PRIFYSGOL
ABERYSTWYTH
UNIVERSITY

Aberystwyth University

Synaesthetic resonances in the intermedial soundtrack of Imitating the Dog's Tales from the Bar of Lost Souls

Woycicki, Piotr

PIOTR WOYCICKI

Synaesthetic Resonances in the Intermedial Soundtrack of Imitating the Dog's Tales from The Bar of Lost Souls

Abstract

Introduction

As with most hybrid performances the experience of spectating Imitating the Dog's *Tales from the Bar of Lost Souls (2010) (*reworked to become *6 Degrees Below the Horizon (2011))* is a multifaceted one, consisting of an encounter with intermedial bodies, spaces, and technologies. Directed by Pete Brooks and written by Andrew Quick this part cinema, part theatre and musical employed strategies that addressed a myriad of sensorial experiences. Focusing mainly on the role of the soundtrack, composed by Hope and Social and myself, I will explore the ways in which it elicits synaesthetic experiences turning this intermedial work into a 'playground' of practice—where modes of seeing, hearing and experiencing cultural constructs may be contested. I will not argue that the show allows an audience of non-synaesthetes to experience the phenomena of synaesthesia to the same degree that people who actually have the clinical condition would. Rather, I will argue that the show elicits synaesthetic sensations in an 'aesthetic' sense by building upon the shared capacity of spectators to experience some degree of synaesthesia. The 'aesthetics' of synaesthesia will not be associated here with the common understanding of the term 'aesthetic', which equates the 'aesthetic' with the beautiful, but rather it will be associated with a shift towards an emphasis on and a foregrounding of a visceral, sensorial experience. I will define synaesthesia through the context of its Greek etymology, scientific research and artistic practice relating it specifically to intermedial performance. I will go on to address the case study analytically building upon Josephine Machon's re-worked definition of synaesthetic experiences, namely that of '(syn)aesthetics', arguing that the soundtrack elicits a (syn)aesthetic mode of spectatorial engagement.

Let us begin by briefly considering the narrative of the piece. The genre of melodrama adopted as a structural frame for the piece brings with it a host of expectations, tropes and modes of meaning making and spectating. The notion of expectations associated with melodrama is central to the deconstructive strategy of the piece. The etymological root of the word expectation, 'expectare'—meaning to look forward to—suggests a spectator who is already ahead of herself, who to some degree assumes to 'know' what the outcome is going to be, what the 'secret' at the heart of the story is. The narrative strategy of *Tales from the Bar of Lost Souls* is to a great extent based on the subversion of this dynamic of looking ahead and ultimately on revealing an *unexpected* 'secret' at the heart of the melodrama. The show took as its starting point:

> [T]he melting pot of Mediterranean port communities, where notions of national borders and identity were challenged by the ever-changing mix of ethnicities and nationalities, the activity of commerce, the blurring of the lines between legal and criminal behavior and by the suspension of the norms that attempt to govern sexual and political orthodoxy (www.imitatingthedog.co.uk).

The story line goes as follows: on his deathbed, an old man recounts the story of his life to his daughter. The tale concerns a sailor who fell in love with a bar singer in one of the port communities in southern France. The idyllic melodrama quickly turns into a tragedy as his life spirals into a world of crime, male prostitution, depression and finally incarceration with a looming death sentence for killing a police officer. This tragic element also plays with the notion of generic expectations since the motif of the infernal descent (katabasis) has a longstanding history. At the end of the piece, this trope is subverted. When released on parole he wanders off into the town's dark alleys to find the titular Bar of Lost Souls. There he meets Mephisto who offers him dark liquor called Amaro. The town's legend holds that if one drinks the liquor at sunset, their deepest, best-kept desire will come true. At the end of the piece, we find out that the old man's 'secret' is the fact that he is his daughter's mother. This puts a final twist on the story: the sailor's deepest desire was for his wife to become a man. Again this twist at the end of the piece plays with audience expectations in the sense that it subverts the notion of 'expected' stereotypical gender identities. In a surreal way, the plot of the play addresses the performativity of gender, fluidity of sexual identity and the power of storytelling to construct 'reality'. However, the most striking aspect of the piece is the intermedial, post-cinematic strategy through which these instabilities of meaning are being addressed.

Figure 1: 'Prologue' from *6 Degrees Below the Horizon.* Photo: Ed Warring

This theatrical deconstruction of cinematic aesthetics offered possibilities of reading the piece and its connotations as a more 'open text'. Umberto Eco's concept of the 'open text' has a certain affinity with the (syn)aesthetic mode of spectatorship. The 'open text' refers specifically to an ambiguity of narrative as enunciated by a linguistic code, a possibility of making a plurality of meanings during the act of reading and also the possibility of placing in 'doubt the very structure of the code itself' (Eco 1979: 67). Like the suspended reader of the 'open text' a (syn)aesthetic mode of spectatorial engagement can turn narrative expectations into something uncommon or instinctive, hence eliciting an openness towards the exploration of 'unconventional' readings of a text. The difference is that Eco's readers engage with the open text mainly on a semiotic basis, whilst Machon's (syn)aesthetics emphasise a visceral, sensorial engagement as a basis for the meaning making process, one that in this context engenders an openness of interpretation. As I will argue later in more detail by analysis the function of the soundtrack within the piece, (syn)aesthetic perception allows for a re-evaluation and (re)cognition of the relationship between the somatic, sensorial and the semantic, semiotic content of an artwork.

Definitions of Synaethesia

Before going into a specific analysis of how the soundtrack of the piece elicits a (syn)aesthetic experience I will introduce the concept of synaesthesia in more detail, by looking at its definition within the context of its etymology, scientific research, and artistic purchase. This will provide a context in which to locate Machon's concept of (syn)aesthetics, which is derivative yet different to synaesthesia per se. I will also relate the concept of synaesthesia to its usage in mainstream cinema since *Tales from a Bar of Lost Souls* could be called a post-cinematic piece that stages a deconstruction of mainstream cinematic aesthetics.

Synaesthesia has its etymological roots in the Greek words *syn,* meaning: 'together' and *aisthēsis* meaning: 'sensation'. From the perspective of neuroscience and cognitive psychology, synaesthesia can be defined as:

> [A] curious condition in which an otherwise normal person experiences sensations in one modality when a second modality is stimulated. For example, a synaesthete may experience a specific colour whenever she encounters a particular tone (e.g., C-sharp may be blue) or may see any given number as always tinged by a certain colour (e.g., '5' may be green and '6' may be red) (Ramachandran 2001: 4).

Synaesthesia refers to innate and induced abilities of experiencing joint, cross-modal sensations. The key feature of a synaesthetic experience is that one of the sensations being evoked is absent. For example, a colour evokes an absent sound or an image evokes a taste or smell. Within the mimetic theatrical tradition, aesthetic experience as a whole can be said to be premised on absence. This is in the sense that absence stimulates the spectator's imagination often relying on pre-established conventions of representation. The experiences of synaesthesia and in turn the concept of (syn)aesthetics are different in this respect. Synaesthetic cross-modal sensations do not by-design evoke a representational construct whilst adhering to some generic cultural formulation but elicit uncanny, subconscious associations by evoking the absent stimuli in unique ways.

For instance, if we were to relate the above to the role of the soundtrack in classical realist cinema then traditionally the implementation of a musical score resonates more with the mimetic tradition of an aesthetic experience than with that of a (syn)aesthetics one. In classical realist cinema, the soundtrack plays an important role in grounding a cinematic metaphor, by providing an aesthetic framework, a sensible support for the represented narrative. The sound often works in support of the image. It not only emphasises it but also frames the image, making specific signs and meanings more significant and relevant whilst automatically drawing attention away from content that is not supported, thus rendering certain things irrelevant and less meaningful.

The soundtrack for *Tales from a Bar of Lost Souls* used a mix of musical approaches, genres and registers to trigger a variety of perceptions of the intermedial spectacle. At times it supported the action creating moments of 'focality' (Bleeker 2004). For example, the love theme was extensively used to foreground the romantic relationship between the sailor and his wife at specific moments within the drama inviting the audience to focus their attention on specific theatrical components (gestures, mimics, body language). In other instances as will be discussed later, the soundtrack jarred and disoriented the logic of the narrative suggesting ambiguities and multiplicities of interpretation. As a result the soundtrack became a 'composite of decompositions' foregrounding spectators' potential to become the 'creators' of meaning by giving them the 'response-ability' (Lehmann 2006: 186). In addition, it provides the potential to engage in a spectatorial process where they can compose

(and re-compose) their own perspective of the spectacle as opposed to adopting one that is 'expected' and inherently 'implicit' within its design.

Innate Synaethesia

When considering synaesthesia from the perspective of neurological research there are two main types of synaesthetic experiences worth distinguishing: innate and induced. Innate synaesthesia (also known as clinical synaesthesia) is an interesting condition, which affects only a small portion of the population, roughly 1 in every 2000. A simple way to describe it would be a 'union of the senses'. This union occurs when experience from two or more of the five senses that are normally experienced separately become tied together to form a fused sensory experience. This fusion of the senses is usually involuntarily and automatic (Cytowic 2002). Most reported synaesthetic experiences involve 'seeing' colors when sounds are heard or when words are read. This is usually referred to as color-graphemic synaesthesia (Sagiv 2005). Other experiences can involve shapes, touches, smells, intra and inter emotional states or proprio sensory stimuli in almost any combination. Synaesthetic sensations tend to be automatic and the beholder cannot simply turn them off.

Induced Synaethesia

Even though research into synaesthesia has been undertaken mainly from a neuro-scientific and psychological perspective, there has also been considerable investigation into the cultural aspects of the phenomenon. Clinical synaesthesia is a phenomenon that concerns a small portion of the population, though to some extent most people have certain synaesthetic tendencies. However, Ramachandran and Hubbard argue that 'we all have some capacity' for synaesthetic experiences (2003: 58). By extension, we all have some capacity for experiencing a synaesthetic cross-modal fusion of the senses once it has been triggered by external stimuli. Thus (syn)aesthetic appreciation (which is different from synaesthesia) can be seen as a form of artistically induced synaesthesia.

Apart from intense cross-modal sensations, synaesthetic experiences can also provide the subject with a form of 'knowledge that is experienced directly' (Cytowic in Machon 2009: 26). According to Cytowic, synaesthesia provides an ability to access deeper, more intuitive levels of knowledge and associations allowing for a 'multisensory evaluation' (Cytowic 2002: 92). This notion of a direct access to deeper levels of knowledge, in ways that are more direct, immediate and intuitive and that encompass a broad spectrum of sensorial stimuli, resonates with experiences of intermedial work which often addresses a multiplicity of sensorial experiences. (Syn)aesthetic stimulation reactivates our ability to re-connect with intuitive associations, potentially providing an audience member with an appreciation that is both 'affective and experiential' where 'semantic sense cannot be de-associated from somatic *sense*' (Machon 2009: 20). It also has a more profound implication for the

study of cognition in general in that it enables 'other kinds of knowing' (Cytowic 1995: 14) that are underpinned by sensorial experiences. As Machon argues the '"ineffable" is greatly significant for (syn)aesthetic appreciation in that it defines "that which by definition cannot be put into words"' (Machon 2009: 16).

An investigation into the influence of these substrate levels of perception on the meaning-making process can further our understanding of the construction of meaning in linguistic systems and their cultural referents and by extension the perceptual processes through which language itself can evolve and be re-defined. Consequently, an application of this research to (syn)aesthetic spectating of intermedial theatre can further our understanding of the role that soundtracks in intermedial theatre can play in performatively subverting and challenging dominant cultural expectations and sense-making frames.

To further expand on the relationship between synaesthetic perception and language let us consider an interesting case study of this concern: the *bouba/kiki* effect. German psychologist and phenomenologist Wolfgang Köhler designed an experiment where people were shown two visual shapes and asked to choose which one they associated with the word *bouba* and which with the word *kiki*. Around 95% to 98% chose *kiki* for the angular shape and *bouba* for the rounded one (Maurer 2006). The experiment was also conducted on the island of Tenerife where similar preference between shapes called *takete* and *maluma* were shown. Even small children who were too young to read also confirmed the effect. The experiment became a 'striking demonstration that sound–object correspondences are not completely arbitrary in that adults map nonsense words with rounded vowels (e.g. bouba) to rounded shapes and nonsense words with unrounded vowels (e.g. kiki) to angular shapes' (Maurer 2006: 316).
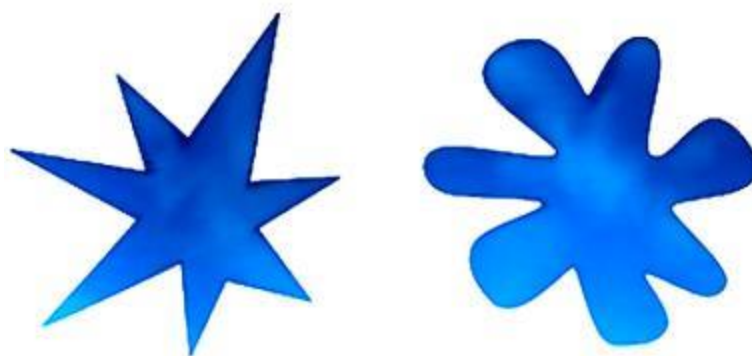

Fig. 2: 'Bouba and Kiki'. Illustration: Piotr Woycicki.

In their article titled, *Synaesthesia: A window into perception, thought and language*, V. M. Ramachandran and E. M. Hubbard suggested that the kiki/bouba effect could have implications for the evolution of language and that the naming of objects is not completely arbitrary, a notion which historically has been heavily contested.

In the study, it was suggested that due to the round character of one shape it was intuitively named *bouba.* This had to do with the fact that the mouth has to make a more rounded shape in order to produce the sound. In the case of *kiki*, the shape the mouth makes is more angular and sharp since the sound is more acute. The sound of B is also softer and weaker than the sound of K.

Such 'synaesthesia-like mappings' contest the arbitrary link between reality and language, suggesting at the same time that there is a neurological basis for sound symbolism and that language and its enunciation are not arbitrarily mapped to objects and actions in the world. Ramachandran and Hubbard claim that the *bouba/kiki* example 'provides our first vital clue for understanding the origins of proto-language, for it suggests that there may be natural constraints on the ways in which sounds are mapped on to objects' (Ramachandran and Hubbard 2001: 19).

Another striking observation made by Ramachandran and Hubbard is that of a synaesthetic link between different body parts and their respective motor sensory maps. They cite an example noted by Charles Darwin in *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872):

> Darwin (1872) noted that when cutting something with a pair of scissors we often unconsciously clench and unclench our jaws, as if to sympathetically mimic the hand movements; in our scheme this would be an example of synkinaesia between the motor maps for the mouth and hand, which are right next to each other in the Penfield motor homunculus of the pre-central gyrus. In the example cited above, mouth shape for 'petite', 'teeny' and 'diminutive' might be synkinetic (Ramachandran and Hubbard 2001: 20).

The confusion of the senses during a synaesthetic experience is thus a performative process. Evolution is not an entirely random process but a selective one, which limits the possibilities and outcomes for change, therefore, limiting the 'arbitrariness' of this relationship without totally eliminating it. Thus the arbitrary link between language and reality is dependent on what we are capable of performing at any given moment in time. This is where the worlds of theatre and synaesthesia meet.

Performance seems to be at the heart of the claims made by Ramachandran and Hubbard since they are clearly referring to the performative abilities of the human vocal apparatus. Words are not arbitrary because the movement of the mouth—the performative physical gesture of the uttered sign—resonates with the signified. This interpretation of synaesthesia postulates a performative phenomenon and positions theatrical practice as a process of language making. Furthermore, there seems to be a potential link between the multi-sensory aspect of synaesthesia and by extension (syn)aesthetics and the intermedial, which negotiates various sensory experiences[i].

It is no coincidence that cultural concepts solidify through the reinforcement of performative gestures. Thus the synaesthetic relationship between sensorial experiences and their cognitive meanings heavily depend on the performative processes that link them together. As Machon has argued: 'to experience synaesthetically means to perceive the details corporeally' (Machon 2009: 17). In many ways, the synaesthetic phenomenon allows for the construction of *metaphors* (aesthetic linkages between two arbitrary concepts), which are essential for language but also are a strong concept within totalising artworks such as those of Eisenstein. In *qualia* philosophy this linkage can be referred to as 'differential correlations' (Sellars 1919: 408), a theory put forward by philosopher Roy Wood Sellars suggesting that two seemingly unrelated sensorial experiences i.e. the sound of an English horn and the color green, may vary in a similar way. To grasp this better let us imagine a strip of magnetic tape containing a soundtrack. The soundtrack will be transferred into sound when played back. There is no inherent similarity between the sound produced and the magnetic pattern on the soundtrack side of the strip. However, the variations of the magnetic field on the strip will correspond to the variations of the sound in terms of frequency and amplitude. There is a co-variation between the two, which can also be defined as 'structural isomorphism,' a term introduced by Stephen Palmer (1999: 935). In that sense, the case of *bouba* and *kiki* is a case of 'structural isomorphism' since there is a correlation between the vocalised sound and the movement/shape of the lips. But the correlation is not a static relationship between these two signifiers—the vocalised sound and the movement/shape of the lips. Rather the correlation exists between the differential qualities of these two signifiers. The vocalised sound and the movement/shape of the lips are not similar, but they *vary* in a similar way over time. This is a dynamic, durational correlation and thus it is a performative one.

Synaethesia in Cinema

The concept of 'structural isomorphism' can be identified within classical film and its aesthetic operations. Since *Tales from the bar of the Lost Souls* addressed and deconstructed cinematic aesthetics before looking at the (syn)aesthetic qualities of the soundtrack in the piece, I will briefly consider how soundtracks function in film. Historically classical cinema has correlated sound and image to induce synaesthetic experiences that underpin and validate narrative. This often was done by design with the intention of establishing 'structural isomorphism' between the sound and image. In his essay on *Alexander Nevsky* (1938), Sergei Eisenstein meticulously analysed and diagrammatically described the whole process of scoring and editing the movie. Through his collaboration with composer Sergei Prokofiev he tried to achieve a subtle harmonious correlation between the music and the filmed image.

The structure of the beginning of the 'Battle on the Ice' from *Alexander Nevsky* shows Eisenstein's technique of coupling visual and musical material. The essence of this technique is to create a correlation between perceptual trajectories—visual

and musical. Eisenstein illustrates it by drawing a graph of the 'eye's movement' ('diagram of movement') (Eisenstein 1943: 138) and aligning it with the 'music's movement' (musical score). He elaborates on this correlation:

> Now let us collate the two graphs. Both graphs of movement correspond absolutely, that is, we find a complete correspondence between the movement of the music and the movement of the eye over the lines of the plastic composition. In other words, exactly the same motion lies at the base of both the musical and the plastic structures (Eisenstein 1943: 138).

In this particular example, the 'structural isomorphism' between the musical and plastic structures is designed to take the spectator on a very specific perceptual trajectory and thus elicit a specific interpretation. This is not to say that this film cannot be read 'against the grain' or that the spectators will not interpret these images in their own specific ways. However, there is a clear attempt to engineer and correlate the superstructure of the different components of a film (music, shot composition, camera trajectories etc.) with a specific and 'desired' interpretation of the images. The intent behind such an approach to filmmaking seems to maximise synchronicity between the various elements of film through montage in order to create a 'persuasive' and clear-cut narrative/argument by engaging the spectator on a multiplicity of sensorial levels[ii]. The link between the elements of the film is a performative one and in this case, it could be called a performance of the spectator's perceptual trajectory.

In intermedial performances such as Imitating the Dog's *Tales from the Bar of Lost Souls,* there are also moments of 'structural isomorphism', moments when different layers of the production are orchestrated to come together. For instance, during a street fight scene, the fight itself is performed live on stage, with punches and kicks being accurately choreographed to the soundtrack and the projections showing synchronised blood splatters. The layer of live performance is synchronised with the layers of the soundtrack and projected images. Particular moments in the piece such as this are very effective in creating a hybrid of cinematic and live stage effects, which in turn elicits synaesthetic impressions in the common sense of blending sensorial experiences. However, there is always an element of de-synchronisation as it is impossible to match the live stage action with projected film/graphics and music with the degree of synchronicity enabled by the medium of film. Despite moments when there are deliberate attempts to synchronise different components of the theatrical spectacle, many scenes and aspects of the piece foreground de-synchronisation instead.

Thus I would like to look at moments and aspects of the piece which exemplify de-synchronisation and effectively negotiate (syn)aesthetic engagement—moments where the 'structural isomorphism', the co-variance of sensorial experience within an aesthetic framework, is deconstructed. This deconstruction elicits (syn)aesthetic

appreciation that allows for a playful, defamiliarised rekindling of the relationship between senses and higher-order meaning, offering a plurality of meanings and at times an experience of sensorial overload. The analysis will look at the role the soundtrack plays in some of the intermedial strategies adopted in the piece, namely those concerning mediaphorisation and the hybridity of the intermedial mise-en-scène. Finally, the score's internal structures and harmonic composition will also be considered.

Mediaphorisation

Classical cinematic metaphors rely on a seamless blending of music and image through the 'structural isomorphism' of their constituent elements. When looking at intermedial performances and their structure it is useful to consider an analogous concept to that of a *cinematic metaphor,* namely: the *mediaphor.* Isabella Pluta in her essay 'Robert Lepage and Ex Machina, *The Andersen Project (2005)'* introduces the concept of a 'mediaphoric body' (Pluta 2010: 192). This concept is very useful when analysing synaesthetic effects in intermedial performances because it articulates intermedial compositions as potentially producing metaphors. Also, the human capacity to create and understand metaphors is arguably a result of induced synaesthetic capabilities. So let us first look at the concept of a 'mediaphoric body', which Pluta explains as follows:

> From an etymological perspective, this concept incorporates three elements of a different order, both concrete and conceptual: the living, the media-related and the metaphorical. The actor in flesh and blood represents the first element. The media-related element is introduced on the stage (so might be thought extra-theatrical), and its components might range from the projected image to the device (such as the screen or camera). The third element, of a conceptual order, represents a semiological figure (the metaphor) [...] Hence the fusion of the latter two terms, which become mediaphoric in this new understanding of the mediaphoric body, which takes shape within the process of hybridisation and is achieved by means of the metaphor (Pluta 2010: 192).

Therefore, the concept of a 'mediaphoric body' and by extension a 'mediaphor' is one which concerns the blending of various media, such as the live body, film, video, and sound, in order to achieve a metaphorical effect, an. If a literary metaphor is created through the association of different concepts, a 'mediaphor' can be understood as a metaphor created through the juxtaposition of different media and their specific forms of sensorial address. Much like with a literary metaphor, the stability and tension of this juxtaposition depends on the aesthetic cohesion of its elements. Thus by destabilising a 'mediaphor', the perceptual effects of its different media elements can be rendered opaque, and its metaphorical content can be deconstructed.

An example of this in *Tales from the Bar of Lost Souls* is the 'Love making' scene, which comes after the protagonist meets his future wife, a local singer in one of the taverns; after a bar fight with local sailors he is injured and she decides to take him in for the night and attend to his wounds. They fall for each other and end up in bed. In this scene the live performance is structured through three vignettes: the central one showing the two lovers and two side frames showing sailors praying.

Figure 3: 'Lovemaking Scene' from *6 Degrees Below the Horizon.* Photo: Ed Warring.

This visual breaking up of the action is used to provide the spectators with various simultaneous shots or 'perspectives'. It almost suggests a staging of different cinematic frames, exposed to be 'montaged' by the spectator. The stage action is supplemented with projected images of blood cells, petals and eventually, fireworks. The soundtrack, which is an orchestration loosely echoing the main theme from Eric Satie's *Je Te Veux*, follows its own logic. Even though it provides a melodramatic structure and an emotional progression for the scene and the final fireworks correlate with the instrumental climax, the live action on stage is at odds with the music. It is uncertain whether this is a romantic scene, a critique of a repressed community or a parody of melodramatic conventions. The sounds and images elicit different sensorial experiences but there is no clear unified metaphorical structure like elsewhere in the piece. There is no clear sense of 'structural isomorphism' at play between the different theatrical elements either. The aesthetic tension creates a feeling of deconstruction, where all the layers do not quite come together allowing for freer and potentially (syn)aesthetic associations to be made. Also, there is no unifying aesthetic structure to guide the spectators' perception and create a coherent perceptual trajectory. Instead, there is perceptual tension and the spectators are

challenged to develop their own perceptual trajectory in order to frame what is taking place on stage. Emerging out of this is what Machon calls a '(syn)aesthetic hybrid'— a particular fusion of sensorial material that is not normalised through a specific aesthetic framework, as is the case with classical realist montage for example. She defines this hybrid as 'a defamiliarised mix of the aural, visual, olfactory, oral, haptic and tactile within performance, enabling a (re)cognition of form due to the unsettling and/or exhilarating process of becoming aware of this special fusion' (Machon 2009: 55). This sense of defamiliarisation of the different sensorial stimuli is evident in this scene, where an uncanny relationship develops between the sensory elements and the semantic content of the piece, ensuring a 'complex simultaneity of stage processes leading to the impossibility of producing a single interpretation' (Broadhurst 1999: 78). As a result, the performance takes on a polyphonic quality exploring content through form, triggering a mode of (syn)aesthetic spectatorship which inspires a (re)cognition of the content in original and unusual ways depending on the spectator's individual reminiscences.

Apart from being a crucial component in the intermedial deconstruction, the soundtrack triggers a (syn)aesthetic spectatorship by eliciting a transgressive stance towards some of the melodramatic tropes in the piece. One of these tropes is the idyllic relationship between the sailor and the singer. The relationship starts when the sailor hears her sing Eric Satie's *Je Te Veux*. This iconic song sparks their relationship. Using this piece of music and its theme as the initial emotive underscore fulfills many cultural expectations associated with romance since it is quite clearly a love song to begin with. It is also harmonically 'clean' and stable as a musical construction, aptly underscoring their initial, idyllic encounter.
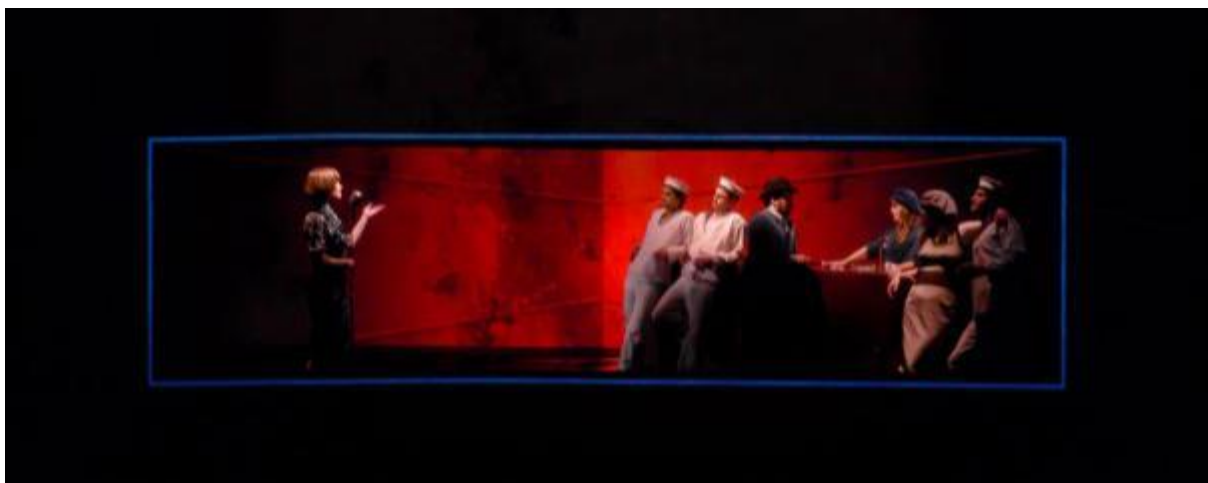

Figure 4: 'Bar scene' from *6 Degrees Below the Horizon.* Photo: Ed Warring.

Thus the initial use of this song induces the music's association with characterisation. One of the main themes running through the play is that of the unstable sexual identity of the protagonist refracted through the various relationships he is engaged in. As the play progresses his sexual identity and his relationships

become multifaceted and complex thus departing from the idyllic melodramatic model first set in the opening act.

The way the music underscoring these scenes works is that it is a re-write of Satie's theme, modifying and effacing the original as the plot progresses. What was originally the love theme between the sailor and the singer is progressively used to underscore the protagonist's homosexual relationships and his deteriorating relationship with his wife. The main structural modification consists of using Richard Wagner's 'Tristan[1] chord' as the basis for the harmonic system. This is a considerable departure from Satie's version where fairly standard classical harmonies are being used. The chord itself[2] is an appoggiatura, which is often used to link two harmonies. It is a transitional chord and by its very nature is unstable. It has no fixed harmonic identity and thus awaits to be resolved. A lot of the music which underscores the protagonist's relationships in the piece is structured in such a way that it moves from one appoggiatura to another modulating harmonically yet never settling on a stable harmonic identity. This structural instability complicates any attempt at correlating the music with the character relationships in the piece and by extension the complex ambiguous sexual desires of the protagonist. The progressive effacement of the melodic theme and the ambiguous harmonic restructuring of the music foreground the manner in which the representation of the sailor's sexual identity and his desires are being constantly deferred, made absent and ambiguous. Instead of reinforcing a singular interpretation, the soundtrack unwinds and progressively complicates the possibility of such. The refusal to let the musical score 'guide' the spectators' interpretation opens up new possibilities for a (syn)aesthetic interpretation and re-evaluation of associations stimulated by the music.

Conclusion

In this article, I have demonstrated how the soundtrack in *Tales from the Bar of Lost Souls* elicits a (syn)aesthetic mode of spectatorship, by defamiliarising the cultural connotations of musical gestures through various intermedial strategies. It is arguable to what extent such intermedial pieces effectuate a re-mappings of cultural associations rather than simply establish new correlations between meanings and aesthetic effects. Music and in particular film soundtracks have played an important role in establishing and solidifying cultural tropes by suggesting associations between the somatic and the semantic on a variety of perceptual levels. Thus by looking at the function of a (syn)aesthetic mode of spectatorship, one that carries the promise of a re-visioning and re-mapping of previously established somatico-semantic matrixes, we can further our understanding of the way in which the mechanisms of cultural evolution work and negotiate the place of the intermedial avant-garde within it. Intermedial works such as *Tales from the Bar of Lost Souls* are

not primarily concerned with establishing new meanings and changing perceptions of particular cultural constructs, but instead they create a 'playground' where our modes of seeing, hearing and experiencing can be exercised and contested. Thus a (syn)aesthetic mode of spectatorship and its subsequent application as a mode of performance analysis contests the very notion of spectatorial agency by implicating the spectator/critic in a web of discourses and their practical manifestations. In this case the concept of the (syn)aesthetic does not necessarily allude to a 'writerly' openness or freedom of interpretation but perhaps in a posthumanist fashion contests the very agency and volition of the spectator by implicating them in de-stratified networks of technology, mediated bodies and spaces.

Bibliography

Bergson, H. (1956) 'Laughter', in *Comedy*, W. Sypher (ed.), New York: Doubleday Anchor Books.

Bleeker, M. (2004) Visuality in the Theatre: The Locus of Looking, Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Broadhurst, S. (1999) Liminal Acts: A Critical Overview of Contemporary Performance and Theory, London: Cassell.

Cytowic, R. E. (1995) 'Synesthesia: Phenomenology And Neuropsychology— A Review of Current Knowledge', *Psyche*, 2(10), July: 1-16.

Cytowic, R. E. (2002) Synaesthesia: A Union of the Senses (2nd edition), Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.

Darwin, C. (1872) The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals, London: J. Murray.

Eco, U. (1979) The Role of the Reader, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Eisenstein, S. (1943) Film Sense, New York: Harcourt Brace.

Eisenstein, S. (1949) Film Form: Essays in Film Theory, New York: Harcourt Brace.

Imitating the Dog (2016) Imitating the Dog Website, www.imitatingthedog.co.uk , Last access: 12.09.2016.

Lehmann, H.-T. (2006) Postdramatic Theatre, Oxon: Routledge.

Machon, J. (2009) (Syn)aesthetics: Redefinig Visceral Performance, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave.

Maurer D., T. Pathman and C.J. Mondloch (2006). 'The Shape of Boubas: Sound-shape correspondences in toddlers and adults', Dev Sci 9 (3): 316–22.

Palmer, S. (1999) 'Color, consciousness, and the isomorphism constraint', in Behavioral and Brain Sciences 22 (6):923-943.

Pluta, I. (2010) 'Robert Lepage and Ex Machina, The Andersen Project *(2005)',* in Bay-Cheng, S., C. Kattenbelt, A. Lavender and R. Nelson (eds.) Mapping Intermediality in Performance, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Ramachandran V.S. and E.M. Hubbard (2001) 'Synaesthesia: A window into perception, thought and language', Journal of Consciousness Studies 8 (12): 3–34.

Ramachandran V.S. and E.M. Hubbard (2001) 'Hearing Colors, Tasting Shapes', Scientific American*,* Vol. 288, No. 5, May: 52-9

Sagiv, N. and L. Robertson (2005). Synesthesia: Perspectives from cognitive neuroscience. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sellars, R. W. (1999) 'The Epistemology of Evolutionary Naturalism', Mind 28 (1919): 407-26.

Biography

Piotr is a Lecturer in Theatre and Performance at the University of Aberystwyth. His research interests concern the intersections between political and aesthetic theory, particularly the work of Lyotard, Deleuze, and Rancière and contemporary intermedial performance practice. He has recently published a monograph *Post-cinematic Theatre and Performance* (Palgrave Macmillan 2014). He is an active member of the Intermediality Working Group within the International Federation for Theatre Research (IFTR). He has also collaborated as composer and deviser with the UK based intermedial company Imitating the Dog and director Pete Brooks on a number of international projects.

---

[i] In the past many artists sought to trigger synaesthetic experiences in their audiences. Scriabin and Kandinsky famously explored the relationship between color and sound through music composition and painting, respectively. Filmmakers such as Eisenstein explored the possibilities of visual gestures in the silent film to conjure up sound and musicality.

[ii] Eisenstein outlines a hierarchy of montage, an aesthetic pyramid, which when structured 'correctly' will produce the most desirable effect. He distinguishes five types of montage in his essay 'Methods of Montage'. The five types are Metric Montage, Rhythmic Montage, Tonal Montage, Overtonal Montage and Intellectual Montage (Eisenstein 1949). The logic is that the basic forms of montage produce emotional effects, engaging the spectator on a pre-conscious affective level whilst the superior contextualize and intellectualize the images by making them appealing to higher order processes—'higher nerve-centers' (Eisenstein 1949: 82)—and by eliciting the spectator to reflect critically on the content that is being presented.