 9 February 2009 https://www.criterion.com/current/posts/1012-the-exterminating-angel-exterminating-civilization. See also Cécile Chaspoul, "Cinéma exilé, cinéma exilant," *Positif* 435 (1997), 113–18; 115.

[19] On the much-discussed spatial manipulation of Buñuel's films – particularly in relationship to the home – see Marc Ripley, "Panic at the Disco? The Liminal Position in Luis Buñuel's *Simón del desierto*," *Hispanic Research Journal*, 16 (2015): 15–30; 15–17; and Pietsie Feenstra, "Buñuel during the Mexican Period: Space and the Construction of Myths," in *Buñuel*, siglo XXI, ed. Isabel Santaolalla et al. (Zaragoza: Institución 'Fernando el Católico'/Prensas Universitarias de Zaragoza, 2004), 123–27.

[20] Those close-ups were more readily evoked by the HD broadcast, though the filmed performance retained a certain "staginess."

[21] Marc Ripley, "Housed Nowhere and Everywhere Shut In: Uncanny Dwelling in Luis Buñuel's El ángel exterminador," *Bulletin of Spanish Studies* 93:4 (20 April 2016): 679-695.

[22] Carlos Rebolledo, *Buñuel* (Paris: Éditions Universitaires, 1964), 142–47; see also Kinder; and Robert Stam, "Hitchcock and Buñuel: Authority, Desire, and the Absurd", in *Hitchcock's Rereleased Films: From 'Rope' to 'Vertigo'*, ed. Walter Raubicheck & Walter Srebnick (Detroit: Wayne State U. P., 1991), 116–46 (p. 142).

[23] Edward Venn discusses Adès in the context of the apolitical art of the 1990s in *Thomas Adès: Asyla* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

[24] Guy Dammann, "Chilling Moments of Rupture," *The Times Literary Supplement* 17 August 2016.

[25] The opera's Silvia conflates Francisco's sister Juana and Christian's wife Rita from the film, to make her a young widowed mother. That she is given an aria is perhaps a legacy of her name's origins in the operatic soprano of Buñuel's cast list.

[26] *Cinema 1*, 1986, 132.

[27] Gwynne Edwards, *The Discreet Art of Luis Buñuel: A Reading of his Films* (London: Marion Boyars, 1997), 176–7.

[28] *Cinema 1*, 1986, 132.

[29] Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 8.

[30] See Venn, "Thomas Adès's *The Exterminating Angel*," 33, which includes an excerpt from the score.

[31] In this sense, Adés has written into his score the fallibility Carolyn Abbate experienced in Ben Heppner's performances in *Die Meistersinger*; see Abbate, "Music: Drastic or Gnostic?" *Critical Inquiry* 30 (2004): 505-536. While Abbate admired Heppner's heroism in struggling on as his voice cracked (p. 535), the women of Adès's opera are given parts that seem beyond the possibility of singing, however capable in its execution they prove to be.

[32] Wiebe, op. cit., 166.

[33] Transformative, redemptive diegetic song from Orpheus onwards is discussed by, among others, Carolyn Abbate in *In Search of Opera* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

[34] Jeremy Tambling, *When Opera Meets Film (Review)* [Marcia J. Citron, *When Opera Meets Film* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)], *Music and Letters* 93 (2012): 272-274.

[35] See Citron, *When Opera Meets Film*, 160-169; and Michal Grover-Friedlander, *Vocal Apparitions: The Attraction of Cinema to Opera* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).