Trick Film: Neil Brand's Radio Dramas and the Silent Film Experience

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Abstract

At first glance, silent film and audio drama may appear antithetical modes of expression. Nevertheless, an interesting tradition of silent film-to-radio adaptations has emerged on BBC Radio Drama. Beyond this link between silent film and radio drama, other radio dramas have highlighted that Neil Brand, a successful silent film accompanist, radio dramatist, and composer, links the silent film experience and audio drama in two of his plays, *Joanna* (2002) and *Waves Breaking on a Shore* (2011). Using theories of sound and narrative in film and radio, as well as discussing the way radio in particular can stimulate the generation of imagery, this article examines layered points of view/audition as ways of linking the silent film experience and the use of sound within radio drama.

Keywords

Silent film

Radio

Sound

Soundtrack

Imagery

Adaptation

Narrative

BBC

Sound in Film and Radio Drama

One of the first banned radio dramas in English was Reginald Berkeley's *Machines.* Written the same year as *Metropolis* (1927)*,* in *Machines* is 'clearly realised the unequalled ability of radio to convey the indescribably huge' (Wood 2008: 56). *Machines* is the story of class warfare and the refusal by the working class to submit to anonymised automation. Reginald Berkeley's previous play for the-then British Broadcasting Company, *The White Château* (1925)*,* was in many ways a landmark piece, both in terms of media representations of the First World War, and as one of the first original full-length radio dramas in English. However, as Roger Wood (2008) has pointed out, the England of 1925 was a very different place to the England of 1927; post-General Strike, *Machines* was considered inflammatory.

The link between *Machines* and *Metropolis* is less tenuous than mere subject matter. The earliest radio dramatists at the British Broadcasting Company and the British Broadcasting Corporation (1927 onwards) were influenced not only by stage theatre but also by cinema (which was, necessarily, 'silent'). Indeed, as Frank Krutnik notes, from its earliest days, radio and cinema 'existed in a symbiotic relationship with one another' (2013: 25). Lance Sieveking, a visionary feature and drama writer and producer, was influenced by Soviet filmmaker Vsevolod Pudovkin and his theories of montage, which Sieveking translated into audio montage. While Pudovkin's montage techniques were purely visual, Sieveking's were necessarily aural. Sieveking's most ambitious project, *The End of Savoy Hill* (1932), broadcast live to commemorate ten years of BBC radio, was, according to a *Radio Times* article 'trying on the one hand to create a distinctive type of broadcast drama, and on the other hand to bring the theatre within the reach of everyone' (cited in Scannell and Cardiff 1991: 137). Therefore, the link between film and radio drama existed from the beginning.

More recently, writer, broadcaster and media scholar Seán Street adapted David Gascoyne's Surrealist text *Procession to the Private Sector* as a BBC Radio 3 drama *The Wrong Procession,* suggesting that 'Radio has always got on well with poetry, largely because of the direct way in which both media talk to the imagination through image' (1998). When Street suggests, however, that 'what could be more surreal than a film you can't see!' he unconsciously invokes what Rick Altman defined many years ago as one of the four and a half film fallacies (1992), namely the ontological fallacy: that you cannot have cinema without image, whereas you "can" have cinema without sound. Altman believed that this marginalised sound, and while refuting this fallacy does not "prove" cinema is a sound medium, it does give credence

to the assertion that it is a profoundly audiovisual one in which sound and image confront one another (which is probably what Street meant by stressing the Surrealist nature of an unseeable film).

Altman's historical fallacy postulates that when film emerged, it was silent, therefore the image is more important to cinema than is sound. This is, indeed, easily refuted; it has been accepted for about a decade that there is no such thing as a silent film; 'from ambient noise to programme music, the moving image has always been accompanied by sound' (Bell 1998: vii). Silent films and their soundtracks dance around the edges of contemporary life, evident in such recent expressions as the popular silent film *The Artist* (2011) and the success in the UK of Minima, a four-piece ensemble who provide live film accompaniment to silent classics like *Nosferatu* (1922), *The Phantom of the Opera* (1925) and indeed the Surrealist classic *The Seashell and the Clergyman* (1928). Showings of silent films in cinemas and film festivals today may never reach the mass audience they did at the time of their original release, but BBC radio drama still has that capacity—current audiences for Radio 4 Afternoon Dramas are around 1 million people (Hindell 2014).

It is no coincidence that the birth of film coincides with the rise of telecommunications, as highlighted above by Krutnik. Furthermore, the entwined nature of cinema and radio pointed to their combined ability to reach millions; Krutnik suggests that in 1941, a single series that adapted for radio glamorous scripts from current Hollywood films, the *Lux Radio Theater* (1934-1955), regularly brought in a weekly audience of 20-30 million Americans (2013: 29). *Lux's* line in adapted film scripts will be discussed further later in this article. The airwaves were originally known as the ether, and as Anthony Enns explains, the ether was 'an invisible yet material' substance that 'permeated the universe, which allowed the movement of all vibrations, including light, sound, and electricity' (2013: 346) What is stressed here is a sense of otherworldliness but also imperfection: sound recordings never quite function as perfect representations of life. Spiritualists, as John Durham Peters has observed, performed a '*danse macabre* of the telegraph,' linking the 'realm of the immortals' from the 'remembered dead to the recorded and transmitted dead' (2013: 362).

> Images seem distant but strangely present and modern, lifelike and recognizable yet also ghostly and fantastic, confusing and perhaps frustrating as well as fascinating and compelling (Grieveson and Krämer 2004: 1).

This description suggests the 'trick films' of early French filmmaker Georges Méliès, in particular the ghostly, Gothic antics in his *féeries* (*The Haunted Castle,* 1896; *The Vanishing Lady,* 1896; *The Merry Frolics of Satan,* 1906). From a theoretical point of view, we are looking at simulacra of reality. This tension and unease in a reproduced, not-quite-real reality is present in the earliest radio, too. Howard Blue reports the case of an American policeman in the 1920s who, 'hearing the screaming [from a radio] through an open window, was so convinced by its realism that he came bursting into the house to stop the "assault"' (2002: 2). Reginald DuGarde Peach capitalized on this uncertainty—and parodied it—in *Light and Shade* (1924), another in the then-popular series of 'danger' plays, whose in-joke is 'that the threatening voice they hear is actually a play on the radio' (Wood 2008: 48).

As suggested above, radio adaptations of stories from cinema quickly became an accepted and popular form of programming on American airwaves. As Krutnik notes, such adaptations were 'a flagrant attempt by broadcasters to appropriate Hollywood's glamorous cultural capital' (2013: 26), yet, in critical terms, these adaptations worked best when they capitalised on 'radio's distinctive strengths' (ibid., 40). Adapted to fit proscribed slots, *Lux* and its imitators both emulated theatre (with a three-act structure) and worked within radio conventions (by trimming sub-plots and including narrators) (Krutnik 2013: 38). *Lux* and its imitators—and the form of film-to-radio adaptation—have been explored in exhaustive detail (such as in *Lux Presents Hollywood: A Show-by-Show History of the* Lux Radio Theatre *and the* Lux Video Theatre, *1934-1957).* George Wells, the successful writer of many *Lux* adaptations, described his process, and in doing so, a relatively enlightened attitude toward adaptation:

> The man who adapts is a blender. He is not a butcher. He must be extremely skilful for he will find every script calls for a new bag of tricks. Every play necessitates novel stunts performed by words and all sorts of sounds. There is no single formula to fall back upon. The fact that radio

> calls for cuts in plays does by no means indicate that broadcasting destroys them. *It is merely a transformation from one medium to another* (cited in Billips and Pierce 1995: 9, my emphasis).

Unlike silent film, however, comparatively little has been written critically about radio and audio drama (Rudin 2011: 61, Crook 1999: 3), and due to the fact that radio drama scripts are often difficult to access, this article will cite short passages of radio dramas, which have been transcribed by the author.

Silent film and radio

In audio drama, music is a frequent, and important, though not essential, component of the aesthetic. According to one formulation by Hand and Traynor, audio drama is comprised of Words, Sounds, Music and Silence (2011: 40).

Neil Brand's BBC radio dramas breathe new life into the silent film *experience* by means of all of these elements. Brand has written more than fifteen dramas broadcast on BBC radio, including adaptations. As a musician and accompanist for more than 30 years, he specialises in providing scores for silent films. Citing the ability to play by ear as an element of his improvisatory technique (Podlucki 2015), Brand also trained as an actor. It could be said, then, that as a writer of radio drama, Brand brings to bear all the elements noted above: words, sounds, music, and silence.

Andrew Crisell's insights on radio and imagination are still frequently invoked. Infamously describing radio as a 'blind medium' (1994: 3), Crisell qualified this statement by referring to radio's unique relationship with the imagination (1994: 9). Moreover, Crisell recognised the nuances inherent in radio-stimulated imagination, linking them with visualisation in literature. In literature, for example, all elements must be imagined, whereas in radio, the audience has one element—sound—with which to build up a mental image of characters, setting, and action. He also argues that it is a false dichotomy to suggest that *no* imagining goes on while experiencing audiovisual media, like television. As Stephen Kosslyn argued, most people use mental imagery all the time, though imagery generation is individual and difficult to quantify (1983: 194). While imagery generation in audio drama is still poorly understood

(McMurtry 2017), audio drama that references silent film can provide a fascinating example of layered point of view and imagination. For example, in Street's adaptation of *Procession to the Private Sector,* 'giving the Camera a voice was an obvious solution' to the challenge of 'filming on radio' (Street 2013).

Brand's theoretical approach to providing accompaniment to silent films is illustrated in his radio dramas. 'When music is allied to drama,' he writes in *Dramatic Notes: Foregrounding Music in the Dramatic Experience,* 'as text, verses, images, or any other non-musical stimulus, the experience of the audience is complex and profound, yet still intuitive' (1990: 3). Music in radio drama helps set the scene in an economical way—music acts like 'fertile seeds of information' by playing on a 'network of pre-existing associations and understandings' (Verma 2012: 33). Discussing creating scores for silent film, Brand notes that 'the music must feel as if it's being created by the film and must hold the audience inside the movie, making them forget everything else [. . .] so that there is no slippage between what we are seeing and what we are hearing' (Brand cited in Podlucki 2015). While film sound design is, like audio drama theory, fairly under-researched (Chion 1994: 5), there are many parallels between film sound and the elements of audio drama, including music. Gianluca Sergi's list of the elements of the audiovisual soundtrack is identical to Hand and Traynor's for audio drama: Effects, Music, Silence and Dialogue (Sergi 1998: 15). When Michel Chion critiques the concept that sound in film gives only "*added value*" (1994: 5, original emphasis), he draws attention to the narrative and emotional qualities inherent in sound (1994: 11). While the vocal performance in audiovisual media—whether verbocentric or not—is usually under-valued in contrast to the visual performance, Martin Shingler (2006) notes that such performances do not have to be eloquent or even articulate. This suggests that difficult-to-define qualities[1] about the voice are important to sound performance. This is perhaps more clearly the case in audio drama. If music and vocal performance are important in narrative and emotional terms to both film soundtrack and audio drama, it is still somewhat difficult to quantify this for every individual, much like the difficulty in understanding exactly how each individual uses visual imagery (Kosslyn 1983: 194).

Danish playwright Pernille Kragh Jespersen contrasts and compares audio drama with the stage in her dissertation, *Can You Hear Me?* She christens audio drama with hybrid origins, film and stage,

[1] 'The English language lacks an adequate vocabulary to define sounds and the speaking voice' (Shingler 2006).

suggesting they lie 'within the theatre' but bear 'similarity to film in that it is not a live phenomena [sic] per se, but goes through massive editing' (Jespersen 2014: 42). Like a film, audio drama has been skilfully edited; like a play, it has an element of liveness—such comparisons have a familiar ring, as *Lux Radio Theater* covered similar territory in the 1930s-'50s, as detailed above. Brand has expressed similar sentiments as regards the experience of silent film: 'The effect is actually very theatrical and unlike either cinema or a live concert – every performance is unique and will touch us as an audience in a way no other art form can' (cited in Podlucki 2015). This ethos has a strong resonance within Brand's radio dramas as well as illustrating his theoretical approach to music.

It should be noted that, while Brand has shown a proclivity in the subject matter of his radio drama for the silent film era, he does not work within strict silent film-to-radio adaptations—though this has a rich tradition. While such adaptations may seem antithetical, they have remained a pervasive sub-genre on BBC radio (as well as in other places where audio drama has been heard). *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (1920) has been the most frequently adapted, first in 1938 by T. E. Mayer and Duncan Melvin, in 2008 in a version by poet Amanda Dalton, and as a voiced film soundtrack by the Tennessee-based Chatterbox Theater in 2012. *Nosferatu* was also adapted by Amanda Dalton in 2012 as *The Midnight Cry of the Death Bird.* In 2004, Peter Straughn's adaptation of *M* (1930) won a Prix Italia; Straughn's adaptation of *Metropolis* also won a Prix Italia in 2007. One might question why, with his evident love for silent film and his undeniable skill in providing rich, emotive musical scores for silent film, Brand has not focused on silent film-to-radio adaptations. Brand's original dramas that depict the silent film experience provide a more comprehensive cultural presentation of the silent film era while at the same time responding to Crisell's theoretical ruminations on the way radio listeners might use their imaginations. To that end, this article focuses on two original Brand radio dramas, *Joanna* (2002) and *Waves Breaking on a Shore* (2011).

Silent film as experience

Neil Brand's theoretical discourse regarding music, storytelling, and emotion is manifest in his play *Joanna* (2002). This radio drama highlights the (popularly) little-known importance of music as the integral part

of the silent film performance in the years between 1913 and 1920. Audiences in this period stated that they often chose which films to see based on who was providing the music and the quality thereof (Grieveson and Krämer 2004: 6). Longer films, when played together, made the experience closer to stage theatre or a night's entertainment, which is reflected in this radio drama.

Joanna is the life story of a piano (Cockney rhyming slang – Joanna = piano), who begins as a gift from an indulgent father to a Victorian lady of considerable talent who returns to a life of bourgeois indifference after the tragic death of her glamorous music teacher. The period of Joanna's 'life' in which we are interested is at the turn of the twentieth century, when Joanna becomes accompaniment for 'moving pictures.' She is played by timid yet ferocious accompanist Agatha Hyde.

> JOANNA: Night after night, we gave a voice to comedies from around the world, pretty pictures of Greek islands and tropical jungles, dramas, modern and classical, serials and scenes from Shakespeare. [. . .] All through the golden years of the early teens, and the nightmare years of the Great War, Agatha Hyde played and swore, played and swore (Kavanagh 2002).

'Special scores' were introduced 'for screenings of blockbusters' in cities, while a standard repertoire of classics was enacted 'in more downmarket cinemas; whatever the pianist could manage elsewhere' (King 1996: 31). This highlights the difficulty of Agatha's job.

The term 'point of audition' has been considered unwieldy in its origin in film sound (Chion 1994: 90, Høier 2012), but as a concept, it can be useful for audio drama. Rick Altman describes point of audition as a sequence that 'typically begins with a shot of the sound source, introducing point-of-audition sound when we cut to a shot of the auditor' (1992: 251). 'It is often difficult to talk about one specific "point" of audition because in most cases many different and parallel sound elements are being experienced simultaneously' as Høier (2012) argues. This formulation of point of audition is critical to understanding its use in Brand's radio dramas, beginning with *Joanna*. *Joanna* is predicated on the historical context. On Christmas Eve 1919, Agatha's lover George Champion dies of influenza, leaving her to play an elegy to their relationship by accompanying the film *Broken Blossoms* (1919) starring Lilian Gish.

> JOANNA: I had never known her to improvise. Always, she had been locked behind the stifling bars of music that had unfolded before her, minute after minute, hour after hour, sight-reading and swearing under her breath. Now, she did not swear. She didn't say anything to begin with. She just made up the most exquisite accompaniment to Lilian Gish's tragic history, played it alone and in glory, unfettered by the presence of other players. As Lilian's character met the first man to ever be kind to her, the whole theatre was told by Aggie's playing what it felt to be needed after so many years of neglect. As Lilian's father discovered the liaison, the music carried chilling portent to every corner of the room, and we all shuddered at the thought of what was to come. As she lay dying after he had beaten her with a leather strap, only I heard the few words that Aggie let slip during that incredible performance:
>
> AGATHA: Oh George, you should have taken me with you!
>
> (Kavanagh 2002)

Many of the BBC radio dramas that are adaptations of silent film or feature silent film as a major motif feature extended monologue and poetic phrasing. In the case of Joanna the piano, the drama exploits the intimacy of radio, a hallmark of the medium (Rudin 2011: 63). Using the appeal to listeners' imaginations, this passage unites several points of view. There is the engagement with the piano herself, an object that through the conceit of radio drama is speaking directly to us, the listeners; the point of view/audition of the audience sitting in the darkened cinema watching and listening to *Broken Blossoms;* and the point of view of Agatha herself, only revealed in her sobbed dialogue. The interactivity of the silent film experience—the diegetic audience's (mental) recreation of the dialogue and voices in *Broken Blossoms*—is mirrored by the interactivity of radio drama itself: 'The fact that everyone "sees" a character in a [radio] drama or a scene means that each listener has a unique and essential role in the creative process' (Rudin 2011: 66, Crook 1999: 61). Furthermore, Street suggests that giving objects voice in audio drama raises 'some uncomfortable issues': 'when a voice TELLs you what it is seeing, the effect becomes strangely voyeuristic, like looking through a key-hole' (1998).

Brand, who played the piano in *Joanna* (and all his radio dramas), remarked, 'I learned early on that it was easy to play what you saw, less easy but much more satisfying to find and play the subtext of the scene' (1998: 1). Victorian thinker Herbert Spence wrote that when speech became emotional, the sounds produced spanned a greater tonal range and thus came closer to music—this theory perhaps has some bearing in this scene. There is, of course, a limit to how much either medium can carry the weight of interpretation; 'music alone cannot specifically portray jealousy,' Storr argues, 'although the music used to underline a dramatic scene of jealousy might deserve to be described as both passionate and agitated' (1992: 143).

Furthermore, in this scene in *Joanna*, the reaction of the live audience to the silent film *experience* is highlighted. This emphasises an interesting connection between the medium of audio drama and the experience of silent film as described here: the act of listening to radio drama *is* live (Jespersen 2014: 43). Crisell believes that broadcasting manifests a need to 'pre-record material on the one hand and to affirm its liveness on the other'(2012: 29-30); they offer the illusion of liveness and reality in a frame of high artifice In this way, *Joanna* highlights the historical context of the nineteen-teens—almost one hundred years ago now—while remaining crisply present with the illusion of 'liveness.' In the presentation of multiple levels of point of view/audition, the drama also engages with audio drama and its appeal to the imagination.

The way silent cinema could have been

Joel Finler writes of early cinema, 'a train arriving at a station (heading directly at the camera), ocean waves breaking on the shore, or even the traffic and pedestrians observed on a busy street, could be guaranteed to make a big impression on the early audiences' (1997: 12). *Waves Breaking on a Shore* (2011) combines all these elements. 'Films that precede the classical paradigm are complex texts that occasionally interrelate attractions with narrative projects' (Gunning 2004: 43), and this description also fits *Waves Breaking on a Shore*. This play, written by Neil Brand and Michael Eaton, functions on multiple levels. First, it is an entertaining story filled with conflict, humor, romance, civil unrest, and, above all,

music. It is also, for those in the know, a primer to early British cinema—both how it 'was' and how it 'could have been'. It is also interested in the way different texts build different stories—or, in the words of the character Uncle Max, 'six pairs of eyes will see six different things.' In *Waves Breaking on a Shore,* sound is valued as more true-to-life than the visual senses, for depicting 'the way things truly are' (Burgess 2010). This is a further extension of points of view/audition as previously described.

Set in 1902, *Waves* highlights the careers of music hall stars Cohen & Cohan (Manny Cohen is Jewish and Danny Cohan is Irish). They stumble on the cutting edge of technology when they exchange their music hall routine for emerging cinema. Manny and Danny take up the offer of Nettie Truman, an upper middle-class woman, to make a film of their act in the back garden studio of her father's company, True Films. True Films also records sound on wax cylinders—in Nettie's words, 'We do pictures with sound'— providing a multi-sensual experience in their parlour on Oxford Street. Filming 'The Orchestral Flophouse' routine may encourage Manny and Danny to believe that 'show folk and picture folk' don't mix, but these sequences include many details that will amuse the silent film enthusiast. Robert Paul, Hepworth, Gaumont and other cinematic pioneers are mentioned; only true silent film buffs will know what the characters are seeing when Danny borrows from True Films the most successful Vitascope, *Rough Sea at Dover* (1896) as stock footage. *Waves* gives a good insight into the behind-the-scenes process of actually making a 'pre-classical paradigm' film of the era. Nettie's imported American camera-man, Eugene, represents 'the male, homosocial world of the Edison Laboratory' where the earliest Edison films were shot, and indeed claims to have worked for Edison (who, in this period had virtual monopoly over American film due to his patent system) (Musser 2004: 21). Furthermore, *Waves* postulates, with tongue-in-cheek enthusiasm, that Manny, Danny, and Eugene invent the 'chase film' genre some time before *A Daring Daylight Burglary* (Sheffield Photo, 1903) and *Desperate Poaching Affray* (Haggar, 1903).

They are, unfortunately, arrested in the process. A scene which engages fully with point of view/audition and imaginative powers follows their release, when they view the resulting footage. Eugene warns Danny and Manny that the footage will be rough, but they are unprepared for Méliès-like jumps in visual narrative ('I don't believe it, that omnibus, it's just turned into a hearse'), the lack of cooperation from extras ('they look away in a minute, there, when I shouted, "Don't look at the camera'"), concluding with Eugene dropping the camera.

DANNY: There's the car on the pavement. Nice shot of the broken window, Eugene. Pity you couldn't catch the moment of impact!

EUGENE: Look. The shop-owner joins the chase. He thinks it's for real.

MANNY: Cracked me across the face when he got me.

DANNY: Ohhhhh. Legs and feet. What the hell was going on here, Eugene?

(Burgess 2010)

The footage is salvaged by the creative insight of Manny, who sees comic genius in the film, when provided with the right emotion-inducing soundtrack and a sympathetic verbal narrative. This scene furthers the point of view/audition layering referenced in *Joanna.* We are provided with the point of view of Danny, Manny, and Eugene as they watch the unfolding rough footage—but we also can picture, from their points of view, the original conditions under which they recorded the footage—resulting in a disjunction between what they set out to achieve and what the footage actually depicts. We also see Manny, Danny, and Eugene watching themselves—and Danny providing the musical accompaniment. This is where our point of view shifts to another dimension of point of audition. We could receive the point of audition that merely coincides with the trio's commentary, which helps us visualise, in a sound-only medium (radio), what the silent film presents (if the characters don't describe it, we have no way of understanding it). At the same time, the musical 'colour' that Danny's playing gives the footage unites it as a film—even if the emotionally cohesive soundtrack does not correspond to the mood of the footage as actually presented. In other words, Danny's music, if heard without the trio's commentary, would present a terse chase narrative, which was the intention of the trio in the first place. At our additional point of audition, however, we understand that the music provides an ironic commentary on the visual footage. This is, probably, the closest we can come to anempathetic music in an audio drama.

Different media blend into one another in *Waves,* serving as a comment on the overall vision of the two-part drama, which touches on socialism and universal fraternity. As suggested earlier, *Waves* also tries to give the potential for social uplift that the freedom of the pre-classical paradigm film could give.

Eugene's possibly too-apocryphal speech to Danny about the possibilities for silent film to bring people of all languages together in 'palaces of the people' postulates a truly utopian vision of the cinematic form.

> EUGENE: Ah, but these are no dwellings of kings or princes, the royal seats of no emperor or sultan. They'll be palaces of the people, run by the people for the people, every manner and class of person will flock to them, to learn, to laugh, to watch to listen, to see wonders, to see stories [. . .] told in pictures that move. No language barriers, seen all over the world. Tales of heroes and warriors and beautiful women and brutal men, clowns, statesmen, and yes, maybe even the Almighty Himself. The minstrel's lay, the campfire yarn, the Bible story, myths and legends springing to reality without cardboard sets or theatre machinery. Just the trees and the mountains and the seas themselves, caught on film, in an instant, and poured out in fountains of light, into these palaces. For thousands of people at a time to watch, to cry over, to wonder at.
>
> (Burgess 2010)

It could be argued that Eugene is in fact anticipating radio drama rather than 'paradigmatic' cinema when he scorns painted backdrops, one thing that is sure to be dispensed with in audio drama; however, considering the context of the plays, it is tempting to envision a utopian cinema along with Eugene. Upon reflection, this may not be as naïve as it first appears; silent film comedy has been proven to cross boundaries (see Cao 2015, Martofni 2015) and Indian cinema in particular revelled in the universality of the pre-sound era (Pal 2015).

The first screening of Manny and Danny's self-made film, the *Komic Kapers Kriminal Kaos,* takes place in the hall where Uncle Max's anarchists meet. In this scene, Theodor Adorno appears to be reborn in Uncle Max's body, criticizing mindless entertainment and lauding an *avant-garde* use of three cameras projecting at the same time as Manny's poetic monologue and Danny's impressionist music. Uncle Max declares 'your cinematograph could be used in the service of progress.' The Cohan & Cohen method seems to anticipate the real-life Hale's Tours, which sought to 'produce the projection of moving pictures as an environment' (Burch 1990: 39). Manny, Danny, Eugene, Nettie, and Uncle Max's visionary use of

moving pictures, music, and the equivalent of then-popular lecturer is an almost total reversal of the original Vitascope film *Rough Sea at Dover,* as, according to Charles Musser, Vitascope exhibitions 'emphasized lifelike images and movement rather than the development of narrative' (Musser 2004: 32). This artistically unique formulation of the 'silent' film experience not only emphasizes the variety of the non-classical paradigm, but it revels in the sometimes violent reactions the combination of media could inspire. 'Music brings about similar physical responses in different people at the same time,' Storr claims, and goes on to say, 'What seems certain is that there is a closer relation between *hearing* and emotional arousal than there is between *seeing* and emotional arousal' (1992: 24, 26). Unfortunately, this exciting experiment turns into a tragedy for all the characters in *Waves Breaking on a Shore*, thus making narrative cinema seem—for a time—an evolutionary blind alley.

Street (1998) suggests, very rightly, that sounds are often ambiguous. The production of audio drama is predicated on point of audition, an issue complicated when adapting from film or in competing with the visuals of silent film in an audio-only medium. 'Where is the listener now?' Street asked during the adaptation process of *Procession to the Private Sector*. 'Are they (for instance) with the Camera, or are they with the subject the Camera is seeing? It became quite mind-boggling at times'. I would argue that *Waves Breaking on a Shore,* and, to a lesser extent, *Joanna,* attempt to tackle this challenging point of view/audition dichotomy.

Conclusion

Despite the long history of radio drama, as noted above, the link between visual imagery inspired by aural stimulation has not been fully investigated, and little has been empirically established about the cognitive effects of imagery generation in aural media (McMurtry 2017). Sound design in film has likewise not received the amount of critical attention one would expect (Thom 1999). Until the last decade, silent film was also under-theorised. The links between the three have been highlighted in this article through the lens of two of Neil Brand's radio dramas, *Joanna* and *Waves Breaking on a Shore.* In these dramas, point of audition sound and visual imagery are explored in a dramatic context while simultaneously having

something to say about silent film and sound—the silent film experience and the fact it was 'never silent', which in turn challenges what Rick Altman has called the ontological fallacy of film. It is hoped that further explorations of these concepts can be spearheaded, particularly in analyses of silent film-to-radio adaptations.

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