Textes et contextes
ISSN : 1961-991X
: Université Bourgogne Europe

19-1 | 2024
L'entre-deux, une recomposition des représentations. Regards transdisciplinaires et transfrontaliers

Music and Memory in Cinema – The *topos* of Mourning in *The Dead* (John Huston, 1987), *Broken Lullaby* (Ernst Lubitsch, 1932) and *Brief Encounter* (David Lean, 1948)

15 July 2024.

Raphaëlle Costa de Beauregard

http://preo.ube.fr/textesetcontextes/index.php?id=4695

Music and Memory in Cinema – The *topos* of Mourning in *The Dead* (John Huston, 1987), *Broken Lullaby* (Ernst Lubitsch, 1932) and *Brief Encounter* (David Lean, 1948)

Textes et contextes

15 July 2024.

19-1 | 2024
L'entre-deux, une recomposition des représentations. Regards transdisciplinaires et transfrontaliers

Raphaëlle Costa de Beauregard

http://preo.ube.fr/textesetcontextes/index.php?id=4695

---

1 Introduction. In literature, when music is heard by a character, the reader is both blind and deaf, and only visual and aural imagination can supply the necessary information to enjoy the description of distinct memories and emotions of the character. In cinema, we believe we can see and we can hear things directly, though we are aware that the picturing of onscreen memories as well as the melodrama of individual and collective memory remain an imaginary audio-visual construct.[1] The three films under discussion, *The Dead* (John Huston,

1987), *Broken Lullaby* (Ernst Lubitsch, 1932), and *Brief Encounter* (David Lean, 1948) have in common the *topos* of mourning which sheds a particular light on the symbiosis of music and memory within cinematic time.

2 The individual experience of reminiscing past scenes which are suddenly identified by a character when a long-forgotten piece of music intrudes upon the narrative continuum, reaches the heights of tragedy in Huston's adaptation of Joyce's *The Dead*. The sudden transformation of the past into the present by the on-screen performance of a music piece-calls for the study of collective as well as individual memory; such is the case in the climactic scene of Lubitsch's *Broken Lullaby*. What about non-diegetic music and the character's memory? This point will be examined in a discussion of David Lean's *Brief Encounter* (1948). Such cinematic scenes are a means of arousing the spectator's empathy with the characters, whether by diegetic music and their recovery of a forgotten moment, or musical underscoring of dramatic action. Thus, it will be argued that the cinematography of the experience of memory in scenes of mourning finds a powerful ally in music.

1. Music and memory in *The Dead*

3 The case of off-screen diegetic music [2] being suddenly recognized by the heroine as having a secret meaning for her, will be discussed in the light of the screen adaptation in 1987 by John Huston of James Joyce's short story *The Dead*. [3]

4 Music echoes throughout the short story and there are suggestions that its pattern is operatic. [4] Mary Jane Morkan plays the piano, and she accompanies her aunt Julia Morkan who sings classical *arias* as was the fashion in middle class Catholic society in Dublin, among which, in Huston's film, 'Array'd for the bridal'. Before dinner, Mary Jane plays quadrilles such as 'lancers' (Joyce 187), and the guests start dancing. Among the guests is Bartell D'Arcy, a tenor who keeps complaining about his voice, until he is finally heard off-stage singing an Irish ballad, "The Lass of Aughrim" [5] although most of the guests have already left. In this key scene, the contrast between the bustle of music during the party and the lyricism of the *aria*, between society and a solitary figure, is an operatic mise-en-scène of memory, and

the ghostly presence of an absent third party[6]. This on-stage/off-stage aural structure which is found in opera music implies the on-stage character's stillness, listening intently as if overpowered by the music, while the spectator is made to listen carefully. For the sake of methodology, a summary of the analysis by Michel Chion of the modalities of listening in audio-vision is added here and will be used in the following case studies. The film critic distinguishes between 'causal listening', in which the sound is understood as a source of information on the surrounding world, 'semantic listening' which identifies a message in the sound heard, and 'reduced listening' which focuses on the traits of the sound itself (Chion 25-34). This key scene of Joyce's work is grounded on the pause in the action and the 'reduced listening' of both character and spectator. Moreover, we recognize here the musical theme which is introduced by composer Alex North in the 'main title' (Kalinak 4), i.e., the opening credits, and which is heard repeatedly in the following musical underscoring of the film.

5 In this climatic scene, the memory aroused in Gretta (Angelica Huston)'s mind by the off-screen diegetic music also causes an intense emotion in a second listener as well, her husband Gabriel Conroy (Donald McCann), though without any memory to match the lyric. In Joyce's text, the impact of the melody which is heard by Gretta Conroy as she is leaving the party with the other guests[7] is strong enough to make her stop short on the top of the stairs, while Gabriel has already reached the ground floor. Thus in the short story as well as in Huston's film, the scene is framed from Gabriel's point of view. He must look upwards to get a view, not of the singer, but of the listener.

> He was in a dark part of the hall gazing up the staircase. A woman was standing near the top of the first flight, in the shadow also. He could not see her face but he could see the terracotta and salmon-pink panels of her skirt which the shadow made appear black and white. It was his wife. She was leaning on the banisters, listening to something. Gabriel was surprised at her stillness and strained his ear to listen also. […] Gabriel said nothing but pointed up the stairs towards where his wife was standing (Joyce 211).

6 References to lighting are used in the description of Gabriel's perception as if in a frame: the dark part of the staircase fills the foreground,

while the background is also in the shadow. A weird play on the subjective upward angle gives us a view of her feet rather than her face, as Gabriel only sees the "terracotta and salmonpink panels of her skirt". She is transfixed into complete immobility like a sitter in a portrait. [8] In Joyce's text, Gabriel uses the metaphor of music for his fancied painterly effect:

> If he were a painter he would paint her in that attitude. Her blue felt hat would show off the bronze of her hair against the darkness and the dark panels of her skirt would show off the light ones. *Distant music* he would call the picture if he were a painter (Joyce 211).

7 While the camera screens what Gabriel sees, we also notice that instead of commenting on the singing performance, his attention to the ballad is drawn by his wife's surprising attention to the performance. [9] This is the first and only time when Gabriel's attention shifts from the guests at Julia's new year's party, to the music being played, as he identifies an Irish ballad. [10] As to Gretta herself, her 'reduced listening' allows her to perceive the singing purely as music, in its "cadence", i.e., its rhythm, and "hoarseness", i.e. its pitch.

8 The song seemed to be in the old Irish tonality and the singer seemed uncertain both of his words and of his voice. The voice, made plaintive by distance and by the singer's hoarseness, faintly illuminated the cadence of the air with words expressing grief:

> O, the rain falls on my heavy locks
> And the dew wets my skin,
> My babe lies cold . . . (Joyce 211)

9 The ballad is a popular one: "The Lass of Aughrim". [11] While Joyce is careful to render the old-fashioned context of the scene, where it is heard with piano accompaniment, Alex North gives it more dramatic emphasis by choosing to use the single sound of the voice singing *a capella*. This underlines the fact that the scene is devoted to the return in Gretta's present life of another scene from her past, as she tells Gabriel later at the hotel. [12]

10 Because her young lover died for her, as she believes, the fact that she hears a man's tenor voice singing the ballad while all the singing

during the party was by Julia Morkan, resurrects the young man himself. The memory of Michael Furey who died after waiting outside her window is thus typical of the 'displacement' and 'condensation' defined by Freud as the characteristics of dreaming, and in this particular scene, those of reminiscing.[13] While the ballad tells the death of a seduced and betrayed young woman, to Gretta, it tells the story of her young lover in Galway, and the very distance between her and the singer revives the distance between her and the young man catching death outside. The tenor's male voice is heard in the distance as if she heard the voice of the dead Michael Furey's ghost, a ghost of a lover who, as Gretta says, 'died for me', and haunts the scene described by Joyce. The ballad tells the tale of the seduction, betrayal, rejection and death of a young girl, but also has national, i.e. collective, significance.

11 While Gabriel attempts to empathize with his wife, it is made clear that her own emotion cannot be shared by him. For him, this scene is the climax of an experience of revelation, of Joycian *epiphany*.[14] He now sees their relationship in a new light: until then he believed they shared an intimacy grounded on an equally genuine love. He realizes all his own memories of their love which now come back to him have been unreal, a mere fiction which he constructed in his imagination. During all those years, she lived both in the present with him and in the past with her young lover.

12 Musical performance causes the emergence of a repressed memory in this story, but later Gabriel is seen behind the room's windowpane, as he is gazing in the distance. Greta's mourning for Michael Furey becomes his own mourning for Ireland's past tragedies, as if an evocation of a collective memory was also meant in Joyce's text, which suggests another relation between music and memory. For him, the story also echoes the ghosts of Irish History. The past is ever present in *The Dead*. Aughrim is a village in County Galway, which was the site of a 'slaughter' in 1691.

13 In the following example which will be examined now, music has a similar relation to individual memory, as it is thanks to a musical performance that another ghostly young man can at last be properly mourned. In addition, it will also be seen that the lyrics allow the shift from personal to collective memory in a quite explicit manner.

2. Music and mourning ritualized in *Broken Lullaby*

14 The sudden return of the past and the achievement of mourning through music, at first secret and individual and then given a national meaning in Joyce's *The Dead*, was screened as both an individual and a collective mourning in Lubitsch's *Broken Lullaby*.[15] The climactic scene of the film occurs when the German parents of a son killed on the front are called upon by a French soldier who wishes to be forgiven by confessing his responsibility. The film shows how a single piece of music can be used in a ritual of mourning which gives the dead young man a form of second life as he will always be remembered.

15 In Lubistch's antimilitarist melodrama, *Broken Lullaby*, memory is represented as frightening hallucinations. Paul is haunted by the ghostly face of Walter, the German soldier whom he killed on the front as they confronted each other in a shell hole in which they had both fallen. Rather than sharing the French army's celebration of victory, in the hope of freeing himself from this obsession, which is driving him crazy, he confesses the killing to a priest, but when told that he was only doing his duty, he finds that this does not cure his hallucinations. Because he examined the young German soldier's wallet, he knows his name and address and about his earlier stay in Paris as a violinist. Having decided to meet the young man's parents in Germany to atone for having killed him, in the hope of freeing his mind from his hallucinations, he plans to confess the truth and ask them to forgive him. Instead of doing so, however, he invents a meeting with Walter in Paris, telling the devastated parents that they had been friends, while delaying the moment of his confession. By borrowing a false identity which is grounded on an imitation of what he has learnt about Walter when reading his last letter (DVD 05:56—07:00) Paul creates for himself an acceptable role in the family group, that of the dead man's friend. The fact that the rest of the population of the town is scandalized by his intimacy with Walter's family underscores the collective dimension of memory and the tension caused by his being an alien. He is finally invited by Walter's father to play on his son's violin. He chooses a piece which he has memorized as a violinist him-

self and which he knows that Walter used to play and is therefore familiar to his grieving parents.

16 If we follow Maurice Halbwachs's theory of collective memory in response to Henri Bergson's own theory of subjective individual memory, the choice of Schumann's music piece *Traumerei- A Dream*,[16] to achieve the final atonement which will free his mind from the obsession of Walter's dead face, confirms the collective nature of memory in public musical performances. Music, as Halbwachs explains, is not only a semiotic system of codes and conventions but also a vehicle of memory for the listener. The case of the transposition of piano into violin --which is the case of the *Traumerei* performance in Lubitsch's film -- is analysed by Halbwachs as an example of memory at work. He examines the gap between the initial performance on a piano and its transposition into a lyric for a violin. For Halbwachs, there is only one explanation, the fact that the melody has been memorized separately from the instrument on which it was played. And it is the recognition of the melody which interests the philosopher psychologist when it is being heard as an aural experience.

> Where is the model which we recognize, if we do at all? It must be located in our memory and within the sound space. In our mind, as a disposition which we have acquired in our past to reproduce what we heard, but an incomplete disposition because we would have been unable to reproduce it. But the sounds now heard come forward and join the reproduction being performed. [17]

17 Though there is a great difference in the acoustic quality of a fluid continuity on the piano thanks to the pedal sustaining the vibration of the piano strings, and the essential fluidity of the violin's notes tied together by the musician's bow, yet we know the melody for having heard it in the past. In the film the transposition from Schumann's piano score into a score for a violin is implicit. What Lubitsch is showing is that the melody is what catches the attention of the characters, who show that they identify it perfectly, as for example Walter's fiancée Elsa as she immediately sits at the piano to play an accompaniment to the melody. The melody has clearly been memorized individually and independently from the instruments. The appeal to collective memory is dramatized by the performance, since the ex-

periences of playing and listening both share the memorizing of a common cultural artefact from the past. What is more, there is an emphasis on the present time of the shared moment, a merging of the temporality of the characters in the fiction and our own temporality as audio-viewers. The framing of Walter's parents sitting on a sofa literally signals our fictive presence within the frame.

18 The narrative pattern of the film focuses on the power of music to address collective memory. It is therefore all the more significant as it sustains the dominant pacifist ideology of the film – i.e. 'passions' or 'psychic affects' upon which cinema as well as music exert a subliminal power – such as hatred being cured by love thanks to the ritual of mourning. When Elsa, Walter's fiancée, is secretly told the truth by Paul, she first suffers from a fit of hatred, but she also wishes to protect her foster-parents from suffering from this terrible truth. She accordingly decides that Paul will have to stay and live with them as the only way to atone for the killing, thus suggesting the necessary transformation of individual passion from hatred into mercy.

19 In this scene we are engaged in the three above-mentioned forms of relating to music, from the diegetic level of causal listening to the cultural recognition of a well-known piece of piano music by Schumann transposed for the violin, and to pure attention to the sonic qualities of the performance. While these modes of relating to music are simultaneous, yet they are narrativized so that they are identifiable by the film audio-viewer. Just as in Huston's film, the use of diegetic music in Lubitsch's suddenly interrupts the flow of narration, and allows the emergence of repressed memory and haunting ghosts. Memory is closely associated to the diegetic music as the melodramatic narratives reach their climax, and its relation to time is significant, since it re-situates the past in the present. In addition to Halbwachs's above-quoted analysis, it is now thought that rather than recovering a fragment stored in a given part of the brain, the reminiscence "is an ordering of people, places, things and events. There are no calendars in the brain" (Rosenfield 166). The music pieces, whether an Irish popular ballad or a well-known piano piece by Schumann, both introduce in the unravelling of the narrative a moment of re-creation rather than mere recovery of a past scene by its rhythm and movement. To quote Rosenfield again:

> Accurate memory traces would hardly help us survive in an ever-changing world. Freud attempted to account for how what he believed to be permanent memory traces could be altered in given circumstances. Yet, he often pinpointed the ways in which memories are new creations. Obsessional neurotics, for example, "redo" unpleasant experiences in a variety of obsessional rituals. Such rituals are memories *par excellence* – new creations, the past reworked (Rosenfield 79).

20 However, it is noticeable that the two filmmakers' scripts make the scenes essentially cinematic by the intrusion of a specific form of movement thanks to musical performance. The attempt to "redo" a repressed scene is an act of creation within the movement of cinematic time, and, since for Freud "the unconscious lacks a concept of time" (Doane 37), I suggest that, in these two films, music gives such a temporal function to the lyrical performances. Music appears to be a privileged moment of suspension of diegetic time when the protagonists enjoy purely acoustic qualities. Because all acts of recognition and recollection require some motor activity, the memory-scenes of Michael Furey dying from cold or of Walter dying from a deep wound can be created anew by the subject thanks to acoustic displacement and condensation of ordinary movement into a newly re-created present encounter with the real, however tragic it may be.

21 My thesis in this paper would be that the issue of the musical movement - its rhythm, tempo, pitch, and melody (Accaoui 145) - is central to the emotional awakening of visual reminiscence because it allows the re-enactment of the past. Its obsessional resurgence as in Paul's hallucinations is different from memory, resulting from trauma. Thus the three modes of relating to music defined by Michel Chion, already mentioned above, causal, semantic and reduced listening, are in symbiosis with memory and the achievement of mourning in those two scenes, by music's above mentioned auricular qualities. Both Gabriel and Paul are aware of the music's source, singing a popular ballad or transposing piano for the violin, and can formulate its title, but what makes the lyric truly efficient in the re-creation of the past is the capacity of embedded listeners, Gretta and Walter's parents, to enjoy reducing their listening to pure rhythm, tempo, pitch, and melody (reduced listening).

22 In the two films discussed here, music is used diegetically to depict a climactic moment in the story-telling which causes a protagonist to experience mourning as a revival of the dead. Memory and music appear synchronic owing to common movement: contemporary theories of memory – Freud in particular – (Rosenfield 78-79) define reminiscence is a re-enacting of the experience by setting the 'memory image' into movement, which is what music is about. The third film examined in this paper, though more complex in its representation of memory and music through the *topos* of mourning, tends to confirm this view, as will be argued.

3. Music and memory and *Brief Encounter*

23 Instead of witnessing a character's emotions at the return of the past which the performance of a piece of music has occasioned, in David Lean's adaptation of Noel Coward's play, *Brief Encounter* (1948),[18] we share the reminiscing character's memories and emotions throughout the film. The spectator has an immediate access to Laura's memory at work thanks to the autobiographical narrative of the voice-over in which she addresses a confidant, supposedly her husband. By the 1940s, this form of first-person narration had been well established by novelists such as Henry James and Virginia Woolf and popularized as 'the stream of consciousness'. It became typical of noir film by the 1940s along with the use of the flashback.[19] In parallel, it is the continuum of music which provided the first theoreticians of cinema with concepts which appeared appropriate, such as the fragmentation into movements, the necessary succession and repetition of its composition. Bordwell, among other film critics, mentions Eisenstein's reference to Wagner to enforce the musical analogy: "in Sergei Eisenstein's essay on *Alexander Nevsky* 's battle on the ice […] [t]he musical analogy is used to stress temporality" (Bordwell,147). Germaine Dulac is known to have compared cinema to music by Claude Debussy: "The integral film which we all hope to compose is a visual symphony made of rhythmic images, coordinated and thrown upon the screen exclusively by the perception of an artist […] Debussy's *Le Jardin sous la Pluie*, or Chopin's "*goutte d'eau*" prelude, for

example, are the expressions of a soul pouring forth, reacting among things". [20]

24 Rachmaninov's *Second Piano Concerto* was requested for David Lean's film by Noël Coward presumably because it combines a Wagnerian use of the leitmotiv and the cinematic understanding of film music as the expression of the stream of consciousness. In the script of the film, the narrative tells us about Laura's memory in a series of flashbacks as she reminisces her love affair and brings it back to life in accordance with the process of memory, a re-enacting of the experience by setting the 'memory image' into movement, as said above. This meant that the use of Rachmaninov's concerto had to become Laura's music, in conductor Muir Mathieson's opinion (O'Connor 3). This is made clear in the end of the film, when, after having parted for ever from her lover, she is seen resting after dinner in her husband's company, and we see her turning on the radio: Rachmaninov's *Second Piano Concerto* is heard at once. As she sits in her armchair by the fireplace with some needlework, she acts as if she were listening to the concerto, dutifully keeping company to her husband who is busy doing crosswords puzzle. At this instant, the concerto becomes diegetic music, though only for a few minutes (13:42). Throughout the flashbacks, the concerto had been non-diegetic film music while the spectator followed her reminiscences of her secret love-affair. [21] In parallel with the voice-over, the concerto fragments which are used to underscore her memories become essentially 'her music', the themes fitting her different moods from deep anxiety to intense happiness or tearful nostalgia, and thus become classical non-diegetic film music (Gorbman 14-18), as will now be seen.

3.1. From the concerto to Laura's music

25 The musical score of the film's 'main title' (Kalinak 4) is the first minutes of the concerto, which are heard as the credits roll down on a shot of a dimly lit train station at night, between the opening shot of an express train thundering by from the foreground on the left into the distant background on the right, its white steam invading the black sky in the opposite direction, and its repetition concluding the credits and introducing the platform and the refreshment room. The effect is to introduce main themes of the film in the tradition of opera

overtures, so that our own memory is immediately aroused by musical 'themes' as we have grown to expect in classical Hollywood cinema. The opening bars of the concerto establish the atmosphere of the film: the first piano chords follow Rachmaninov's indications, emphatically sounding the bottom note of the chord first, which Eileen Joyce does with great success. The orchestra is then heard to play in succession a first melody followed by the full orchestra; the piano then follows with the new theme, which is the most famous melody in the concerto (O'Connor 4). The latter melody is repeated by Rachmaninov in his concerto in various forms throughout the work, the repetition being a piano solo which might suddenly be overtaken by the orchestra (O'Connor 5).

26 What makes the film music of *Brief Encounter*[22] so special is that while we are involved in a process of reminiscence by such themes, Rachmaninov's own concerto is itself grounded on echoes and repetitions (Cormack 19-30). Rachmaninov's explanation of this concerto is based on the notion of awakening from memories, suggesting that the repetition with slight changes of themes or 'leitmotivs' are akin to his own 'stream of consciousness'.[23] The composer uses recurring themes and, when repeated, alters them slightly to transform them. Similarly, in the film, the use of "memory-motifs" (Gorbman 28) belongs both to the non-diegetic music which allows us to hear fragments from the concerto and to the structure of the concerto itself, which thus tells us about memories. Arguably, the whole conception of the concerto fits the theories of how our memory works, reappropriating the past to give it some sort of new coherence, as Halbwachs and, later, Rosenfield, argued. This is so true that when people are asked about the music of the film they will speak of the 'theme of the film' never even mentioning Rachmaninov's *opus* (O'Connor 1).

3.2. 'memory-motifs'

27 In his paper, Sean O'Connor follows closely the three movements of the concerto and finds that such 'memory-motifs' are inserted in the film's score with different effects. For example, the same section of the main title belongs to the first movement of the concerto, and it is heard underneath Laura and Alec's date in the park when they confess their love, thus expressing her happiness (O'Connor 5). Another

theme underlines her unhappiness in scenes of guilt (07:15, 14:34,52:14) (O'Connor 7). The second movement is used more sparingly, in moments of suffering, when they decide that their next meeting will be the last, and, as the train starts moving out, she is followed at her window by Alec's gaze. The piece of romantic music continues until the narration tells us of the next day, when they walk to a bridge in the park (57:39). They kiss for the second time (58:30) as we hear the piano which goes on until they reach the station and the sound is replaced by a loud sound of a train rushing by (59:50). The concerto's 'memory motifs' underscore scenes which Laura re-enacts as moments of deep emotion, either happiness and innocent love or its opposite, anguish caused by her sense of guilt.

28 Thus, what we hear has little to do with the actual performance which Laura comes upon by chance as she turns the radio on. We do not hear the opening bars of Rachmaninov's *Second Piano Concerto* which we have heard in the main title, but rather an effect of 'streaming' with the flow of music either growing very loud in the foreground of the screen sounds or fading to a softer background sound.

29 The music is used to indicate her reminiscing, sounding as it were in a distant place and progressively drawing nearer by the increasing sound. Being a dialogue between a piano and an orchestra, it sometimes expresses solitude in solo pieces, or irresistible gushes of desire by the full orchestra playing wave after wave of music. When piano and orchestra are played together within a single musical harmony, they convey moments of happiness (Costa de Beauregard 80).

30 The very rhythm of the concerto underscores the re-enactment of memory. The music uses strong contrasts between accelerating or slowing down tempos, these changes in rhythm being edited in the film to match the feelings of the heroine. Following the concerto's three movements while watching the film as Sean O'Connor proposes to do in his above quoted paper, shows how Rachmaninov's recurring themes are also an essential source of unity which matches the continuum of present consciousness given by the voice-over, like a tapestry within which Laura's memories are re-enacted.

3.3. Intercutting of distinct time-lines

31 The story of Laura's chance encounter with Alec is introduced by her voice, in the form of a confession : "I'm a happily married woman – or rather, I was, until a few weeks ago.[…] But, oh, Fred, I've been so foolish. I've fallen in love. It all started on…" Only at this point do we begin to see the images which are ushered by her words (Dyer 16). Punctuations such as trains rushing by, trains whistling, or bells ringing to announce departure, provide transitions from voice-over reminiscing to embedded onscreen re-enacted scenes, i.e. memory scenes.

32 The film's narrative representation (Gorbman 20) plays with several distinct temporalities. On the one hand, two present timelines are constantly competing: the embedding present temporality of her evening at home listening to the radio (timeline one), and the present as continuum, or 'duration' (Bergson 315), in the evanescent temporality of her day-dreaming when the concerto is heard (time line two). A third timeline is created by autonomous scenes which are inserted within the film continuum. The inter-cutting from timeline two and timeline one provides the narrative closure. In the middle of her reminiscing, her husband's voice is heard, interrupting the continuum of her dreaming memories:" Hi! Laura! You were miles away! […] turn that down?" He rises and turns the sound down, and then says: "You look a bit tired". The camera cuts to her face as she says "I'm perfectly happy" (48:13—48:48). This violent return to the real (timeline one) interrupts her daydreaming and voice-over (timeline two) as the scene of the perfect day of happiness has reached its end: the scene (timeline three) was showing them on a lake with Rachmaninov's music playing as she was recalling her happiness (42:08). As they walk back to the station in silence, the loud sound of a rushing train is heard and the music starts again (48:06) with an as yet unheard new movement of the concerto. But in timeline one, her husband eventually kindly draws near her suggesting she is having a bad dream. The scene leads to the conclusion of the film by suggesting her place as a wife and mother.

33 The third timeline is constructed from embedded past scenes which she re-enacts to keep her promise to remember forever. While Laura

is waiting in the Milford railway station's refreshment room before her train home after a day's shopping, Alec joins her and we understand they are meeting for the last time. But their conversation is sharply interrupted by Dolly, a close acquaintance who exclaims: "What a lovely surprise!". The woman sits with Laura on the train home, and keeps talking to her while Laura is beginning to remember scenes from her love-affair. She remembers their first meeting in this refreshment room as Alec had removed a piece of grit from her eye.

34 In this parting scene, before Dolly's intrusion upon them, Laura was telling Alec she wanted to die. But he was quick to reply that she must live because what he wanted was that she should remember him every day of her life. Memory is central to the film's narrative from the very beginning of the flashback which starts when the concerto is heard after noises from the train station and we see her on board her train going home. Their last meeting, which is what she recalls first, overlaps the present time of her listening supposedly to the radio and pretending to confess her love-story to her husband.

35 If we examine the three timelines distinguished above in the light of film music and its relation to memory, one might ask who really listens to the concerto, as none of the characters in the film show any disposition to 'reduced listening' to musical codes and their affects. The scenes from the past which Laura re-enacts (timeline three) for the sake of keeping her promise to Alec have their own musical coherence. For example, we hear diegetic music, when a string orchestra is playing in a restaurant where they have stopped for lunch. Never paying attention to the musical performance they laugh at the artists whom they find grotesque and enjoy a degree of intimacy in their laughter (22:10), and Alec even jokes as he asks Laura with a smirk whether she plays the piano. Then they go to see a movie called *Flames of Passion* and, before the film starts, a lady plays the organ [24]. Instead of paying attention to her performance they wait for her to turn and face her audience, betting on whether she is or is not the lady from the restaurant orchestra and when they find she is indeed, again they enjoy shared laughter (25:16). Such musical performances show that neither Laura nor Alec are sensitive to music's emotional impact. This supposedly 'sophisticated' sneering at musical performance is not so very different from the moment when Laura's husband complains the sound of the concerto is too loud and turns it down

(48:13). I believe that we are meant to infer that she is not listening to the music of the concerto. Besides, if her husband unwillingly hears the concerto, Alec never hears it. Rather she seeks shelter in its subliminal sound as a form of noise in which to secretly enjoy her memories, since listening to the radio gives her a common countenance.

3.4. Laura's voice

36 But what about the cinematic continuum which is the vehicle for the stream of consciousness in her secret present? The timeline of the voice-over (timeline two) stands for her pretence at confessing her affair to her husband, and it shifts between recalling how innocent or how shameful she felt in the past and how nostalgic she feels now. This is when we hear the concerto in fragments expressing her emotions. In these moments the concerto is a depiction of her emotions by its form, as it expresses her inner life through rhythm, tempo, or pitch as well as melody. If memory is the 'matter' of the concerto, that is to say the present "duration wherein we see ourselves acting in the continuous change of living experience" (Bergson 243), it is linked with music in the film in a particular manner: it only influences our emotions, never hers. Which means that the film music is apprehended less as representation than as individual experience by ourselves, and, in the film, it is the close-ups of Laura's face which provide clues for the present experience of the lost past, along with her voice-over.

37 It is her voice-over which is the main source of our sharing her memories, remembering, from the first moment when we hear her saying to herself: "I want to remember every minute" (09:13) as the camera cuts to a close shot of her face. The voice-over tells her story, the spectator always paying close attention to what she has to say. In such moments of the film, Laura's voice has an impact of its own: it is non-diegetic, as opposed to the scenes in which we hear her talking with other protagonists in ways that depict her psychology and her moral character. When her voice is only heard by us, she thinks to herself in our presence, re-writing her past, and thinking how happy and innocent she felt, or how guilty and ashamed as when she spends hours in the rain to escape from the temptation of sexuality (1:06:47—1:10:11). As Pam Cook writes about the film: "the film is saying that

memory is a matter of retelling and reordering events" (Cook 102). The role of the story-telling in the voice-over is consistent with the view of "memory as a creative process closely linked to fantasy rather than a matter of accurately reconstructing or retrieving the past" (Cook 110). [25]

38 Her voice accompanies "metadiegetic images", since the scenes in timeline three are supposedly narrated or imagined by her (Gorbman 22). Such is indeed the case when she fantasises a Hollywoodian happy romance while on the train, music matching her dreamy expression on the partly opaque window glass (49:25). During these brief episodes, Rachmaninov is ousted by diegetic music, but sound and image are welded together in a dream of perfect happiness, and we hear successively the coded music of a waltz as she dances at a ball, an opera opening as she enters an opera house, (50:00 –50:10). Nevertheless, the concerto is resumed as she fancies herself and Alec on a tropical beach by the sea (50:38), and this transition is one among many that shifts from diegetic to non-diegetic film music, music she hears or imagines she hears and music she probably only hears subliminally. In such moments, the volume, mood, and rhythm are entirely subordinated to the dramatic and emotional dictates of the film narrative, what Gorbman calls 'inaudibility' (Gorbman 76). Though music can always be heard, in moments when the spectator pays no attention to the musical underscoring, it then becomes subliminal.

39 For this reason, complete silence sometimes screams at us, as the 'inaudible' underscoring is suddenly silenced. These violent breaks in our subliminal pleasure recall the raw unpleasantness of the real world. For example, complete silence is heard as Laura is checking her make up in a mirror at home, and we see her husband appearing in the background. She actually lies to him about having had lunch with her friend Mary Norton, and, as soon as he has gone down again, she asks her friend on the phone to be her alibi (51:08). The insistence on the railway station, on the sound of an express train, not only echoes Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* when she is tempted by suicide (1:20:14) but makes Time a powerful agent in the melodrama (Dyer 18). The diegetic sound of the express trains underscores ominous views of trains rushing in the darkness of night (59:14), as a metaphor of passion as well as a counterpoint to scenes on the train when she

cannot but choose to head for home, or scenes when one of them is leaving on a train moving away, forcibly separating them. Clocks are also omnipresent in the scenes at the railway station, a natural icon of railway life when seen in the hand of the station-master, but which is emphasized when Laura actually buys a clock which we see in close-shot as a present to her husband (Dyer 44-45).

40 And yet, Rachmaninov's concerto fragments have such power that we cannot overlook the music along with the narrative. Whenever we suffer the intrusion of such silences, or of blaring noises from the train station, we cannot but pay attention to the concerto when it returns. Maybe more than anything, it is the sound of the piano which we remember, as it draws our attention to particular moments of Laura's stream of consciousness. Because the concerto is associated in the film with such moments by the enacting of the ritual of mourning, as it were, it displays a form of collective memory as we saw in the two previous films, as if, in the company of her husband's kind attention to her sad expression, she experienced a form of common celebration of the lost lover. In Huston's film, Gabriel never met his wife's young lover, and the true identity of Paul is not revealed to the dead soldier's parents. What the three films have in common is the need for atonement of the guilty young woman or young man, and mature wife.

Conclusion: Music, memory and cinema: a modern form of *Requiem*?

41 The comparison between these films which each dramatize in their own way the theme of 'mourning' shows similar approaches to the symbiosis of music and memory in cinema. They represent the characters' memories and the recovery of secret emotions by music. Different moods accompany the re-enactment of memories by music such as nostalgia for the past in *The Dead*, or ritualization of the lost past in *Broken Lullaby.* In *Brief Encounter*, both nostalgia and ritualization characterize Laura's reminiscing of her past happiness as if she were confessing her love-affair to her husband.

42 To conclude, the *topos* of 'mourning' has appeared as the central motif which suited the study of music and memory in the three films in parallel and has illustrated what Mary Ann Doane calls 'cinematic time' (Doane 1-4, 22-25). Music shares with cinematic time features such as the succession (before/after) of events and the irreversibility of time, along with entropy. The presence of time in mourning is dramatized by Gretta's loss of Michael Furey or Walter's parents' grief, and Laura's loss of Alec. The melodies, as well as Rachmaninov's own repetition of memory-motifs, are musical forms which make the listeners assume time's 'arrow' in a fictional 'eternal return'. In *Brief Encounter*, music stands for Laura's stream of consciousness, and both the melodies and their slightly modified return are the vehicle of irrecoverable change. As has been noted, the regular interruption of the voice-over and its musical underscoring by express trains signalling the progress of time's arrow is an outstanding feature of David Lean's film. In Huston's film, it is expressed by the progress of Aunt Julia's party, and its unexpected ending which reveals the presence of an invisible clockwork. In Lubitsch's film, the context of killing under the pretext of duty make time's progress tragically irreversible. If music and cinema have in common the understanding of time as the experience of irreversibility, music in the three films dealing with the dead, becomes an experience of 'mourning'. Which is to say that the reappropriation of memories in the present moment by explicit intense listening or apparent pretence of doing so, is not unlike the music of a Requiem, because precisely the two forms of expression, music and cinema, address the audio-viewer's lived experience of time in the same manner.

Accaoui, Christian (2001). *Le temps musical*, Paris: Desclée de Brouwer.

Bergson, Henri (2004). *Matter and Memory*, (1896-1905), Engl. Tr. by Nancy M. Paul & W. Scott Palmer (1912) Mineola (N-Y): Dover publications.

Bertensson, Sergei (2011). *Sergei Rachmaninov: A Lifetime in Music*, Whitefish, MT. Literary Licensing.

Chion, Michel (1994). *Audio-Vision Sound on Screen*, Eng. Tr. From the French *L'audio-vision- Son et image au cinema*, Paris: Nathan, (1990), by Claudia Gorbman, New York: Columbia University Press.

Cook, Pam (2005). *Screening the Past—Memory and Nostalgia in Cinema*, London: Routledge.

Costa de Beauregard, Raphaëlle (2014). "Intimacy Shared in Laughter and Tears", David Roche & Isabelle Schmitt-Pitiot, eds., *Intimacy in Cinema – Critical Essays on English Language Films*, Jefferson (NC): McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, pp. 73-83.

Doane, Mary Ann (2002). *The Emergence of Cinematic Time- Modernity, Contingency, the Archive*, Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press.

Dulac, Germaine (2004). "L'Essence du cinéma- L'Idée visuelle" *Les Cahiers du Mois*, 1925, Eng. Tr. SIMPSON Philip, et alii., *Film Theory: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies*, London: Routledge, p. 57-62.

Dyer, Richard (1993). *Brief Encounter*, London: BFI publishing.

Gorbman, Claudia (1987). *Unheard Melodies- Narrative Film Music*, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Halbwachs, Maurice (1939). "La mémoire collective chez les musiciens" On-line http://www.uqac.uquebec.ca/zone30/Classiques_des_sciences_sociales/index.html. Accessed 3/5/2016.

Halbwachs, Maurice (1925). *Les Cadres sociaux de la mémoire*. On-line http://www.uqac.uquebec.ca/zone30/Classiques_des_sciences_sociales/index.html. Accessed 3/5/2016.

Kalinak, Kathryn (1992). *Settling the Score- Music and the Classical Hollywood Film*, Madison (Wisconsin): The University of Wisconsin Press.

O'Connor, Sean. *MHL* 252, April 22, 2013 "Sound Track to a Love Story: the Use of Rachmaninov's Second Piano Concerto in the Film Brief Encounter". https://seanmichaeloconnordotcom.files.wordpress.com/2013/11/brief-encounter-soundtrack-to-a-love-strory.pdf. Accessed 30/07/2019.

Rosenfield, Israel (1989). *The Invention of Memory- A New View of the Brain*, (1988), with a Foreword by Oliver Sacks, M.D., New York: Basic Books.

---

1 A volume of papers about these questions was published by Zeenat Saleh and Melvyn Stokes (Dirs.), *Memory in/of English-speaking Cinema- Le cinéma comme vecteur de la mémoire dans le cinéma Anglophone*, Paris: Michel Houdiard Editeur, 2014.

2 I will be using Michel Chion's tripartite distinction between 'onscreen' music/sound, which is diegetic, as opposed to nondiegetic accompaniment 'offscreen' music/sound, and, third, 'offscreen' music/sound which can be either diegetic or non-diegetic, a device which offers the possibility of shifting from one to the other. For example, the opening scene of Huston's film has off-screen piano music, and, as the camera frames a window, the music becomes diegetic: we understand it comes from inside the room.

3 James Joyce, *The Dead* in *Dubliners*, (1914) Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 2000, p.175-225. Film : *The Dead* (1987) US/GB, colour, 83 min.. Dir. John Huston, pr. Wieland Schulz-Keil, sc. Tony Huston based on the short story by James Joyce "The Dead" in *Dubliners*, ph. Fred Murphy, mus. Alex North. Cast : Angelica Huston/Gretta Conroy, Dowal McCann/Gabriel Conroy, Cathleen Delany/Aunt Julia Morkan, Helena Carrol/Aunt Kate Morkan, Ingrid Craigie/MaryJane.

4 See Athena Media *Podcast* 4 on Music in Joyce's short story *The Dead* https://www.joycesdublin.ie accessed 29/7/19

5 The National Gallery in Dublin has a collection of sheets of folklore music. There is a recording by Elizabeth Cronin singing in 1907, such as Joyce would have heard it. It seems he was a talented tenor and actually sang this Ballad. Athena Media *Podcast* 4 on Music in the short story *The Dead*. In Huston's film, the part of Bartell D'Arcy is played by singer and musician Noel O'Grady, on a version by Patterson. https://www.joycesdublin.ie accessed 29/7/19.

6 See Verdi's *Traviata* (1853), when Violetta hears offstage the voice of Alfredo.

7 Gabriel Conroy's elderly aunts Kate Morkan and Julia Morkan have been throwing a party in their Dublin house during Christmas-time (Joyce, 178). Playing the piano is part of the entertainment, mostly as background unheard musak (Joyce, 186). Music stands for Irish culture, understood as lost in a distant past, and for Aunt Julia in particular for her lost youth, being now an old maid who nevertheless sings « Array'd for the bridal ... » in John Huston's film.

8 The type of portrait which is referred to may well have been Rossetti's portraits of beautiful women lost in thought, turning away from the observer who sees their profile, and who are sometimes accompanied by a music instrument, despite the fact that Pre-Raphaelite painters rejected *chiaroscuro* a well as depth in their works.

9 His listening is not focused on the quality of the sound, but on the cause of it, what Chion calls 'causal listening' (Chion 25).

10 By identifying it, his listening becomes 'semantic' listening (Chion 29).

11 *The Lass of Aughrim* is a version of a widely dispersed Scots and Irish ballad. See Hugh Shields, 'The History of The Lass of Aughrim', *in Irish Musical Studies, I : Musicology in Ireland*, eds. Gerrd Gillen and Harry White, Dublin,

1990, pp. 58-73. It is in the 'old tonality': folk music of Scotland, Ireland, Wales and Brittany employed a pentatonic scale. Melodies which exploited this five-note scale often embraced a range of two octaves and were a challenge to the singer, especially for one more accustomed to the eight-tone octave of the diatonic scale. Joyce, *The Dead*, in *Dubliners*, Note 78, p. 314.

12 Once they have left 15 Usher's Island, they reach the modern Gresham Hotel where they will spend the night. Instead of encouraging her husband's advances for passioante love-making, she admits that the song reminds her of someone, a young man named Michael Furey, who had courted her in her youth in Galway. He used to sing *The Lass of Aughrim* for her. Furey died at seventeen, early in their relationship, and she had been very much in love with him. She believes that it was his insistence on coming to meet her in the winter and the rain, while already sick, that killed him. After telling these things to Gabriel, Gretta falls asleep.

13 Sigmund Freud, *L'interprétation des rêves* (French translation of the 1901 ed., Paris : PUF, 1926), Paris : France Loisirs, 1989, p. 204, 302.

14 Oliver St John Gogarty, a friend of Joyce's, thought that, for the poet-novelist, an epiphany was a showing forth of the mind in which one gave one-self away. Joyce center on the web: https://jamesjoyce.ie/epiphany/ accessed 30/07/2019.

15 Ernst Lubitsch, *Broken Lullaby* (1932) 76 min., b&w, USA, English lang. dir. Ernst Lubitsch, pr. Ernst Lubitsch, sc. Samson Raphaelson, ph. Victor Milner, distr. Paramount Pictures, based on a French play by Maurice Rostand, original title: *The Man I Killed*, or *The Fifth Commandment*, cast: Lionel Barrymore (Dr H. Holderlin), Phillips Holmes (Paul Renard), Nancy Carroll (Fraulein Elsa, Walter's fiancée), Louise Carter (Frau Holderlin).

16 Schumann, *Traumerei*/Dream: *https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kinderszenen.* Accessed 3/05/2016. It is played on the piano by Valentina Lisitsa. It is part of *Kinderszenen/ Scenes from Childhood*, opus 15, n°7 from a set of thirteen pieces of music for piano written by Robert Schumann in 1838. See T.D.Taylor, "Schumann's Kinderszenen…," *IRASM* 21 (1990)2,161-178, on-line. Other musics in the film are from Beethoven, *Symphony n°5* (uncredited), *Der Frohe Wandersmann*, music Theodor Frohlich, lyrics Joseph Freiher von Eichendorff, *Père la Victoire*, music Louis Ganne, *Quand Madelon*, music Camille Robert, lyrics Louis Bousquet.

17 Maurice Halbwachs, "La mémoire collective chez les musiciens" (1939). On-line at: http://www.uqac.uquebec.ca/zone30/Classiques_des_sci-

ences_sociales/index.html. Accessed 3/5/2016. English translation Lewis A. Coser, *ibid.* Maurice Halbwachs, *La mémoire collective*- (1950) Ebook, https://www.puf.com/Auteur%3AMaurice_Halbwachs Accessed 03/05/2016. See also "La mémoire collective chez les musiciens" (1939) on the same website. Since Lubitsch's film is 1932, maybe the most relevant work on the subject is Hallbwachs' influential book published in 1925 *Les Cadres sociaux de la mémoire*, on-line as well on the same website.

18 *Brief Encounter* (1945) GB, 86 min., b/w. adaptation from a 1936 play *Still Life* by Noel Coward; producer Noel Coward, Anthony Havelock-Allan, director David Lean, music conductor Muir Mathieson, music Sergei Rachmaninov. Cast: Celia Johnson/Laura Jesson, a middle-class wife, Trevor Howard/Alec Harvey, a doctor, Cyril Raymond/Fred Jesson Laura's reliable husband, Stanley Holloway/Mr Goby, ticket inspector, Joyce Carey/Mrs Bagot, café owner. The story is told in flashback as she reminisces her love affair in the voice-over monologue which is intercut with actual scenes. Laura and Alec, both married with children, meet in the refreshment room at the station and fall in love; they meet once a week several times but having come across some of Laura's friends and having started to tell lies to everyone, after much hesitation and repression of passion, they decide to part for ever. In its time it was a successful movie, and one can still meet today British film viewers who call it their best loved film. The contrast between the passionate music and the social and moral repression of the scenes achieves strong emotional climaxes.

19 In cinema, it is a characteristic feature of *noir* film, as in Billy Wilder's *Double Indemnity* (1944).

20 See for example Hans Richter, *Rhythmus 21* (1921) and *Rhythmus 23* (1923). The films are on you tube, accessed 08/08/2019. See also David Bordwell, « The Musical Analogy », *Yale French Studies* 60 (1980), 141-156, accessed on JSTOR 07/08/19.

21 The piano is played by Eileen Joyce accompanied by the National Symphony Orchestra of Britain, conducted by Muir Mathieson. Eileen Joyce was a well-known pianist, which contributes according to Richard Dyer to giving a particular female inflection to Rachmaninov's music in the film for spectators who recognised her name in the opening credits (Dyer 17).

22 Sergei Rachmaninov's *Second Piano Concerto* is nearly the only music we hear in *Brief Encounter*. Fragments of the concerto are used predominantly as non-diegetic music addressing us viewers throughout. A timing sheet would show that the time of the three movements I *Moderato* :11.06, II

Adagio sostenuto :11.53, III Allegro scherzando : 11.34 – i.e. 33.93 min, does not coincide with the length of the film 86 min.

23 The *Second Concerto* is known to have been written as the composer was recovering from depression thanks to a therapy of hypnosis. The opening bars suggest the awakening from hypnosis, followed by reminiscences of the causes of his depression : his past suffering is told in deep tones and loud chords (first movement *Moderato*). With the second movement, *Adagio sostenuto*, the musician recovers hope in life, even though his melancholy is still present. In the third movement, *Allegro Scherzando*, music is reinstated at the superior joy of the musician (Bertensson, 67-96).

24 Pipe organs were standard equipment when silent films were on show until the 1920s. The Paramount theatre used a Wurlitzer which became the fashion. Listening to the organ player is a reminiscence of such common practices.

25 For this reason, questions have been asked about Laura's reliability as a narrator, in particular because the distinction between her emotions in the past and her emotions in the present is necessarily blurred (Dyer 17-18). Moreover, it has been noted that, because she enjoys reading, the reference to the novels by Kate O'Brien – such as *Mary Lavalle* (1936) about the conflict between romance and everyday life – that she borrows at Boots is an indication of her personality which is conveyed by the voice-over, and explains her selection of Rachmaninov on the radio (Dyer 37-39).

English

The relations between the two concepts are examined through a single *topos*, mourning, which the three films have in common. Huston's film follows Joyce's key scene in which a voice which is heard singing a ballad has an emotional impact on the heroine by awakening her memory of her dead lover. Lubitsch uses a similar device, when Schumann's *Lullaby* is played and arouses the hearers' memory of the dead soldier. The cinema's use of music and memory is brought to greater complexity in the third film, owing to inner monologue, while Rachmaninov's *Second Piano Concerto* is adapted to the film's narrative and becomes film music.

Français

Les relations entre les deux concepts sont examinées du point de vue de la figure du deuil. Le film de Huston se réapproprie la scène centrale de la nouvelle de Joyce, lorsqu'une ballade est chantée *a capella* hors-champ, et réveille le fantôme d'un jeune amant dans la mémoire de l'héroïne. Lubitsch

utilise un procédé similaire, lorsque la *Berceuse* de Schumann est jouée sur le violon du mort et ressuscite son fantôme pour sa famille. Dans le troisième film, ce procédé entre en résonance avec d'autres : le monologue intérieur, et la transposition du *Deuxième Concerto pour Piano* de Rachmaninov en musique de film.

Mots-clés
Huston (John), Lubitsch (Ernst), Lean (David), Schumann (Robert), Rachmaninov (Sergueï), deuil, mémoire, musique de film

Keywords
Huston (John), Lubitsch (Ernst), Lean (David), Schumann (Robert), Rachmaninov (Sergueï), mourning, memory, film music

---

Raphaëlle Costa de Beauregard
Professeur émérite, Université Toulouse Jean Jaurès (UT2J), CAS (EA801), 5 allées Antonio Machado, 31058 Toulouse Cédex