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A Brechtian Perspective on *London Road*: class representations, dialectics and the Gestic character of music from stage to screen

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Abstract

This article contributes to discussions about the role of music and song in the audience reception of the "verbatim musical" *London Road* (Taylor 2013; Zavros 2018). It uses Brechtian philosophy to assess the audience reception, and shows how *London Road* can illuminate the resonance of Brechtian philosophy with contemporary docu-musical. The first section analyses Brechtian class representations in *London Road,* with a particular focus on the dialectics and the Gestic role of the music and song. The second section explores how the adaptation from stage to screen further affected the dialectics of the musical and, paradoxically, further served key Brechtian aims. I consider the audience's reception of both productions. I include my own reception, because I have seen both the stage and screen versions. I focus on two dramaturgical changes in the adaptation from stage to screen: the chronological order of the narrative and the alternation of interview sections and dramatised sections, which resembles the structure of the popular drama-doc genre. Given that reordering and restaging the original verbatim numbers could affect audience reception, I analyse the way the meaning is affected through the Brechtian notions of alienation and the gestic character of music. Throughout, I discuss class representations and relevant dialectical implications.

Introduction

Three quarters of the way into the musical *London Road,* from the darkest place of National Theatre's Cottesloe stage, Sarah sings: '…I wanna get clean for 'em because it's took their lives from them to think about and go 'Come on. Let's get these girls off the street'' (Blythe, 2011: 58). Sarah is referring to the five sex workers who were murdered in 2006 in Ipswich, who seemed to be sacrificed so the local community would eventually help Sarah and the other surviving women to 'get off the streets'. In the next scene, the journalists sing 'The Verdict' (*ibid*: 60-62) after Steven Wright is found guilty of all five murders. Julie, a London

Road resident, expresses her gratitude to the murderer: '…(*Beat.*) I'd still shake his hand. I'd love to just shake his hand an' say "Thank you very much for getting rid of them". (*Beat*)…' (*ibid:* 65).

Sarah and Julie are not fictional characters, but real interviewees. Sarah is a member of a sex workers' group and Julie a member of a London Road residents' group. These quotes from the verbatim musical *London Road* (2011) expose a conflict between the two social groups. Because at the centre of this conflict is the sex work, a controversial profession that sustains the marginalised group of women, the specific social conflict is primarily a class conflict. This class conflict is an ideal starting point for the theatre that Bertolt Brecht envisioned: a theatre that can 'make dialectics into a source of enjoyment' (Brecht, *A Short Organum,* 1948: 17). Sarah and Julie speak for themselves in their interviews, but because there are no leading characters in the musical, it is easy to see them as the leaders of the two conflicting choruses – the marginalised sex workers and the working class residents. The audiences were also invited to consider the struggle between a local working class (the London Road residents) and a local marginalised class[1] (the sex workers). The creators were reluctant to categorise *London Road* as a musical (Costa, 2011). However, the work has been acknowledged for its innovative musical form[2], which enables a class conflict in Ipswich 2006 to be presented as entertainment to a middle-class audience at the National Theatre in 2011. It also reached broader audiences in a screen adaptation in 2015[3].

Documentary materials have been used in musicals since Joan Littlewood's *Oh What a Lovely War* (1963). The verbatim[4] musical *London Road* follows a 'theatre of the real'[5]

[1] Karl Marx's term 'lumpenproletariat'-- the lowest social class, which owns no property and earns money through crime and includes prostitutes, beggars and criminals (Marx, 1987:8)—would not be a good term to use because contemporary socioeconomic structures are more complicated. Charles Murray's term 'underclass' has been used to describe people out of work who struggle with addictions and other problematic behaviours (1990: 23). However, it is this appropriate either because it ascribes the class a lessen value, but also because young women often struggle with poverty because of more complicated social and cultural issues than addiction (Bullen & Kenway 2004).

[2] The production won 'Best Musical' at the 2011 Critics' Circle Theatre Awards (Edwards, 2011).

[3] The film was co-produced by Cuba Pictures and BBC films. The DVD was released by Picturehouse Entertainment in October 2015. The film was distributed by the National Theatre Live programme, which aims to broaden and diversify its audience by broadcasting live productions in cinemas across the UK and around the world. (National Theatre Live, 2019).

[4] Verbatim theatre uses as its text testimonies and dialogue from existing archival transcripts, whether in the public domain (e.g. tribunal records or the media) or from the theatre maker's own archives (e.g. recorded personal interviews) (Luckhurst, 2008:

[5] In 'theatre of the real', theatre makers edit, shape and reframe nonfictional material to create the dramaturgy, text and performance. Although the theatre makers are free to select the material to include

tradition established by the Broadway musical *A Chorus Line*[6] (1975) and the UK 'docu-musical'[7], which focused on the stories of marginalised groups. The writer Alecky Blythe was invited by the National Theatre to collaborate with the composer Adam Cork[8] on a verbatim musical theatre production. Blythe's working technique is to record conversations with people from a community, play the conversations to actors and ask them to repeat them exactly as they are spoken – including every cough, stutter, hesitation and personal idiosyncrasy (Blythe, 2011: v-vi). The interviews used to create *London Road* were conducted following the murders in Ipswich in 2006. Blythe was drawn to the story of the murders and began interviewing sex workers who operated in the area at that time. However, she found greater dramatic possibilities in the interviews with residents of the area, so she shifted the focus of the story from the murders themselves to the story of 'a community healing itself' (Calkin, 2015). This shift of focus undermined the main aims of verbatim theatre to show commitment to 'a particular narrative of opposition' (Tomlin, 2013:120) that aims to present both sides of a conflict and consider the danger of a production becoming 'singular in its political objective' (*ibid*).

in their work, the fact that they are 'citing' real testimonies and events gives their work a legitimacy and a relationship with the real that Roland Barthes calls the 'reality effect' (Van Alphen, 1997:21). Verbatim theatre, documentary theatre, tribunal theatre and autobiographical theatre are all considered 'theatre of the real' (Martin, 2010:120).

[6] *A Chorus Line* (Bennett et al., 1975) was based on real interviews with dancers and was created through the use of verbatim practices and 'workshopping', which at the time was an innovative process for creating a musical. (Tepper, 2015: 38). This methodological innovation shaped the musicals that came after *A Chorus Line*, not only in the way that they were created but also in the stories that were told. Up to this point only stars' stories were considered leading parts of a musical and the idea of an ensemble of equals was less represented (ibid: 39). The lyricist and the composer created the songs after listening to the taped interviews and talking to the dancers. Some of the interviewees also performed in the show, which added to the authenticity of the musical (Tepper, 2015: 40). The film version of *A Chorus Line* (Universal, 1984) did not please the stage version's fans (Hischak, 2008: 149).

[7] The use of verbatim practices in screen musicals has its own history. The genres 'docu-operas' and 'docu-musicals' are mergers of musical and factual forms (Paget, 2011: 280). For the libretto of the first docu-opera, *Nixon in China* (1987), the librettist Alice Goodman used documents of the meeting between President Nixon and Chairman Mao Zedong. Much of the libretto is 'verbatim or near-verbatim' (ibid: 281). In the UK, Brian Hill and his company Century Films have a record in docu-musicals, including *Drinking for England* (1998, about the consumption of alcohol in England in a range of social classes), *Feltham Sings* (BAFTA-wining, 2002, about youth detention centres), *Pornography the Musical* (2003, about women who work in adult film industry) and *Songbirds* (2005, about women's prisons) (Paget, 2011: 283).

[8] Adam Cork hadn't worked on a musical before *London Road*, but he had extended experience of composition and sound design for theatre and radio and less experience for film and TV. He received a Tony award in 2010 for his music and sound score for *Red* (Donmar/Broadway) and an Olivier Award in 2011 for *King Lear* (Donmar). He was nominated in 2010 for the Tony Award for Best Score (Music and Lyrics) for *Enron* (Broadway/West End) (Faber, 2016).

The social and political implications in a verbatim musical, invite a Brecthian analysis. Bruce Kirle suggests that even 'commercial Broadway showmen' like Stephen Sondheim and Harold Prince have been influenced by Brecht's work, which can be traced 'in the ironic, often jeering commentary and use of musical comedy and vaudeville conventions to underscore intellectualized ideas' (2005: 121-122). However, there is a resistance to acknowledge Brecht's contribution to the transatlantic dialogue of musical theatre, because of his association with a Marxist ideology (Kirle 2005: 121). Indeed, in order to activate his left values, Brecht's applied a dialectical philosophical methodology (Barnett 11-36), which encourages the representation of oppositional views in a work, in a discursive rather than didactic manner. In order to invite the audience's thinking processes, the central method that he developed is the *Verfremdung,* commonly recognised as the "Alienation Effect": 'A representation that alienates is one which allows us to recognize its subject, but at the same time makes it seem unfamiliar.... The new alienations are only designed to free socially-conditioned phenomena from the stamp of familiarity which protects them against our grasp today' (Brecht 2014: 192). The intention of Brecht's alienation effect was not to produce a lack of emotion in an audience, but rather 'different emotions from those being experienced by the characters on stage' (Eddershaw, 1996:16), which indicates that they reflect on the emotions on the character and respond with their own emotions. This reflective process is unique for each audience member and involves cognitive engagement. Kirle points out that there is a false impression that Brecht aimed to 'totally eliminate emotional response' (Kirle 2005: 122) which is oppositional to key aims of to musical theatre. The dominant negative dispositions about Brechtian practice, have traditionally made musical theatre practitioners and scholars reluctant to engage with it.

Postmodern approaches to audience reception might also find a Brechtian lens unproductive, especially if we consider how the use of music in musical theatre further complicates audience reception. Having said that, Duška Radosavljević's suggests that Brechtian theatre as a philosophy of its own terms can offer a critical lens for works that merge the entertaining with the social (2013: 119-149) because Brecht's 'philosophy of theatre, rather than any prescriptive rules distilled from it' resonates with 20th and 21st century verbatim theatre productions' (*ibid*: 126). Radosavljević writes that audience reception in the 21st century transcends Brecht's dichotomy of theatre that engages in either a rational or an emotional manner (2013:121). Drawing on an essay by Bruce McConachie, she argues that the way in which the human brain performs conceptual blending – or a synthesising of concepts

from different areas of cognition (such as reality and make-believe) – is a matter of degree rather than kind, and it is a process that unfolds unconsciously' (*ibid).* Taking these ideas as a starting point, I analyse the stage version of *London Road* through Brecht's notions of class representation and the Gestic character of music and song. I explore how its adaptation from stage to screen in 2015 affected the production's meaning and highlighted uncomfortable realities about the dialectics of the musical. I draw on theatre, musical theatre and media studies[9] to discuss audience reception. In particular, I draw on my own experience, because I have seen both productions.

The Gestic Use of Song and Music in *London Road*

Scholars have discussed how the use of music in *London Road* promotes a critical distance to the storytelling. Lib Taylor suggests that the music in *London Road* offers a critical framework because it provides 'a dynamic strategy for the destabilisation of the real to promote critical insight' (Taylor, 2013: 370). Taylor observes that Blythe's naturalistic approach to the material would have affected audience reception towards more empathising patterns, but it is the use of music that counterbalances this. She writes that 'voice in London Road both claims and defers authenticity and authority, in as much as the voice signifies presence and the embodiment of identity but the reworking of speech into sung tunes signals the absence of the real' (Taylor, 2013: 379). Drawing Lehmann's post-dramatic perspective (2006), Demetris Zavros suggests that the reworking of speech into sung tunes does not signal an absence of the real, but rather an 'irruption of the real'' (Zavros, 2018: 712.0/787). He argues that:

> this musical recomposition is not *imposed* as a critical frame only to reveal the artifice and constructed nature of (the) performance. It is a poetic accentuation of the musical attributes that *already exist* in the language, which comments on the artificiality of the source material itself: the performativity inherent in what we might usually assume to be (expressions of the) 'real/authentic/personal' in the everyday—in 'real talk'. (*ibid*)

[9] Helen Freshwater (2009) addresses the divide between scholars regarding the set of limitations around reception theory, which uses concepts and theories from film and media studies in Theatre Studies (14-31). Scholars like Susan Bennet (in *Theatre Audiences,* 1970) and John Tulloch (in *Shakespeare and Chekhov in Production and Reception*, 2005) have drawn on concepts from film and media studies. This essay will do the same and also draw on concepts from musical theatre studies, as a discussion of an adaptation of a musical from stage to screen is necessarily interdisciplinary.

The two approaches highlight the multiple ways in which the use of music in verbatim theatre can be examined in relation to audience reception and the alienation effect. A Brechtian perspective would contribute to the above discussion with a social perspective, that focuses less on how alienation is achieved by the use music and more on the potential of the music to emphasise the dialectics of the work.

London Road's portrayal of the class conflict between the residents and the sex workers aligns with Brecht's social aims. David Barnett describes Brecht as a 'shrewd political theorist and practitioner [who] continually strove to open up events on stage and expose the social forces acting upon individuals' (2016: 5). The reality of the interviews and the artificiality of the musical theatre form work with and against each other and eventually represent how the sex workers have been marginalised by the local community. Typical Brechtian devices that have contributed to the alienation effect in *London Road* include the non-chronological structure of the dramaturgy, the direct engagement with the audience as they enter the Cottesloe theatre and the chronological leaps: the stage version of *London Road* takes place over the three years during which the residents were interviewed. The audience's ability to identify with the characters and emotionally engage in the drama is further undermined by devices that are specific for musical works, like the Gestic use of song in the musical, the type of melody and music structures, the adapting of the interviews to the libretto's components and the singing style. The idea of a Gestic use derives from another of Brecht's key concepts, the Gestus, which describes 'actions that are both themselves and emblematic of larger social practices' (Martin and Henry, 2005: 5). The term refers not only to the performers' movement but also to costumes, music, set and the overall appearance of the company. The Gestic character of music in *London Road* plays an integral part in the dialectics of the piece because it amplifies, underlines or contradicts the representation of the residents and the sex workers.

The interviews turn into songs, and their main function is to comment on the events that followed the murders. A more typical musical theatre use would be to advance the plot and allow for a psychological state or heightened emotion to be explored. Instead, *London Road* reminds more of Brecht's and Kurt Weill's use of song in *Threepenny Opera*, where the songs are used to 'comment on the action rather than to further the plot or to define character' (Kirle, 2004: 95). The action that the residents of *London Road* are commenting on is the activity of the sex workers, the murders of five women and the trial and conviction of their murderer. The lyrics of the songs are the very words used in the interviews, and offer multiple

working class perspectives on how and why the problematic behaviours of the marginalised women brought such distress to their community. The stage version starts with Ron's interview in the song 'Neighbourhood Watch AGM', who comments on the actions taken to solve the problem:

> Hopefully the problem with the girls has disappeared. We don't see them now. I believe there still a few round in Hanford Road but er (*Beat.*) we really can't concern ourselves with them. I think the police have done exceptionally well under exceptional circumstances to clear the streets as they have done. (Blythe, 2011: 5)

The song lyrics represent the working class's pejorative perspective of the marginalised class as 'unwanted item' that needs to be removed from London Road, at least to the point that they are not visible anymore. The socially exclusive terms continue in all the songs of the first act (Blythe 2011), only to be opposed by the surviving women's perspective in the second act's song 'We've All Stopped' (ibid: 56). The choice to represent the conflicting views through song highlights the alienating irony of the stage version, which does not dramatize any of the described events, but only presents a peripheral 'real commentary' around them.

The type of melody and musical structures of the songs further serve Brecht's aims to incline 'to social commitment' and present an 'accurate representation of our social lives', (Brecht, *A Short Organum,* 1948: 1). Cork did not use a particular musical style but let the tone and content of the interviews lead the structure of each song (*ibid*: ix). He found that 'music' could be heard within the verbatim recordings – for example, certain words were effectively sung by the interviewees – which served as a point of departure for his composition. The composer's commitment to the accent, stutters and other expressive means of a local working class is not only an artistic commitment, but also a social one. Cork's commitment to using the original interviews evokes Brecht's idea of social representation. The music serves as a Gestus for the local Ipswich proletariat. Cork based the music on the interviewees' patterns of speech, which preserved its Gestic[10] character: it is derived from the local proletariat's voices and concerns, rather than from the composer. This echoes Brecht's vision that 'a proletarian theatre must learn how to encourage the free development of the various arts it needs. It must know

[10] In 'Gestus in Music', Weill and Albrecht write that music can have a Gestic character. Therefore, a composer needs to be very careful that the Gestus of the music does not treat the libretto misleadingly (1961:30).

how to listen to artistic and political arguments and should not give the director [or the composer] an opportunity to "express" his individual self' (Willett, 2001: 83). *London Road* challenges the flexibility of the genre and points towards a new direction of musical theatre (Whitfield, 2011: 314). Cork did not shape the text to fit the music; rather, the music followed the accent, speech patterns and levels of literacy of the Ipswich working class. In Brechtian terms, *London Road* represents the voice of the Ipswich working class.

The shared expressive means of the residents, which shaped the music, further amplified their shared perspective, which is another Gestic use of the music. Blythe wrote that the music bound together the 'shared sentiments in the interviews' (2011: vi). By creating verses and choruses for the songs, she shaped 'the material for narrative and dramatic effect further than before' (*ibid*). The engagement with a libretto's internal structures for the first time, invited the theatre-maker to assess her materials and reflect on their use in enlightening ways. These musical structures further alienate the audience and invite their judgement. They are invited to consume the production as entertainment and, simultaneously, to judge its contents. Similarly, in *The Threepenny Opera* Brecht intended both to entertain the audience and invite a critique of crime and capitalism.

The singing style in *London Road* also reflects Brechtian aims. The almost reciting to music style resembles the Sprechgesang, which is the equivalent of Wagner's operas' 'recitativo'. The delivery of speech that is casual and quotidian to music, also reminds of Yvette Guilbert's (1867-1944) 'diseur/diseuse' technique, which developed in the German cabaret and involves 'mainly reciting to music, but some times acting' (Ruttkowski, 47). Both the Sprechgesang and the diseur/diseuse cabaret song turn the focus more towards the lyrics rather than the music, and therefore invite primarily judgments rather than emotions. The similarities with the above two song techniques reveal a closeness to German expressionism, which highly influenced Brecht's and Weill's work in *Threepenny Opera* (1928). This enables the use of a chorus and 'a representational rather than a psychological' acting style (Blythe, 2011: xi). Blythe expected that 'hearing the natural speech patterns sung in this way, would distance an audience from the "character" and the "story" but in a positive way so that it would alter the quality of listening' (*ibid*). The unfamiliar and innovative musical style, which Logan describes as 'an incongruous clash of colloquial speech and choral singing' (2011) can have the effect of distancing the audience from the drama.

The use of the above musical devices in *London Road* serve key Brechtian aims, such as the real representation of social life within an entertaining form and a commitment to the working class. However, there is a central problem with the unbalanced dialectics. In particular, the choice to focus on the story of the recovery of the residents leaves little space to represent the marginalised class of the sex workers. The narrative actively ignores the main event of the plot – the murders. The murdered women and the surviving ones who were exposed to the danger, they are represented only in the number 'We've All Stopped' (*ibid:* 56). The residents' voices are dominant: they sing eleven numbers[11] and speak in the nine 'London Road sitting rooms' scenes[12]. The journalists sing another four numbers[13] in which they describe the murders, the arrest and the trial and briefly mention the victims. Brian Logan highlighted the absence of the marginalised class's perspective in his review for *The Guardian*: 'Few thoughts are spared for prostitutes living or dead, as public spirit blooms in wake of Wright's crimes' and the conventionally dramatic parts of this story are [often] happening offstage' (2011). The voices of the sex workers are overpowered, because most of the interviews are derived from resident and therefore most music has been composed with the residents' voices as the starting point. This merging of the real and the entertaining elicited responses such as: 'how did such a tragic event inspire a piece of musical theatre?' (Whitfield, 2011: 314); and 'knowingly shameful admission that something good has come out of it: a reborn community and a renewal of civic pride' (Coveney, 2011). Audiences are ultimately invited to critically reflect on the musical's dialectical failures, in choosing to represent one social group over another.

London Road **from stage to screen: achieving Brechtian aims using anti-Brechtian means**

The screen adaptation premiered on 12 June 2015 as part of National Theatre Live (2018). Critics received the screen version[14] enthusiastically. Peter Bradshaw wrote: '*London*

[11]'Neighbourhood Watch AGM'(Blythe, 2011: 5-6), 'London Road in Bloom' (*ibid*: 7-9), 'Everyone is Very Very Nervous' (*ibid*: 10-15), 'It Could Be Him' (*ibid:* 18-22), 'Shaving Scratch' (*ibid:* 23-25), 'That's When it All Kicked Off' (*ibid*: 26-29), 'My Opinion' (*ibid*: 32-33), 'A Wicked Bloody World' (*ibid:* 38-39), 'Ten Weeks' (*ibid:* 47), 'Everyone Smile' (*ibid*: 72-78) and 'London Road in Bloom' (reprise) (*ibid*: 78-79).

[12] In the 'London Road sitting rooms' scenes residents are interviewed individually or in pairs. (Blythe, 2011: 9-10), (*ibid:* 15-16), (*ibid:* 16-18), (*ibid:* 26), (*ibid:* 33-14), (*ibid:* 48-53), (*ibid:* 53-56), (*ibid:* 62-64) and (*ibid:* 64-65).

[13] 'They Like a Good Moan' (*ibid*: 29-31), 'The Five Counts of Murder' (*ibid*: 42-44), 'Cellular Material' (*ibid*: 48-53) and 'The Verdict' (*ibid*: 59-62).

[14] It has been called 'utterly gripping' and praised for its 'amazing musical technique' and the 'high-wire fascination' it creates when it comes together on screen (Robey, 2015). Like the stage version, however, its genre could not be easily categorised. Reviewers called it a 'filmed adaptation of a highly

Road was a mighty success on stage. Now it is a unique triumph on the movie screen' (2015). A comparison of both versions illuminates structural differences in the dramaturgy of the stage and screen production (see a breakdown of scenes/numbers in Table 1 in page 16). The typical Brechtian device of an episodic structure has been abandoned. Audience participation is also abandoned for practical reasons. The restoration of the chronological order (see Table 1 in page 16) would invite an audience to respond emotionally rather than intellectually. The audience's involvement is further achieved by the typical use of music as underscoring and leitmotif in screen drama. Paradoxically, the anti-Brechtian devices that are used to involve the audience achieve a different Brechtian aim and restore the dialectics of the piece.

The film opens with the title 'In 2006 five women were murdered in Ipswich, England' (Norris, 2015). This Brechtian opening title suggests that the story is not about the 'community crisis', as the opening of the stage version suggests (see Table 1 page 16), but the murder of five women – an idea that stays with the audience throughout the film. This is followed by a dramatised section depicting the sex workers' activity in London Road, over which is played the voices of the annoyed residents (Norris, 2015: 0:04:40-0:07:10). Audience members are given enough information to empathise with the women and look for the victims' narrative in the film. Such empathy was difficult in the stage version, in which the sex workers appeared only in one number, which occurs about one hour into the performance and is staged in the shadows. Therefore, a traditionally anti-Brechtian device, which is a narrative with a chronological order, becomes a positive step in counterbalancing the representation of the marginalised class of the sex workers.

The screen version highlights the silence surrounding the representation of the sex workers, which contrasts with the residents' cheerful agony. The screen version uses slow-motion blurry imagery[15] to represent the victims' perspective, which reminds the audience that

unusual slice-of-life musical drama' (Calhoun, 2015), a 'very moving cine-opera in a reportage verbatim style', a 'film oratorio' and a 'forensic thriller set to music' (Bradshaw, 2015).

[15] The narrative of the sex workers has been supported in the following additional ways: 1. after the number 'Shaving Scratch', which refers to the serial killer's profile, and before the taxi driver drops off Jane in London Road, three sex workers appear in a blurry image waiting for a customer at the side of the street (Norris, 2015: 00:16:00). 2. During the description of the murders in the number 'The Five Counts of Murder', there is a dark long shot in the murderer's house, which could be the place in which the sex workers were killed, and a shot of a sex worker from behind (*ibid*: 00:41:00). 3. The resident Grahame Cooper outside the Courthouse, after the sentencing of the murderer, looks at the flowers laid for the victims and says: 'Do you know I've almost got this mental picture of when those girls got up to Heaven… - and they said something like (*Pause.*) 'D'you mean it's over? (*Beat*)d'you mean it's

the women's voices have been largely omitted. This absence is further highlighted by the use of an eerie leitmotif, which is associated with the sex workers. When the silenced group song is eventually given a voice in 'We've All Stopped Now', this is the climax of their marginalised status. The song's melody suggests their victimhood and vulnerability. The harmonies highlight the multiplicity of emotions and voices within the group, which at times included as many as thirty women, not only from Ipswich but also from neighbouring areas (Blythe, 2011: 57). Derek Paget observes that when the characters in Brian Hill's docu-musicals sing, 'they escape victim status and become active in a different way' (2011: 283) and they perform their addiction with 'a self-knowledge and self-confidence'[16]. Even though the perspective of the sex workers is more powerful in the screen version, little emphasis was put on their positive representation. The interviews took place in the Iceni Project Rehabilitation Centre in Ipswich, which is both a part of the local community and evidence that the women have been sorting out the addictions which led them to sex work. Instead, in the screen version they sing in the staircases by the isolated gas tower, which further sustains a 'dark and isolating' perspective, which is the one-dimensional and stereotypical representation of marginalised groups. Sarah says 'I've got well' (Blythe, 2011: 57), by which she means that she has been dealing with her addiction (*ibid*: 58) while keeping some regular customers (*ibid*: 57). This is the only clear indication of social progress in the story. In the final scene, one of the women watches the residents' celebration unnoticed. Only a little girl notices her, which further emphasizes her marginalised status. At the end of the screen version the recordings of the sex workers' voices are played, inviting the audience back to the reality of the real victims of the story. Overall, the screen audience has access to a more balanced representation of the two conflicting perspectives.

Another way in which the anti-Brechtian linear structure achieves Brecthian aims, is that it engages the broader screen audiences, who are less used to episodic structure. Certain dramaturgical and directing choices of the screen version resemble the linear dramaturgy of the popular screen genre drama-doc[17]. Drama-docs often alternate real witness interviews with

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finished? D'you mean they can't **hurt** me anymore?'', while a woman walks slowly into frame and looks at him from a distance (*ibid*: 1:11:00).

[16] Paget discusses one of the songs in Hill's docu-musical *Drinking for England:* 'The song gives Tony the chance to own another aspect of his 'real' self. The self mockery of the song's words means he performs his drink addiction with a self-knowledge and self-confidence that are, to say the least, unexpected'.

[17] Drama-docs are films or TV formats that combine fact and created action. 'Throughout its long history, drama documentary has been one of film and television's most popular, but also most

dramatised sections to provoke tension and create a dynamic and dramatic affect. The interview sections comprise edited interviews with real witnesses, and the dramatised sections include re-enactments of real events by actors. Drama-docs frequently use archive material, which is either shown in its original form or is re-enacted by actors. Cutting between interviews and dramatised sections can interrupt the audience's emotional engagement with the story, and presenting the interviewees' different perspectives invites the audience to make a judgement.

The film of *London Road* similarly invites the audience's judgement. The residents' interviews are alternated with dramatised sections. Some of these interviews are turned into songs, which is typical in a docu-musical. In the docu-musical, the interview of the 'real person' is alternated with performers who sing and this shift alone can alienate an audience member. (Paget, 2011: 283). This is further supported by looking straight into the camera lens. The film starts with interviews with some of the main residents, who break the fourth wall by looking directly into the camera. This Brechtian device of directly addressing the audience interrupts the illusion of the performed character and invites the audience into the discussion. Characters move in and out of frame in the opening interviews, and the unusual camera angles draw attention to the film's 'theatre machinery'[18]. Brecht considered the revelation of artificiality to be a guarantee of the audience's critical engagement with the story. The film differs from typical drama-docs, in which actors portray the characters in the interviews as well as in the dramatised sections. The familiarity with the drama-doc genre makes the film more engaging for broader audiences. However, because the interviewees are often performed by popular actors like Olivia Coleman, Anita Dobson and Tom Hardy, the audience is constantly reminded that they see actors who represent the real people who were interviewed in a similar way to that portrayed in the film. This affects the film's immediacy and invites the audience to consider the 'reality' of the characters from a double alienating effect.

In comparison to the stage version, the flexible drama-doc structure of the screen version offers a clearer view of the residents as witnesses with subjective and often biased

controversial, forms. Film and programme makers are attracted to its combination of the languages of drama and documentary either to dramatise research, thereby stimulating interest in issues through empathy with characters and narrative, thereby enhancing its immediacy. However, critics and theorists continue to debate the extent to which these techniques "blur the boundaries" of fact and fiction, "dupe" viewers and sacrifice factual accuracy to dramatic storytelling' (Rolinson).

[18] Brecht was influenced by Piscator's Epic and the Russian ex-Futurists who thought that art should show their audiences how it is made. 'Art should be considered a form of production, not a mystery; the stage should appear like a factory with the machinery fully exposed' (Mitchell, 2003: xvi).

views of the events surrounding the murders. The ability to more closely examine and engage with the residents through close-ups invites the audience to think about their lack of sympathy for the murdered women. Furthermore, songs like 'London Road in Bloom' and 'Everyone Smile' enable the residents to display some rather disturbingly playful[19] and celebratory feelings about the murders. They add to the multi-dimensional portrayal of the residents' social group and also highlight the lack of a similarly multi-dimensional portrayal of the victims' class.

The cheerfulness of the working class is an exaggerated representation of their agony. The film's linear drama-doc narrative turned the stage musical into a 'forensic thriller' (Bradshaw, 2015) that engages the audience through fear. Horror films and horror documentaries[20], which entail 'real horror', are very popular among broader audiences[21]. Bruce Kawin writes that 'within the frame of fiction, the horror film's images and events touch on the genuine fear and revulsion that may be inspired by our imagination and apprehension' (2012: 207). The intention to engage audiences through fear is clear in the first third of the screen version of *London Road* – even the opening titles contain the word 'murder' (Norris, 2015: 00:00:39). Soon afterwards, the TV news announces, 'the nightmare… two more bodies found… one more method of killing… the multiple murderer' (*ibid*: 00:02:36) and then Julie states that she is worried about her daughter's safety[22]. The chorus number 'Everyone is Very Very Nervous' seems to be shot from the murderer's perspective – the shot between Santa's legs in the market – and the chorus number 'It Could Be Him' seems to be shot from the victims' perspective – the two girls fantasise about running away from men that they suspect to be the murderer. The suspense inflicting underscoring further amplifies the horror effect.

[19] Even in 'It Could Be Him', fear is built up in the narrative. The two teenagers sing 'this is exciting because nothing really happens in Ipswich', which has little emotional effect in an interview setting, where the words were originally spoken, but the dislocation of the text into a playful chase in the supermarket, where the customers dance and laugh rhythmically, gives further access to the residents' multiple reactions and emotions.

[20] In his book *Horror and the Horror Film*, Bruce Kawin (2012) dedicates a chapter to the horror documentary as a separate form, because of the boundless feelings 'real horror' may cause to an audience due to their inability to consign the evil to fiction (204).

[21] Many scholars tried to identify why the horror genre is popular among audiences. Andrew Tudor, echoing Helen Freshwater's book *Theatre & Audience* but from a horror film studies perspective, writes that there are no universal or general explanations for why horror is a popular genre. He says that such explanations depend on the audience's socio-historical moment (Tudor, 2002: 50).

[22] 'JULIE. It was- It was absolutely awful. They wrecked- wrecked off my evenings. Y'know, There are on my streets. Y'know, my children are out at night. I've got- I' ve got teenage girls. I've got- I've got fourteen-year-old' (Norris, 2015: 00:05:50).

The horror effect is further heightened in 'Saving Scratch' (*ibid:* 23-25) by the dramaturgical device of dislocating of the text. In the stage version, the number takes place in a bar in which one resident talks about the murderer and other residents tease him by saying that he might be the murderer himself. In the screen version, the text is dislocated and set in a taxi, in which a taxi driver describes the murderer to a frightened woman passenger. His quick, enigmatic glimpses in the mirror suggest that he himself may be the killer[23]. The film generates a sense of horror by reference and implication (Kawin, 2012: 207), and by seemingly gradually to disclose clues about the murderer until he is arrested and accused. Noel Corrall writes that the appeal of horror mostly derives from narratives of disclosure (2002: 40), which engage the audience in 'processes of disclosure, discovery, proof, explanation, hypothesis and confirmation' (*ibid*: 35). The film's chronological order enables the audience to follow the gradual disclosure of the horror. The suggestions about the murderer's identity invite them to make their own hypothesis. Corrall suggests that 'the paradox of horror (attraction and repulsion) derives from the curiosity/fascination duality' – a combination of intellectual and emotional engagement (*ibid*: 40). The horror narrative once again brings the sex workers to the centre of attention. The residents reveal that they knew they were safe because the murderer killed only sex workers (Blythe, 2011:15). This highlights that focusing on the surviving sex workers more not only would serve the dialectical side of the work but also its entertaining side, inviting audiences to experience the suspense of the story.

Conclusion

I have used Brechtian concepts to analyse the stage and screen versions of *London Road* to show how specific musical theatre devices affect the audience's emotional/rational duality. I have highlighted the paradox of a cinematic narrative that, surprisingly, offered a more balanced representation of the two conflicting classes. Such choices and implications are further complicated by the musical genre, given music's Gestic character. The representation of the marginalised, or disconnected, class of the sex workers becomes a matter of both quantity (how many numbers are sung by the sex workers) and quality (how positively are they

[23] 'MARK: I uhm. I I I've studied serial killers since I'm in my mid-teens and it doesn't mean I am one but err…' (Blythe, 2011:24). In the screen version, this character is moved out of the playful atmosphere of the bar, and the words are delivered by a taxi driver who looks persistently into the female passenger's eyes through his car mirror.

represented). Audiences see a local working class, who don't want to be "labelled" or associated to the negative behaviour of a local marginalised class. The residents see the marginalised class as the root of the criminal activity in the area and this undermined the Brechtian aim for dialectical theatre rather than a one-sided representation of a real event. Even so, the merging of the verbatim with the musical with its particular use of song, melody and musical structures, musical dramaturgy and singing style served the Brechtian aim to represent real life in an entertaining way. Finally, this analysis indicates how Brechtian philosophy can explore how using Brechtian devices in a postmodern era can undermine fundamental Brechtian aims.

Table 1 Breakdown of Scenes/Numbers in London Road

STAGE VERSION Act One

1. Opening in Community Centre
   'Neighbourhood Watch AGM'
   'London Road in Bloom'
2. London Road sitting rooms (we were labelled)
3. Market
   'Everyone is Very Very Nervous'
4. London Road sitting rooms (are the sex workers only in danger?)
5. London Road sitting rooms (cops interrogating residents)
6. Stella's coffee shop
   'It Could Be Him'
7. The County of Suffolk pub
   'Shaving Scratch'
8. London Road sitting rooms (cops in the neighbourhood)
   'That's When it All Kicked Off'
   'They Like a Good Moan'
9. LIDL car park
   'My Opinion'
10. London Road sitting rooms (suspect lived next door)
11. London Road police cordon
12. Outside Ipswich Magistrates' Court 'A Wicked Bloody World'

SCREEN VERSION Act One

1. Opening with title 'In 2006 five women were killed in Ipswich'
2. London Road sitting rooms (we were labelled)
3. News reportage gives details about the five murders. Murderer still free.
4. Sitting rooms Jane and Dodge describe the problem with the girls.
5. Dramatized sections showing the sex workers in action.
6. Market
   'Everyone is Very Very Nervous'
7. Stella's Coffee Shop/Alleys/Bus
   'It Could Be Him'
8. The suspect- taxi driver
   'Shaving Scratch'
9. London Road sitting rooms (cops in the neighbourhood)
   'That's When it All Kicked Off'
10. London Road sitting rooms (suspect lived next door)
11. Outside Ipswich Magistrates' Court
    'A Wicked Bloody World'

STAGE VERSION Act Two

13. Outside Ipswich Crown Court
'The Five Counts of Murder'
14. Neighbourhood Watch Christmas Party
'Ten Weeks'
15. London Road sitting rooms (media in London Road)
'Cellular Material'
16. London Road sitting rooms (London Road is 'clean' now)
17. Iceni Project Rehab Centre, Ipswich 'We've All Stopped'
18. London Road sitting rooms (waiting for the verdict)
19. Courthouse Café
20. Outside the Courthouse 'The Verdict'
21. London Road sitting rooms (Steve Wright found guilty)
22. London Road outside (women having difficulty to trust men)
23. London Road sitting rooms (feeling sorry about the sex workers?)
24. Alfie's garden in London Road
25. Outside garden No 79
26. Dodge's back garden in London Road
'Everyone Smile'
'London Road in Bloom' (reprise)

SCREEN VERSION Act Two

12. London Road Sitting Rooms 'Ten Weeks'
13. Murderer's dark house
    'The Five Counts of Murder
14. Community hall
    'Neighbourhood Watch AGM'
15. Outside Murderer's House
    'Cellular Material'
16. London Road sitting Rooms (London Road is 'clean' now)
17. Gas tower staircase
    'We've All Stopped'
18. Outside the Courthouse 'The Verdict'
19. 'London Road in Bloom'
20. Outside Courthouse (women having difficulty to trust men)
21. London Road sitting rooms (feeling sorry about the prostitutes?)
22. The Competition
    'Everyone Smile'
    (a sex worker in slow motion walks amongst the celebrations unnoticed. She interacts only with a little girl, who offers her a balloon. She takes it and climbs the stairs of the gas towers. The residents dance in slow motion. She waves at the little girl and releases the balloon into the sky)

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