Miranda

Revue pluridisciplinaire du monde anglophone /
Multidisciplinary peer-reviewed journal on the English-speaking world

21 | 2020

Modernism and the Obscene

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Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/miranda/28131>

DOI: 10.4000/miranda.28131

ISSN: 2108-6559

Publisher

Université Toulouse - Jean Jaurès

Electronic reference

Annelie Fitzgerald, "'The resonance of the music' in *Resistance*, Novel (Sheers, 2007) and Film (Gupta, 2011)", *Miranda* [Online], 21 | 2020, Online since 13 October 2020, connection on 16 February 2021.

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/miranda/28131> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/miranda.28131>

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'The resonance of the music' in *Resistance*, Novel (Sheers, 2007) and Film (Gupta, 2011)

Annelie Fitzgerald

Introduction

- 1 *Resistance*, Owen Sheers's acclaimed novel, was published in 2007 and released as a film in November 2011. Amit Gupta, the film's director, and Sheers co-wrote the screenplay, and *Resistance* was subsequently nominated for three BAFTAs. There is a pleasing symmetry in the fact that Sheers's first novel became Gupta's first feature film.¹
- 2 In her *Theory of Adaptation*, Linda Hutcheon reminds us that adaptations say things differently, but that they also say slightly different things (3). My objective in this analysis is to make a modest contribution to adaptation studies by examining the 'transcoding' of this novel into a film, along with some of the shifts in emphasis, the 'slightly different things', that the adaptation occasioned. Literature, as Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan have underlined, has a rich synergistic capability and multilayering potential that operates on a horizontal level, namely on the single 'track' of the verbal discourse (Cartmell and Whelehan 10). Film, on the other hand, is synergistic on a vertical level, with multiple signifying layers operating simultaneously: sounds, music, images, language (dialogue) function together in what Michel Chion has called a *synchresis* (Chion 1990, 9), a term already used by the Russian formalists.
- 3 My principal focus will be on the analysis of one scene in particular, where the protagonists share a piece of music. With regards to adaptation studies, this is a particularly interesting scene because of the centrality of the diegetic music within it. Analysing the presence of music, another signifying system, in this scene helps one reflect on the respective aesthetic and technical limitations of film and literature, and the resonances and resistances that pertain to each medium or 'code'. In this scene, then, the resonances and resistances that are present thematically throughout the

novel and film are prominent, but the film adaptation also foregrounds some of those encountered in the process of transcoding a story from novel to film. As Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo note, 'Adaptations redistribute energies and intensities, provoke flows and displacements; the linguistic energy of literary writing turns into the audio-visual-kinetic-performative energy of the adaptation, in an amorous exchange of textual fluids' (Stam and Raengo 46). Before focusing on this scene, however, and assessing the redistribution of such energies and intensities in *Resistance*, some background information about the novel and its adaptation is necessary.

- 4 In both novel and film, recent history is 'adapted' in that an alternative version of the Second World War is represented, one in which the Normandy landings have failed and Nazi Germany has invaded Britain. In the afterword to his counterfactual novel, Sheers reveals that the kernel for the story was given to him by an acquaintance in Abergavenny, the market town located at the edge of the Brecon Beacons in Wales where he grew up. In 1940 local man George Vater was recruited into the Auxiliary Units Special Duties Section, which was, as Sheers explains, 'a network of farmers, vicars and other local people trained and prepared to run messages and spy' in the event of a German occupation (Sheers 2008, 352).
- 5 *Resistance* is set in a remote valley, the Olchon, which lies just on the English side of the border between England and Wales, a real location very close to Abergavenny. One day the women of the valley wake up to find their husbands have all vanished, presumably in order to join the Resistance, and they thus find themselves forced to deal with the demands of farm labour on their own, at the same time as they try to cope with their loss and worry. The arrival a few weeks later of a German patrol on a secret mission, led by Captain Albrecht Wolfram, greatly exacerbates this anxiety. In time, however, an uneasy co-habitation, 'a fragile mutual dependency', as Sheers himself has put it (Sheers 2011), develops between the women of the valley and the German patrol. With the onset of a brutal winter, the women come to rely increasingly on the help of the men who are their enemies. The main focus of the story is the evolving relationship between Sarah Lewis, a young wife struggling to come to terms with the unexplained disappearance of her husband, and the world-weary, battle-worn Albrecht. Both protagonists are faced with making difficult choices in the course of the story, which explores the resonances and resistances in their relationship.

Reception

- 6 Shot over thirty days on a budget of £2 million, the film featured Andrea Riseborough as Sarah Lewis and German Tom Wlaschiha as Captain Albrecht Wolfram. On its release in late November 2011, the film received some critical reviews, being unfavourably compared by one critic (French) with *It Happened Here*, a 1964 film that imagined a Britain occupied by the Nazis, while another opined that "the story sinks into humourless catatonia, surrendering all pulse" (Robey). The *Guardian*'s Peter Bradshaw, however, was more positive, remarking, "Cult status may yet arrive for this strange, atmospheric movie, an eerie counterfactual fantasy with a hint of Cavalcanti's *Went the Day Well?*" Bradshaw added:

This is an overwhelmingly bleak film, progressing with a dreamlike drift, and the howl of wind is a continuous accompaniment. There is little conventional suspense or action, just an undertone of violence, and a sense of hallucination and disorientation. (Bradshaw)

- 7 Writing in the *Telegraph*, Sarah Crompton deplored the fact that the 'beautifully shot' film which she thought really 'deserve[d] to be seen' was only being screened in thirteen cinemas in Britain (it did not have a cinema release in France). As a result, it would barely be seen on the big screen where, she argued, it looked 'sumptuous' (Crompton). By contrast, film critic Dylan Moore concluded that, 'The brooding beauty of the landscape aside, there is no compelling reason for this novel's translation into the visual medium' (Moore).

A 'filmic' novel

- 8 As Moore suggests and as Sheers himself has pointed out, the landscape is indeed 'one of the main characters' in both the novel and the film.² As one of the film's producers, Sheers insisted that the film was shot where the story was set: 'It has an extraordinary drama and yet it's on a scale where it can be caught' (Sheers, DVD). The landscape exerts a powerful hold on the minds of the characters, as suggested by this passage from the novel narrated from Albrecht's point of view: 'he'd never seen somewhere quite like the Olchon before. Somewhere so still, so bluntly beautiful and yet possessed, within that same beauty, of such a simple, threatening bareness too' (Sheers 2008, 130). Gupta's still, establishing shots of the landscape seek to capture this spartan beauty. Eschewing digital technology in favour of 35 mm film, Gupta explains that he used a 2.4:1 aspect ratio because depicting the landscape was important³, and indeed the film features numerous long and very long shots of characters in the landscape. As film critic Peter Bradshaw has noted, the howling wind is omnipresent in the film's soundtrack during outdoor shots, where it underlines the harsh elemental environment in which the women live and upon which Sheers's prose dwells. In the novel, the wind also emphasizes Sarah's solitude: 'She listened but again there was nothing. Just the wind, hushing and rushing in her ears, rising and falling like her own blood, like distant waves, endlessly folding against a stubbornly silent shore' (Sheers 2008, 68).
- 9 Gupta has described Sheers's poetic prose as 'a visual style of writing' (Giles-Keddie); it exquisitely depicts, for example, the shape and features of the valley in which the story is set and the phenomena of the natural world the valley encloses:
- The still dawn she'd watched through that window turned into a crisp morning, brittle with brightness after the days of loose rain billowing like curtains across the valley. Every twig of every branch seemed redrawn, sharper. The edges of the hills were newly refined against the sky like old blades worked to a thinness on the granite sharpening wheel. (Sheers 2008, 90)
- 10 Indeed, for Gupta there was 'something about [the novel] that felt very filmic' (Giles-Keddie). In another of the promotional interviews he gave after the release of *Resistance* Gupta remarked that the novel's very 'cinematic atmosphere' was something that he wanted to capture on screen (Walsh). Gupta employs the same term—despite its notorious vagueness—to refer to the ways in which he and Sheers went about adapting the novel: 'It's interesting how many people talk about it being quite a faithful adaptation but when you write it down it's not very faithful. It's faithful to the atmosphere' (Gupta, DVD).⁴
- 11 The atmosphere of both the film and novel can be described as one of emotional restraint and yet of rawness; it is sparse and spartan, bleak and sober. In the film, this

sobriety is also reflected in the costume design, which banishes bright colours; the characters' clothes' colours are muted greys, brown and blues that blend in with the tones of the quietly dramatic landscape that the characters inhabit. The frugality of the lives depicted in the novel and film is also reflected in the devices employed by Gupta: the camera is predominantly static and there are no tracking shots or pans. As far as editing is concerned, cuts are favoured over fades and dissolves. The static camera and straight-on angles also reflect the sober restraint that characterises the story; the rare camera movements are reserved for ten flashbacks focalised through different characters⁵; the dreamlike quality thus created serves to distinguish them from real time. Sheers notes that Gupta references Terrence Malik's *The Thin Red Line* in his filmic approach to flashbacks, i.e., using a moving camera for filming such scenes (Sheers, DVD). The analepses in the film tend to be related to characters' memories of the past and to operate as reflections of their state of mind in the present rather than explanations as to how the current situation came to be. In the film, for example, we do not know that George's recruitment into the Auxiliary Unit took place 4 years previously in 1940; it is simply not necessary to know this fact.

- 12 The film can therefore be considered faithful to the novel's atmosphere, in accordance with Brian McFarlane's definition of the adjective 'as a descriptive term to designate loosely a certain kind of adaptation' (McFarlane, 166). Although the film respects 'the fundamental narrative, thematic or aesthetic features of its literary source' (Stam and Raengo 14), some further brief general remarks about the ways in which the adaptation (hypertext) departs from the source novel (hypotext) merit exposition. After all, Gupta and Sheers set themselves the challenge of transforming a 350-page novel into a 90-page script and a 90-minute film.

Redistributions, displacements and mutations

- 13 As is often the case in film adaptations, compression, elision and omission (Leitch 99) serve to pare down the novel's narrative complexity. The novel's plot features various kinds of analepses and progresses in a much less linear way than the film, though the film resorts to a flashback structure (of which more below). Certain characters are amalgamated: Tommy Atkins and the anonymous agent in the novel become one character in the film; the member of SS Albion who discovers Sarah's diary at the end of the novel is replaced by Albrecht at the end of the film. Furthermore, certain subplots, such as Bethan and Gernot's burgeoning relationship, are excised, and the proportion of the story devoted to George, the character based on George Vater, is reduced, although his cardinal role in the plot development is retained.
- 14 Overall, then, the novel's narrative arc is retained, along with its principal thematic and aesthetic features. But the film contains significant 'mutations' (Hutcheon 31) and numerous additional scenes. Sheers has commented that he 'really started enjoying the script-writing, when [he] was actually writing new dialogue, new scenes. That felt great' (Sheers, DVD).⁶ For example, Sarah's voice-over accompanying the final sequence was written for the film. Likewise, when Sarah walks alone to Llanthony Priory to fetch water for Albrecht to whom she is showing the valley whence she comes, in the novel she tries and fails to recall her husband, Tom (Sheers 2008, 335)⁷; in the film, however, she enters the church and we see a flashback of her wedding, with Tom waiting for her at the altar. One of the effects of this change is to modify the degree of her 'resistance'

to Albrecht as perceived by the reader and audience, thereby portraying her as more resistant to him in the film than in the novel.

- 15 Earlier on, a sequence written specifically for the film demonstrates how filmic images are very concisely used to contrast the levels of resistance to interaction with the Germans between the women: one day the Germans leave rabbits they have caught for each of the women in the valley. Sarah throws hers to her dogs, but when she goes to visit her neighbour Maggie, she finds rabbits strung up inside her porch. As Sheers points out, filmic storytelling can do 'the work of 10 or 15 pages in the novel' (Sheers, DVD). This is just one example of such filmic shorthand.
- 16 Yet another example is the juxtaposition of English and German in the film. Sheers and Gupta have both stressed that they were determined to ensure that the German characters' dialogue was shot in German and not transposed into English, as was the case in the novel. Sheers explains:

Once uniforms are replaced by civilian clothes then language becomes the most manifest form of occupation. As film-makers, the juxtaposition of a wartime setting, German words and Welsh hills, was exactly the kind of emotional and thematic shorthand we needed. (Sheers 2011)
- 17 About a third of the film's dialogue is thus in German (with English subtitles), something which emphasizes that which divides the two groups of characters and underlines the transgressive nature of the human relationship that develops between them. The alien nature of the German uniforms in the Welsh context is reinforced through the language in which the patrol communicates against the backdrop of this very landscape. The novel cannot 'hear' German; in other words, it cannot make the foreign language audible and present in the way that the film can.
- 18 A further aspect of the soundtrack that will be paramount in the rest of this study is the presence of music. There is very little non-diegetic music in the film, with dramatic strings being heard at two crucial points, which signify the onset of a crisis: when George shoots Maggie's colt, Glyndwr, precipitating the end of the isolated relative safety of the Olchon Valley, and when Albrecht returns to Sarah's cottage after she has fled to the mountains and failed to meet him as she had promised. At some other points in the story, we briefly hear the same string chords, a musical leitmotif. The film, however, does contain one instance of diegetic music, and this, as mentioned earlier, will be the focus of the rest of this study.

The music scene and *mise-en-scène*

- 19 What I have called the music scene—the 'musical parenthesis' to use Michel Chion's words (Chion 1995, 212)—is a key episode in both the novel and the film because its cardinal function is to precipitate a crisis in Albrecht and Sarah's relationship, which is then set on a new footing. Sheers has described it as a fulcrum around which the film turns, and indeed it occurs almost exactly at the mid-point of the film.
- 20 In the film, the music scene is made all the more resonant by the paucity of non-diegetic music in the soundtrack, echoing its pared-down aesthetic. The action in this episode in both novel and film is fairly straightforward: one early spring morning, Sarah's birthday, Albrecht comes to visit Sarah, bringing with him an old gramophone which he acquired—unable to resist taking it—as a spoil of war while passing through Oxford on his journey to the Welsh borderlands.⁸ He plays Sarah a record and, after

listening, Sarah, very moved, reacts angrily to this imposition (and its implications of complicity, and possibly intimacy) and asks him to leave. He reveals that he did not come to the valley to look for her husband and the other men but for something else. When she asks him what it is, he offers to show her. Subsequently, the object of his quest is revealed to be the Mappa Mundi from nearby Hereford Cathedral, hidden away in a cave high above the valley.

- 21 In the film, the music scene is highly condensed, consisting of 39 shots lasting just under 5 minutes (40:26-45:14), whereas in the novel it takes place over a dozen or so pages (222-233). The characters' dialogue is reduced by a half: 398 words of direct speech in this section of the novel as against 199 words of dialogue in the equivalent film sequence.
- 22 In the novel, focalisation switches between Sarah and Albrecht as the reader is given insight into both their states of mind at this point in the narrative. The sparse dialogue is interspersed with several analepses, both homo- and heterodiegetic (Genette), which amplify the psychological resonance of the episode. These analepses, three of which are narrated from Sarah's point of view and two from Albrecht's (in a form of counterpoint), can be summarised thus:
 - 23 1) After Albrecht has arrived at Sarah's farmhouse, we learn from the narrator that relations between the women of the valley and the Germans have thawed since the winter; only Sarah keeps a distance, disapproving of Maggie and Albrecht behaving like confidants. Sarah has difficulty accepting the fact that 'Tom had, after all, just gone and left nothing other than a fading scent on his clothes and the ghost of his impression in the mattress' (Sheers 2008, 223) (Sarah: homodiegetic analepsis).
 - 24 2) Some of the Germans have begun wearing the farmers' clothes; Maggie had given her permission for them to wear them (Albrecht: homodiegetic analepsis).
 - 25 3) Sarah recalls her feelings the previous day when she had ridden up the hill, where Nature provided a cruel reminder of her solitude: 'a pair of crows circle[d] and dance[d] about each other in the air. When they'd landed they'd rubbed shoulders and Sarah had felt again, as if for the first time, the pain of her solitude' (Sheers 2008, 224) (Sarah: homodiegetic analepsis).
 - 26 4) Sarah recalls seeing local women dressing up to the nines and waiting at railway stations in order to wave at passing trains that might contain their mobilised husbands (Sarah: heterodiegetic analepsis).
 - 27 5) Albrecht has been experiencing a reawakening of his senses with the start of spring. He and his patrol have been listening to gramophone records throughout the winter (Albrecht: homodiegetic analepsis).
- 28 In the novel, these analepses all occur within the first five pages of the episode, thereby suggesting their scene-setting function within this section of narrative. If the analeptic sections of the narrative are suppressed, what remains closely corresponds to what is portrayed in the film sequence, with the sparse dialogue punctuated by descriptions of the characters' attitudes and behaviour that resemble stage directions or the text of a screenplay, as in the following passage from the novel:

He busied himself at the gramophone, taking the small crank from out of its clip in the box and fitting it to the square bolt at the back. He began winding, slowly at first, then quicker, talking to Sarah as he did.

'You have no music here,' he said with his back to her. 'I thought you might like

some.'

Sarah didn't reply. Her head was bent to the table as she traced the knots and whorls in the wood with her finger. (Sheers 2008, 225-26)

- 29 Two of the analepses focalised through Sarah's consciousness at the start of the music scene foreground the female protagonist's anguish at having been deserted by her husband: 'Abandoned in a world gone sour. [...] Sarah had felt again the pain of her solitude' (Sheers 2008, 224).⁹ Her solitude is underlined in the fourth analepsis:

There was nowhere she could go in the hope of seeing Tom. No reports she could read with her heart in her mouth. And no letters she could wait for. Just an empty vigilance for some sign, some hidden message and her long rides up on the hills, forever facing up to their blank answer. (Sheers 2008, 225)

- 30 In the film, the lack and absence evoked explicitly here (reinforced by the repetition of the negative particle and the adjectives denoting absence) are referred to in the diary entry, written specifically for the film, which Sarah is writing when the sequence begins, and that the audience hears in a voice-over:

March 10th. I'll only be 27 once Tom, and you aren't here. It's weeks now since the thaw. But no one's come in the valley. I heard the motorbike the other day so perhaps they're getting ready to leave. (*Resistance*, 40:26)

- 31 The first medium long shot shows Sarah, seen from behind, leaning over her desk in the farmhouse kitchen and writing. Her voice-over continues as we see two shots of Albrecht in civilian clothes (of which more below): a long shot of him walking towards the camera carrying a case under his arm—subsequently revealed as the gramophone—followed by a medium shot of him walking out of shot. The next shot is the same as the first; Sarah then gets up to answer the door. In the novel, this episode begins with the arrival of Albrecht at Sarah's door and describes her curiosity about the 'thick square leather case' (Sheers 2008, 222)¹⁰ he has with him. In the film, the cross-cutting of these shots forms a sort of counterpoint that suggests the tension that will arise between the two protagonists in the scene that follows. In the novel, it is the succession of analepses focalised through the two protagonists that help create this tension. In the film, there is also irony, of course, in the cross-cutting of Sarah's voiced-over speculation that the Germans are on the point of leaving and Albrecht's purposefully striding through the local landscape dressed in civilian clothes.

- 32 In the film, the absence and solitude that haunt Sarah (to which the act of diary-writing to Tom in both the novel and film attests¹¹) are also inscribed in the *mise-en-scene* of the sequence. Sarah, little more than a dark silhouette seen from behind, is sitting at her desk to the extreme right of the shot, a position which underlines the neat frugality of the rather gloomy farmhouse kitchen, with its bare table and tidily arranged pots on the dark shelves above the stove; the low-key lighting, the chromatic sobriety of the empty kitchen and the fact that it occupies about 5/6ths of the shot help convey the painful absence which lies at its heart and about which Sarah is writing at the start of the sequence. Sheers has noted that Gupta's direction ensured that the concepts of absence and silence permeated the film (Griffiths). The farmhouse thus contains a sort of vacuum—notably the empty armchair next to the stove—that Albrecht will come to fill with both the music and his person; his placing the gramophone on the bare table constitutes a visual counterpoint to the bulky closed account book which serves as Sarah's diary and which lies on her desk on the right of the shot. All this brings to mind McFarlane's comment that 'the writing can never tell us all about a scene, whereas the

film is forced to fill its settings, as it fills its frame, with the paraphernalia of the world in which its action is set, creating a visual replacement for effects achieved by the writing' (McFarlane 130).

- 33 Another aspect of the *mise-en-scene* in the film needs to be highlighted at this point: in the novel the narrator draws attention to the fact that Albrecht is still wearing his Wehrmacht uniform, worn out though it may be:

He still wore his uniform, threadbare at the elbows and knees. The collar of his shirt was broken and frayed. Over the winter some of the other members of the patrol had begun mixing their uniforms with clothing they'd found in The Court. (Sheers 2008, 223)¹²

- 34 The second (long) shot of the sequence, however, shows Albrecht in civilian clothes—this is the first time he appears in the film without his uniform—and in the third (medium) shot, the details of his typical farmer's clothes can be clearly made out: a brown tweed jacket, a green-grey cable-knit pullover and grey trousers. The previous sequence in the film had shown Albrecht asking Maggie to allow him and his men to wear the clothes they had found at the Court farmhouse where they had billeted themselves. In this sequence, Albrecht's new clothes also have a symbolic value and suggest that he is sloughing off—or at least trying to slough off—his identity as an enemy soldier.
- 35 The change of clothes expresses Albrecht's desire, explicitly articulated at a later point in the text of the novel, to be seen by Sarah as 'more than the sum of this uniform' (Sheers 2008, 230). In this part of the novel, the narrator makes clear the transformation undergone by Albrecht since he last saw Sarah: he seems 'lighter, younger' (Sheers 2008, 223) to Sarah; he also feels 'lighter than he had ever done, possessed of a quick, fragile potential. The turning within himself he'd detected on those early walks through the valley was complete' (Sheers 2008, 226). In the novel, Albrecht's wish to be seen differently by Sarah is evoked explicitly in the text; in the film, this desire is implied by being visually encoded in Albrecht's change of clothes.
- 36 Albrecht's change of clothes also indicates a shift in the terms on which he hopes to engage with Sarah thanks to the gramophone and its music. Sarah's attire, too, in the film sequence is significant: she is dressed in black, as if in mourning, while her pallid face has a grey-blue tinge. This melancholy mood is subsequently echoed in the piano music Albrecht brings her and the tone of the diary entry she is writing to her husband.

Resonances

- 37 In the novel, the record that Albrecht plays to Sarah is Bach's *Cello Suite N° 4* in E-flat major whereas in the film it is the 'Venetian Boat Song' from Mendelssohn's *Songs without Words* for the piano (Op. 19, N°6, *Andante sostenuto* in G minor). Although they are played by different instruments, both pieces of music are solos—and perhaps thus help reflect the solitude of the characters.
- 38 In the novel Sheers's prose underlines the emotional expressivity of the music Sarah and Albrecht listen to. The movement of Bach's cello concerto which has the most effect on Sarah is the 'Sarabande': 'Languid, slow, pregnant with sorrow, the strings seemed to belong to another instrument altogether. A regretful but wise and saddened cousin of the cello that had played the first three movements' (Sheers 2008, 229). Mendelssohn's piano 'song' can also be described using the same adjectives and may

therefore be considered, in emotional and expressive terms, a piano equivalent of the work for strings by Bach. In very general terms, then, although they are from different periods in the history of music—Baroque in the novel and Romantic in the film—both musical works convey a similar tone or mood of melancholy.

- 39 Several reasons for the substitution of Mendelssohn's work for Bach's can be adduced. The first is no doubt the pragmatic reason that the sparse non-diegetic music in the film—composed by Mark Bradshaw—consists of strings; thus, in order for diegetic music to be clearly distinguished from the non-diegetic music the former had to be played by another instrument, in this case the piano.
- 40 The second reason, as Gupta suggests in his DVD commentary, is that Mendelssohn was Jewish. Provided that the audience is aware of this, the music scene takes on another, slightly subversive, layer of meaning: the music selected—and appreciated—by a German officer and which he wishes to share with an 'enemy', was written by a Jewish composer; Bach, on the other hand, could be considered an archetypal German cultural reference.
- 41 A third reason for the shift from representing a whole concerto to playing little more than a minute's worth of music is also a pragmatic one: the film cannot afford to devote thirty minutes or so to the performance of Bach's entire cello concerto, in contrast with the twelve pages the novel is able to devote to its being played and to the protagonists' experience of the music. The screenwriters, therefore, sought a way of cutting short the music, so the scene in the film is condensed, with the minute of Mendelssohn's piano 'song' that features in the film being sufficient shorthand to set the melancholy tone that is fundamental to this scene.
- 42 The music of both composers is certainly a signifier by means of which, in both the novel and film, Albrecht invites Sarah to see him in a different light and attempts to overcome the situation of conflict in which they find themselves ensnared. In the novel, the narrator tells us that Albrecht wishes to share the experience of listening to the music with Sarah, for 'the creation of a common ground between them. A common ground that was not a consequence of war, but was in spite of it' (Sheers 2008, 226). In both novel and film, however, Albrecht's explicit explanation to Sarah for why he has brought her the music is simply that it is her birthday.
- 43 In the film, it nevertheless becomes clear that the music constitutes a substitute language for Albrecht, a means of trying to engage in dialogue with Sarah in a manner that is different to that afforded by verbal language. In this respect both the novel and film invoke the expressive and emotive properties of music, along with the—admittedly somewhat well-worn—notion that music is a language which transcends national identities and differences.¹³ In *La Musique au cinéma*, Michel Chion reminds us that music is the element in a film that is susceptible to the most flexible and immediate communication (Chion 1995, 214). In this scene, then, the music functions as a sort of impossible verbal dialogue by which Albrecht attempts to arouse an emotional resonance in Sarah and initiate what the novel calls 'a rare sharing' (Sheers 2008, 231).¹⁴
- 44 The novel depicts the characters as listening together to the whole cello concerto from beginning to end (thus to what can be thought of as a whole musical 'story'), with Albrecht announcing to Sarah the name of its different movements as they begin: the Allemande, the Courante, the Sarabande, the Intermezzo. Sheers's text confronts the

perennial difficulty of representing music in words, as in the following description of the first movement, which can be described as a musical *ekphrasis*:

He lowered his head and at the same time, as if his movement had created it, a bow drew itself deeply across a single bass string before melting to a higher note that fell back towards the first. At the end of that descent, the bow drew across the bass string again, ricocheting the notes higher once more to repeat the movement, the same as the first, but different too. Each time the bow pulled across that bass string, brief and sonorous, a scattering of breadcrumbs on the table near Sarah's hand vibrated over the wood. (Sheers 2008, 226-27)

- 45 Here, the narrator insists on the impersonal character of the music's production but notably avoids the passive voice; the bow, we are told, 'drew itself', 'drew across', 'pulled across' the string. The absence of a musician figure helps focus the reader's attention on the two people who are listening to the concerto and whose fates the music intertwines. Indeed, the action of the bow on the single bass string figures an encounter or resonance between two different elements, much as Albrecht and Sarah can be considered different elements encountering each other in the farmhouse kitchen.
- 46 The narrator's language subtly associates Albrecht with the production of the music; the homonymic term 'bow' is used to describe his attitude in the music-listening episode: 'his bowed head over his folded arms' (Sheers 2008, 227); 'his head still bowed' (Sheers 2008, 228). Albrecht avoids looking at Sarah throughout the time the music is playing and his bowed attitude is suggestive of submission; of the victor asking his victim for forgiveness, perhaps, in an inversion of the relationship dictated by the wartime situation.
- 47 One of the everyday uses of string, of course, is to bind things together, and what the text also traces here is the engendering of a subtle connection between Albrecht and Sarah, signalled by the downward movement of his head at the start of the paragraph quoted above and the vibration of the breadcrumbs on the table near Sarah's hand at its end. The text thus suggests the development of a resonance—both the result of physics and an index of emotion—that is set in motion by the music and that connects the two characters; this resonance (the term is explicitly mentioned on pages 227, 229 and 230) between the music and the breadcrumbs on the table at which Sarah is sitting is alluded to three times in the course of the music scene, evoking a fragile and tentative reaching out and connection.
- 48 In the novel, then, the absent music—absent in that it exists only in Sheers's ekphrastic prose—is made present, and indeed 're-presented', by the narrator's description of it and of the characters' thoughts and feelings as they listen. Once the music has started, the narrative is focalised principally through Sarah's consciousness, shifting mainly to Albrecht's when the cello concerto is over. Listening to the first movement, Sarah finds that

everything in the room, the table, the dresser, the range, the horseshoe over the door, seemed in contact with a new element. The trees she could see through the window over Albrecht's shoulder now moved not with the buffeting wind as before, but under the command of the rise, fall and procession of the music. (Sheers 2008, 227)
- 49 Sarah's familiar surroundings are transfigured by the music that fills her kitchen and overflows into the world outside. The emptiness and blankness she had experienced in the analepsis at the start of this episode become instead a plenitude—'her kitchen filled

with more sound than it had ever heard' (Sheers 2008, 228). On the conclusion of the first movement, a similar transformative interaction or resonance between the environment of the farmhouse and the music is described: 'The wind outside seemed amplified and a blackbird's song rang through the yard, as if all the sound about them had been washed clean in the cello's music' (Sheers 2008, 229).¹⁵

- 50 If Sarah's perception of her surroundings is thus transfigured by its being bathed in the music emanating from the gramophone in her farmhouse kitchen, the narrative also traces the thoughts and feelings she experiences as she listens to the concerto. When the 'Sarabande' begins, for example:

Sarah found her own head dropping now and her eyes closing. It was beautiful but she could not bear it. The music seemed to know. About her hours on the hillside, the wind like the sound of her own blood in her ears, the long nights lying awake in her abandoned bed. It was as if the notes of her heart over these past three months had been dictated directly to the hand that drew this bow over these strings to describe, so perfectly, the complex yet simple geometry of her damaged soul. (Sheers 2008, 229)

- 51 Sarah recognises here that the music somehow expresses her state of mind and gives expression to her feelings. In the novel, therefore, the music fulfils the 'empathic' function (Chion 1995, 228) that is often assigned to it in film by helping to express and reflect the emotions of the characters: 'the music seemed to know'. That the music chosen by Albrecht is able to produce this effect in Sarah in the novel evokes the sympathy that exists between them.

- 52 In the film, the diegetic music by Mendelssohn also serves to arouse an emotional response in the audience; emotions that may well reflect—and help intensify—those attributed to and expressed by the characters on screen. In his introductory chapter to *Literature and Film*, Robert Stam points out that there is a considerable difference between mentioning a piece of music in a text and hearing it performed, even more so when the hearing is combined with seeing filmic images, when there is 'a synergistic interaction between tracks' (Stam and Raengo 18). In the film, of course, the music is experienced by the characters as well as the audience and does not need to be represented within the limits of another signifying system. In other words, the auditory plenitude of the music is directly present in the film and does not require representation in another semiotic code. Its effects on the characters (manifest in facial expressions, gestures, words) are *embodied* and *enacted* by the actors and witnessed by the audience, whom the music also affects. While it is playing, the music itself, combined with the attitudes and facial expressions of the actors, is both a substitute for and suggestive of the intense internal drama—the 'inward vision' (Sheers 2008, 228)—being experienced by the characters and that is explored at length in the novel.¹⁶ In the film, the lack of dialogue while the music plays is fundamental to the synergistic suggestion via the music and images of the state of intense yet restrained emotion experienced by the characters.

- 53 The connections between Sarah and Albrecht traced by the narrator's detailed descriptions of the music and the ways it is perceived by and affects the characters in the novel are suggested on screen by the montage and its alternate shots of each immobile character as the music plays. The music and the montage also serve to build tension between the characters, in anticipation of the rupture and interruption to come. Rarely are the heads and faces of both protagonists completely contained in the

same close-up shot once the music has started playing, a disjuncture that perhaps reflects the thwarted romance that is being played out between them.

Dissonances

- 54 In the novel, the two protagonists listen to the whole cello concerto, and it is only after the stylus has reached the end of the record that Sarah asks Albrecht why he is there and then rebukes him for what his nation has done, alluding to the deportation and extermination of the Jews: 'I know what you've done [...]. So don't cover yourself with this music. Because I see you' (Sheers 2008, 231). In the film, on the other hand, Sarah abruptly puts an end to the performance, removing the stylus from the record with a jarring zippy noise that sharply interrupts the flow of Mendelssohn's music.¹⁷ She then almost snarls at Albrecht when reproaching him for what he, as a representative soldier and citizen of the German nation, has done; her words are almost identical to those in the novel: 'I know what you did. [...] So don't come here and cover yourself with your music. Because I see you' (43:40). In both novel and film, Albrecht's attempts, via the music, to have Sarah see him in a different light, appear to have failed; she can—or will only allow herself to—see him as an enemy rather than just a man. In addition, Sarah's insistence in both the novel and film on the fact that she 'sees' Albrecht indicates her refusal to submit to the auditory power of the music and to the story he seems to wish to develop from it; she explicitly resists and rejects the emotional resonance that Albrecht has sought to instigate between them by means of the music.
- 55 Despite this similarity in the conclusion of the confrontation in both the novel and film, the tone of the music sequence in the film is somewhat different, and Sarah's putting an abrupt end to the impromptu concert is one of the symptoms of this difference. Her resistance to Albrecht's gesture is therefore more assertive and pronounced. The 'concert'—or Albrecht's attempted indirect dialogue with Sarah via the music—lasts 9 shots and 1 minute 18 seconds (41:55-43:13). The long-held close-up of the gramophone (41:55-42:22) after we see Albrecht's hand setting the stylus on the record has its counterpart in the close-up (43:04-43:07) of Sarah's hand determinedly removing the stylus from the record. This act of resistance, one might argue, visually prepares the viewer for Sarah's subsequent aggressively defiant verbal reaction towards Albrecht, which in the novel comes as more of a surprise given the nature of Sarah's musings as the music is playing.¹⁸
- 56 Furthermore, the act of listening to the music is, in the film, more tense and dramatic: both characters remain standing at opposite sides of the kitchen and feature in separate shots, whereas in the novel Sarah is depicted as sitting at the table. The lengthy close-up of the gramophone is followed by an equally lengthy medium shot of a tired- and emotional-looking Sarah (42:22-42:34), with her arms hanging at her side, her pallid face rather ghostly against her black dress and the shadows in the kitchen; there is then an equivalent lengthy medium shot of Albrecht (42:34-42:45) leaning against the kitchen wall, his slightly transpiring face half in shadow and his arms folded almost defensively across his chest. While the novel describes Albrecht as standing with his head bowed, the film's protagonists are gazing at each other while the music plays, though they are not in shot together. The editing here thus resembles a classical shot/reverse-shot, but the dialogue between the characters consists in this instance of musical notes rather than words.

- 57 There is also a subtle shift in the coincidence of dialogue and physical actions in the film which is significant. In the novel, Albrecht responds to Sarah's accusation that he thinks her husband is dead with the negative 'Maybe not', adding that the war may be full of terrors but that it is full of miracles too (the regeneration he has undergone in the valley being one such miracle). We then read: 'They remained like that for several seconds before Albrecht straightened up and turned round. 'I should leave. I am sorry if I've upset you, Mrs Lewis.' He fastened the latches on the box and slid it off the table' (Sheers 2008, 232). In so doing, Albrecht is also symbolically packing away his hopes after Sarah's angry outburst.
- 58 In the film, however, the shot of Albrecht closing the latches on the gramophone follows Sarah's question, 'You think he's dead don't you?' Before Albrecht gives a verbal answer to Sarah's question, we see a close-up shot of his hands fastening the latches, and the loud clunk this action makes seems to undercut the answer he then gives to Sarah's question ('Maybe not') and contradict the slight hope it admits; indeed the black gramophone case itself might also be seen as an avatar of a coffin, thus perhaps suggesting the tenor of Albrecht's true thoughts about the fate of Sarah's husband.¹⁹
- 59 There is thus a shift in emphasis in this scene between the novel and the film, with the filmic music scene having a more conflictual and forlorn tenor due to Sarah's brusque interruption of the music. Her refusal to listen any further to the music Albrecht has brought her and her insistence on 'seeing' him are a form of resistance to what is referred to in the novel as 'the resonance of the music' (Sheers 2008, 230).

Conclusion: resonance and resistance

- 60 The cardinal function of the music scene is the same in both novel and film, precipitating a crisis—an eruption of dissonance and dissent on Sarah's part—which then sets Albrecht and Sarah's relationship on a new footing and leads both characters to new knowledge. Albrecht subsequently reveals to Sarah the real reason for his presence in the valley and takes her to see the concealed Mappa Mundi, thereby establishing between them a complicity different to that he had hoped for when he brought her the music. In both works, resistance and resonance are in play as key notions in the music scene (and indeed throughout the story), but to differing degrees. The music resonates more with Sarah in the novel, and the music scene's mood is more contemplative and meditative (at least until Sarah's angry outburst); in the film—thanks to the interrupted music—it is more confrontational, and Sarah's resistance to Albrecht is heightened.
- 61 While I chose to focus on the music scene—with the presence of its extra signifying system—as a particularly interesting entry point into the adaptation of the novel, other narrative mutations and additions also reflect this heightening of Sarah's resistance to Albrecht in the film. Some examples from the latter part of the film include Sarah's 'vision' of her husband in Llanthony Priory; the final flashback to Tom's kissing her goodbye on the forehead when he left her as she slept; her poisoning her dogs; the fact that it is Albrecht, rather than an SS Albion soldier, who opens Sarah's bible to learn of her death at the end (she has inscribed the date of her death next to that of her birth in her bible). In this sense, the music scene is emblematic of the tenor and effect of the numerous adjustments and the redistribution of intensities made to the story in its transcoding from novel to film. In very general terms, and to misappropriate somewhat

a musical term, the adjustments include shifts in key: Sarah's resistance is heightened in the film, while the theme of resonance is more pronounced in the novel. The shift in both is apparent in the music scene.

- 62 Studying the adaptation of the music scene in the film also highlights that which resists translation from one medium into another. In the novel, the music scene is protracted as the music has to be re-presented in another semiotic (here linguistic) code. As the music 'plays' silently, the interior worlds of both characters can be explored with great temporal and spatial freedom. The text interweaves a depiction of the music being played by the gramophone with Sarah's internal emotional response to the music. Such suppleness, as Cartmell and Whelehan have suggested, is characteristic of literature's 'rich synergistic capability' (Cartmell and Whelehan 10) within a single semiotic code. Somewhat paradoxically, the resonant and emotive power of music is more prominent in the novel, where the 'silent' and absent music is re-presented and its effects articulated in words by the narrator. In the film, on the other hand, the scene is condensed and the (recorded) music is played (mimesis), while the tenor of the intense interior worlds and emotions of the characters is suggested through a synergistic combination—or synchresis—of the diegetic, 'on-screen'²⁰ music and the actors' facial expressions and physical performances. The emotive power of the music, while directly experienced by the characters as well as the audience, is also conveyed by the fact that Sarah feels compelled to interrupt it as something to be resisted.
- 63 The 'common ground' (Sheers 2008, 226) of the music scenes in film and novel thus displays differing degrees and kinds of resonance and resistance, calibrated in accordance with the technical constraints of each artistic medium. In Sheers's words, 'the very practical elements of film-making sometimes force you to make changes' (Sheers, DVD). Such changes, of course, also combine with the aesthetic and interpretive choices made by the screenwriters and director in the adaptation process. The novel and film say things differently, but also slightly different things. Operating in audio-visual-kinetics, the film foregrounds Sarah's overt resistance to the music she—and the film's audience—hears, while the novel, in an extended musical *ekphrasis*, gives more weight to the resonant power of the 'silent' music and its effect on the characters' states of mind, especially Sarah's. In other words, the intensities of resonance and resistance represented and perceived in the novel and the film reflect the constraints of these art forms, their respective discursive and technical limits inflecting the shape of the stories they tell.

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NOTES

1. Sheers (b. 1974) is one of Wales's most prominent contemporary writers. He has published two collections of poetry, two novels, several works for theatre and television, non-fiction, and was named the Welsh Rugby Union's first Writer in Residence in 2012. Twice awarded the Wales Book of the Year, he has been Professor in Creativity at Swansea University since 2015. Gupta (b. 1972), who writes and directs for film, theatre, television and radio, contacted Sheers after reading *Resistance* to suggest they collaborate on a screenplay. In 2007 he wrote and directed a short film called *Love Story*, and *Jadoo*—a feature film adaptation, this time of a radio play he wrote for BBC Radio 4, which was released in 2013 and selected for the 2013 Berlin Film Festival. He has since written and directed another feature film called *One Crazy Thing*, released in 2018.

2. DVD audio commentary. Hereafter: Sheers, DVD.

3. DVD audio commentary. Hereafter: Gupta, DVD.

4. Sheers also uses 'tone' to describe what he and Gupta sought to retain while adapting the novel for the screen: 'I mean "tone" was the word that you were always talking about early on, and I think that's what you adapt isn't it?' (Sheers, DVD).

5. 1) Sarah relives being rescued by Albrecht in the snow; 2) Albrecht collects dog tags from dead soldiers in the snow on the Russian front; 3) Sarah remembers a past Christmas with Tom and other men; 4) Albrecht relives a combat scene; 5) Sarah remembers her wedding night with Tom; 6) Sarah has a flashback of her wedding; 7) At the agricultural show George recognises Alex as the German soldier he saw at a checkpoint; 8) George remembers Tommy Atkins telling him that collaboration cannot be tolerated; 9) George recalls Tommy Atkins asking him how he wants to survive; 10) Tom kisses Sarah goodbye (this is an 'omniscient' and not a subjective flashback as Sarah was unconscious at the time).

6. Sheers also points out that Gupta and he agree that a 'faithful' adaptation makes a bad film; they are in fact 'both fans of bold adaptations. If you're going to move a story into a different medium for story-telling it should change' (Sheers, DVD).

7. Sarah, we are told, hoped 'that the place would still hold a resonance of that day' (Sheers 2008, 335).

8. 'Albrecht hadn't been able to resist and as Alex started the car he'd loaded the gramophone and kit bag of recently introduced 33rpm records onto the back seat' (Sheers 2008, 108).

9. See also: 'Tom had, after all, just gone and left nothing other than a fading scent on his clothes and the ghost of his impression in their mattress' (Sheers 2008, 223).

10. 'Sarah's eyes were immediately drawn to the thick square leather case Albrecht had carried in his right hand' (Sheers 2008, 222); 'She couldn't take her eyes off the case. It was a rigid box

covered in dark leather, battered and scratched with use. Her mind raced to wild possibilities as to what it might contain' (Sheers 2008, 223).

11. Yet in the novel, Sarah never admits to Tom that the valley has been occupied by Germans who are actually helping the women to survive, and finds herself compelled to be economical with the truth to her absent husband.

12. In the novel, Albrecht is first described wearing mainly civilian clothes at a later stage in the story, namely when Sarah takes him to see Landor's house in the Llanthony Valley: 'He still wore a pair of grey-green uniform trousers, Wehrmacht-issue boots and an army water bottle on his belt. But from the waist up he was dressed in clothes from The Court; a heavy tweed jacket over a shirt and a dark blue jumper' (Sheers 2008, 279). It should also be noted that, while the novel describes the scholarly Albrecht as wearing spectacles, being a leading man in a film means that Tom Wlaschiha's character is relieved of the deficiency of short-sightedness.

13. The emotively resonant power of music is evoked in an analepsis in the music scene in the novel: the German soldiers have been listening throughout the winter to the records acquired by Albrecht: 'The music had stilled them. At times it had lifted them too' (Sheers 2008, 226).

14. In the film, the music scene can be regarded as a sort of *mise en abyme* of the way a film's own musical score operates as an emotional prompt to the audience, in whom it may arouse empathy with the protagonists' plight.

15. Sheers also compares the emotional release experienced by Sarah when listening to the music to the thawing of the snow along the river: 'So much sound, so intricate and yet so simple. The weight of the winter months seemed to collapse about her, undermined by this music like the blocks of snow along the banks of the Olchon, weakened and loosened by the river's renewed energy' (Sheers 2008, 227-28). Sarah's experience in the novel corresponds in many respects to what Michel Chion defines as the 'musical parenthesis' in film: 'La parenthèse musicale dans beaucoup de films, incarnée par ces séquences de bonheur ou de mort, de rêverie ou de destin qui correspondent presque toujours à un moment où les bruits et les paroles s'effacent, représente un moment de jouissance, de plaisir, d'émoi, parfois d'horreur, échappant au fil linéaire et chronométrique du temps' (Chion 1995, 212).

16. Sheers has described the actors as 'lending their nervous system to the characters, doing so much acting with their faces' (Griffiths).

17. In the novel, the music ends thus: 'The needle ran to the end of the final groove and stayed there, riding the revolving thud of the record's silence, the pulse of nothing playing into the room' (Sheers 2008, 230).

18. Note the juxtaposition of mood ('glazed', 'blushed' and 'tender' versus 'clean', 'hard' and 'pared') in the following two paragraphs:

Sarah was looking directly at him. Her eyes were glazed with tears, the skin about them blushed with unspent crying. He allowed himself the slightest of tender smiles.

'What are you doing here?' she said. Her voice was clean and hard as bone, pared of all depth by her anger. Her eyes remained locked on his. 'You've won this war. Why don't you just leave now? Leave us alone?' (Sheers 2008, 230). In the novel, the abrupt change of mood is also highlighted by the shift in meaning of the term 'needle' in this scene: Sheers refers to the gramophone's stylus as a 'needle' on three occasions when the record is playing (pages 226, 229, 230); subsequently, we are told that Sarah 'used her husband's name as a needle to pierce him' (Sheers 2008, 231). An instrument of potential momentary harmony becomes a weapon.

19. Death is invoked in the text of the novel, but in relation to Albrecht rather than Tom: 'Standing there like that he looked like a body prepared for the coffin' (Sheers 2008, 227).

20. I have translated Michel Chion's 'musique d'écran' as 'on-screen music' (Chion 1990, 71).

ABSTRACTS

Owen Sheers's counterfactual wartime novel *Resistance* (2007) was adapted and released as a film in 2011. The article first gives a brief overview of the film's reception and the adaptation of the novel before undertaking a detailed comparative analysis of the central scene involving diegetic music in both novel and film. The study focuses on the adjustments—the resonances and resistances—that the transcoding of this scene from one medium to another entails and reflects on how they impact the narrative and its interpretation.

Résistance (2007), le roman de guerre contrefactuel d'Owen Sheers, fut adapté au cinéma en 2011. Cet article donne d'abord un bref aperçu de la réception du film et de l'adaptation filmique du roman avant de procéder à une analyse comparative détaillée de la scène centrale dans le roman et le film, laquelle tourne autour d'une musique diégétique. L'étude dégage les ajustements – les résonances et les résistances – qui résultent du transcodage de cette scène d'un médium à un autre et réfléchit à la façon dont ils impactent la narration et son interprétation.

INDEX

Keywords: adaptation studies, diegetic music

Mots-clés: études d'adaptation, musique diégétique, *Resistance*

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