Spirits on the Air: Ghosts, Sound and the Radio

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There is something profoundly uncanny about sound. The fact that it is literally invisible means that it can stealthily surround us and permeate our environment. In the form of music, it can manipulate our mood, sometimes reinforcing or just as easily undercutting with irony whatever we may be observing. Sudden noises can grab our attention, frighten us or wake us from the deepest slumber. Throughout the history of civilization, the phenomena of echoes and Aeolian harps have eerily fascinated us, just as whispers, thunderclaps, screams and 'things that go bump in the night' have sent shivers down our spines and made our hearts beat faster. Even when the science of sound was elucidated and audio technology developed, the uncanny dimension to sound continued. For example, the captured voices on tinfoil drums, wax cylinders and other pioneering examples of recording technology can continue to haunt the listener: the late nineteenth-century wax recordings of Lord Tennyson reciting his poem 'Charge of the Light Brigade' or the ninety-year old Helmuth von Moltke (the only known voice recording of someone born in the eighteenth century) may crackle and distort but have their own, unique potency when compared to the photographic portraits of the same individuals. All audio is time-related: it exists in a temporal context, beginning for the listener and eventually ending. In the recording of Florence Nightingale in July 1890, the legendary Victorian's speech draws our attention to the extraordinary nature of the new technology: 'When I am no longer even a memory, just a name, I hope my voice may perpetuate the great work of my life' (Wellcome Trust, 2016). Nightingale is aware of the perpetuity of the sound recording that will survive when she is nothing but a 'name'.

Thomas Edison was at the forefront of audio technology and when he first experimented with sound recording, he was not just amazed at the results, he was, significantly, *frightened*: 'I was never so taken aback in my life… Everybody was astonished. I was always afraid of things that worked the first time' (McNichol, 2011, 38). Although he was a giant in the history of scientific invention, some of Edison's experiments may come as a surprise to us. In 1920, Edison attempted to develop a 'spirit catcher', a recording device that could capture the voices of the dead, harvesting their sonic atoms (as a telescope might capture the light of distant stars) and allowing the bereaved to hear the voices of their dear departed once again. Edison conducted these experiments in the aftermath of the *Titanic* disaster and the First World War, his attempt reflecting – like the contemporaneous interest in spiritualism – a

hopeful, perhaps desperate, desire to find a remedy to cataclysmic grief. Edison's experiments in this area have been taken up, in some regard, by paranormal investigators: the distinct field of 'Electronic Voice Phenomena' (EVP) entirely explores the audio realm. EVP specialists (such as Konstantin Raudive and other followers) have developed techniques and theories to explain the phenomenon of captured voices in recordings of empty rooms and the white noise of out-of-tune radios. This fascination extended to the radio studio itself: as Jeffrey Sconce reports, in the 1920s there was a 'decidedly eerie' trend for 'ghost broadcasting' in which microphones were left operational in an empty studio to capture the voices of ghosts (Sconce, 2000, 75). Although Edison's spirit catcher is yet to be invented, and EVP and ghost broadcasting remain controversial, recordings made in life eventually become 'otherworldly': as we saw with Florence Nightingale, sound recordings can forever keep alive the voices of the now-dead. No one can personally remember the pioneering nurse but, extraordinarily, we can hear a few seconds of her living, breathing voice, speaking of her own (im)mortality.

Contemporaneous with the advancement of phonographic technology (Edison's phonograph was introduced in 1877), other revolutionary audio inventions such as the telephone (patented by Alexander Graham Bell in 1876) were developed. Over the following years, thanks to the experiments of numerous scientists (including Heinrich Hertz in the 1880s and Nikola Tesla in the 1890s) wireless radio technology gradually evolved from being a theoretical possibility to a practical reality. Subsequent demonstrations of radio technology, such as Marconi's transatlantic wireless transmission in 1901, were genuinely spectacular achievements. Other experiments were nothing short of *miraculous*: in 1906, Reginald Fessenden transmitted choir music and a Bible reading, and when wireless operators who did not realise it was an experiment picked up the broadcast they assumed they were listening to the sounds of an ethereal, heavenly realm. As Seán Street writes, these listeners 'believed the source was supernatural; the timing, the content and the apparent technical "miracle" of the whole thing was overwhelming' (Street, 2012, 24). As we can see with this and many other examples, audio technology's mediation of the spoken word has had the potential to be perceived in an uncanny light. The power of gramophone recordings, telephone calls or wireless broadcasts to *disembody* the human voice, renders the speaker invisible but potent and present, quite literally, in our ears. In the subsequent development of radio, therefore, we can see that this uncanny phenomenon underpins the medium itself. Furthermore, with the development of radio broadcasting beyond shipping and military use and into cultural contexts, specific forms

within it such as radio drama will frequently exploit this most uncanny of media, finding in the supernatural a popular and realizable theme for its output.

When it was realised that radio could have more than an industrial use, broadcasting networks came into existence and needed content for the rapidly growing number of listeners who were enthusiastically tuning in to be entertained and edified. In the early days of broadcasting culture, readings from books were popular, spanning all genres from literary classics to popular fiction. After this, steps were made towards radio drama, firstly in the form of stage plays broadcast from the stage or recited on the air. As well as Shakespeare and other classics, melodramas were particularly popular on both sides of the Atlantic, many of which were supernatural in theme, as Alan Beck's exhaustive survey (2001) of 1920s British radio drama demonstrates. Similarly, when drama specifically written for radio emerges – usually said to begin, in the British context, with Richard Hughes's *A Comedy of Danger* (1924) – themes of suspense continue to be popular. Hughes's play is set in a coalmine during a power cut and exploits the context of utter darkness. The work is a thriller set in a perilous and realistic location, but in one speech a character tries to face up to his mortal doom and draws on the supernatural:

> I tell you death isn't heaven and it isn't hell. Death's *dying*… Death's being nothing – not even a dratted ghost clanking its chains on the staircase.

This speech is anti-religious and anti-supernatural: death is the negation of existence. For the listeners of the live broadcast in 1924, however, the desperate voice of the man caught in a mining disaster must have had an unnerving and uncanny quality: not a ghost with rattling chains, but a man imminently about to die in a coalmine, his disembodied voice infiltrating the domestic space of the listener.

Not only is the medium of radio itself conducive to tales of the uncanny, it involves issues of listener reception too. Radio can be extremely intimate, haunting our domestic space or entering our ears directly through headphones. We should also consider that in audio performance practice, the optimum position of the microphone is in close proximity to the speaker's mouth making the microphone, in effect, the ear of the listener. Having said that, in many respects radio listening is a learned 'skill'. There is nothing to 'look at' when we listen to the radio: on the contrary, we are probably multitasking and a radio play needs to hold our

attention, hooking us into an unfurling story, ensuring we grasp the 'who, where, when and what' of the narrative. In this regard, we might like to consider how the uncanny can function effectively in ensuring that we listen: the large number of supernatural stories throughout the history of broadcasting reflects a perception that the genre has the potential to hold us and haunt us.

In the so-called 'Golden Age' of American radio broadcasting (the 1930-50s), themes of mystery and the supernatural were abundant in standalone plays and series. From the bloodiest examples of villainy and horror to adaptations of classic or neglected works of Gothic literature, the airwaves of America reverberated with tales of murderers, vampires, lycanthropes and mad scientists' experiments. Between these terrifying or impossible incarnations brought vividly to life on the air wandered another entity of horror: the ghost. In radio's diverse tales of phantoms, spectres and spirits we find subjects and objects of terror ideally suited to the medium. This becomes clear if we consider what a ghost is. Robin Hanson provides a useful summary of the 'mythical concept' of the ghost:

> A ghost was once human, but then died, and now is an active agent with death-related features. So ghosts tend to be cold, sick, slow, in low mood, and have a weak influence on the physical world. Ghosts are anti-social, avoid groups of more than a few humans, don't seem to collect into ghost gangs or ghost cities, and don't use tools or weapons. They are reluctant to move away from their old haunts. *Ghosts are heard more than seen*… [Hanson, 2016, 133 emphasis added]

As well as highlighting our standard expectations of a ghost, Hanson's description helps to signal qualities of the ghostly that are relevant in the context of radio. The fact that ghosts have 'a weak influence on the physical world' means they are suitable for the disembodied invisibility of the airwaves; likewise their anti-social nature makes them ideal for the intimacy of radio; and, last but not least, they have a predilection for audio presence rather than visual manifestation.

Radio is a particularly strong medium for both storytelling and documentary, and examples that have hybridized these forms have included programmes on 'true' ghost stories. For example, the 'Ghosts' episode (17 December 2013) of the BBC's *Shared Experience* roundtable discussion show featured people, from different backgrounds and with diverse beliefs, united by experiences in which they seemed to have encountered ghosts. This show followed the convention of other BBC series from decades before, such as *Do You Believe in*

Ghosts? (1952-53), in which 'genuine' people were also given the opportunity to recount their personal uncanny experiences on air. In our time, this form has discovered a particular popularity on the internet: *Ghost Pod* (2010 onwards) is one of numerous websites which provide a forum for people to share their own experiences of ghosts and the paranormal. In the best democratic traditions of storytelling, *Ghost Pod* avows that it hosts these uncanny tales in a 'spirit of open mindedness, without judgement or religious bias' (*Ghost Pod*, 2016). Other programmes have used storytelling as a springboard into dramatization, such as the American show *Origin of Superstition* which used the format of framing a narrative with a 'true' story which gradually becomes vividly dramatized as a way into exploring uncanny topics such as 'Black Cats' (27 February 1952), 'Friday the Thirteenth' (2 April 1952) and 'Seeing a Ghost Ship' (15 October 1952). Such framing strategies have, of course, a long tradition in Gothic culture. Countless ghost stories use an opening narration to frame the central story as an efficient way to establish context and build up anticipation but also to create a sense of objective distance from the horrors that may unfurl. The aforementioned 'Seeing a Ghost Ship' shifts from its opening narration into an ambitious realization of a sinking – and resurfacing – ship that fills the sailors who witness it with utter terror. In such plays, the use of evocative sound effects and compelling narrative can work on the mind's eye of the listeners who effectively collaborate with the production team in the co-creation of an experience as dramatic and compelling as any example of screen performance.

There were all kinds of ghosts on classic American radio. Some phantoms appear in tales of detection. These tend to be what we would now regard as 'Scooby Doo' type stories in which the seemingly uncanny is 'unmasked' as having a more rational explanation. John Dickson Carr, a prolific writer in the 'locked room' mystery genre (in which seemingly impossible crimes are eventually given an inventive, albeit often farfetched, solution), is a notable exponent of this. Carr wrote many radio plays that use the tropes and style of the uncanny before a rational denouement. Sometimes this occurs as part of an elaborate scheme for extortion or revenge, while in other cases it is a 'supernatural' delusion caused by the hallucinations of a mind that is collapsing by reason of paranoia or guilt. Carr was integral to the development of the long-running series *Suspense* (1942-62) in America and *Appointment with Fear* (1943-55) on the BBC, and wrote many plays of the 'rationalised supernatural' in the early days of both shows. Ironically, the first episode of *Suspense* – 'The Burning Court' (17 June 1942) – is an adaptation of Carr's fiction and represents him at his most

supernatural, with the murderer being revealed as the vengeful ghost of a woman burnt for witchcraft targeting the descendants of her tormentors.

John Dickson Carr typically wrote self-contained plays but similar ‘non-supernatural ghosts’ appeared in the serial adventures of popular heroes. In plays such as *The Shadow*’s ‘Ghosts Can Kill’ (15 January 1939), *The New Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*’ ‘The Limping Ghost’ (3 September 1945) and *The Saint*’s ‘The Ghost That Giggled’ (17 September 1950), each of the great eponymous heroes reveals a more prosaic criminal cause underpinning the terrors of the seemingly supernatural. Although each rational explanation comes as no surprise to all but the most innocent of listeners, the journey to that point is exciting in the way each narrative exploits the potential of its seeming ‘ghosts’. The plays relish the opportunity to construct the ostensibly uncanny as its spectres haunt their victims in a way that seems to defy reason. The plays use music, sound effects and suspenseful narrative to create an uncanny environment and storyline before the sangfroid of Lamont Cranston, Sherlock Holmes and Simon Templar locates the narrative on a more rational, even keel. As Seán Street observes:

> …montage, shifting perspective, changing acoustics and voice over sound and music have been used through the history of radio to create effects relating to the uncanny, the unearthly and the ghostly (Street, 2012, 29-30)

In the case of the detective tales we have cited, the plays exploit this supernatural potential before, as it were, retrenching their style into the realist conventions of the crime genre. We will now look at examples of radio ghost plays that are ‘fully supernatural’: refusing some rational explanation, these plays create and sustain uncanny realms where ghosts exist and have agency.

One of the most celebrated America horror radio shows was *Lights Out* (1934-47) which spanned tales of science fiction and serial killers as well as examples of the supernatural. In Arch Oboler’s play ‘The Ball’ (also known as ‘Paris Macabre’, 9 March 1943), two young American tourists infiltrate a masked ball in Paris. They are urged to leave but their arrogance makes them remain. When the clock strikes midnight all the guests remove their masks, revealing no heads: the guests are spectral victims of the guillotine. One of the Americans is lynched and decapitated by the ghosts; the other runs out into the Paris streets where a vehicle

strikes him and cleaves off his head. It is a surprisingly bleak ending for a tale that belongs to the horror subgenre of tourists who get lethally out of their depth.

Before the young men meet their dismal fate in ‘The Ball’, they make the most of the party and flirt with a masked female figure. This erotic dimension to ghostly encounters can work well on radio, exploiting the intimacy of the form. In *The Mysterious Traveler* episode ‘Stranger in the House’ (29 January 1952), a married couple move into an old house, despite the wife’s misgivings. The wife overhears her husband talking to someone and a smell of narcissi infuses the house. The man becomes obsessed with the beguiling ghost he has encountered and is increasingly hostile to his wife while swearing his devotion to the phantom. The desperate wife speaks to her doctor who pieces together that the ghost belongs to a murderess who lived in the house in the early nineteenth century. The doctor drugs the man and they take him out of the house and burn the building to the ground. The couple are seemingly happy again, freed from the ghost in the house they drive away to a new life. However, in a twist ending, the husband suddenly smells narcissi in the car, stops driving and murders his wife. Although recent films like *Insidious* (James Wan, 2011) may have used the slogan ‘it’s not the house that’s haunted’, classic radio plays such as ‘Stranger in the House’ have explored a similar concept with an similarly disturbing ending. In another example of a (not altogether happily) married couple finding the spectral in their new home, the *Fear on Four* play ‘Dead Man’s Boots’ (BBC, 31 January 1991), a couple discover a pair of hobnailed boots in the old house they have bought. Myra (the wife) begins to piece together the story of the owner of the boots and realises he was a murderer. At the climax of the play, we are with Myra upstairs as the ghost reclaims his footwear and walks up the stairs and into the bedroom: *clump… clump… clump…* It is a simple, well-crafted ghost story but listening in the environs of a domestic space, the story has the potential to penetrate one’s own surroundings in an uncanny way.

The ghost in ‘Dead Man’s Boots’ never says a word but in other plays, ghosts can be much more loquacious. In Rosemary Timperley’s ‘Listen to the Silence’ (27 March 1982), an episode of the BBC series *Haunted*, a lonely woman is terrified of silence and fills her life with the sound of the radio. In an effective aural sequence at the beginning of the play, when she attempts to live without the comfort of the radio, the oppressive silence in her room carries to her the siren of an ambulance and, afterwards, the sound of her own heartbeat: alienating reminders of her own mortality and loneliness. Eventually, while she attempts to

brave the silence again she encounters a ghost in the form of the clear voice of an old man. When she panics because she cannot see anyone, the spirit replies: ‘Can you see the voices that come from your radio?’ The old man – a Polish seaman reminiscent, we are informed, of Joseph Conrad – claims to be her grandfather and tells her the surprising truth of her background and his own adventures. Initially, she delights in feeling like a child listening to bedtime stories and hurries home to listen to ‘Grandfather’. However, when she loses her job she begins to use her corporeal status to write down his thrilling tales, the ghost eventually denying her requests to leave the room. Finally, she is discovered starved to death with exercise books filled with writing. The story builds a vivid relationship between the woman, the ghost and his exciting stories, contrasting with the lonely mundanity and stress of her everyday life. This colourful textuality finds an echo elsewhere in radio ghost stories. For instance, in Gillian Tindall’s *The Night House* (BBC, 23 July 2014) a married couple move into a converted schoolhouse where the woman immediately hears a crying child. Locating a journal of one of the former pupils, the woman gradually pieces together the traumas of the past. The play moves from the woman’s investigations and discoveries (with scenes charting the increasing domestic tensions with her husband) to the child’s voice reading her journal and dramatizing her experiences in the pervasively eerie atmosphere of the unhappy building. As in ‘Listen to the Silence’, the spiritual world in *The Night House* is a *textual* world, a realm of vivid and emotionally intense stories in contrast to the harsh triviality of the ‘real’ world.

Plays like ‘Stranger in the House’, ‘Dead Man’s Boots’, ‘Listen to the Silence’ and *The Night House* all establish domestic spaces that are important contexts for their uncanny narratives. Some radio ghost stories have gone even further in developing this, including the use of on-location recording. *Bad Memories* (7 January 2011), a supernatural drama about a police investigation into the discovery of human remains in a house, was recorded in a genuine mansion: Stanmer House in Brighton. In the play, the mansion is called the Blake House as a way to ensure the story is clearly a work of fiction although, incidentally, Stanmer House has its own share of ghost stories associated with it. *Bad Memories* develops a sense of the character of the house and also features ‘audio within audio’ when a number of digital audio files are discovered in the mansion. These sound recordings are corrupted but are gradually deciphered by a forensic audio expert who uncovers the horrific truth of the mansion. The house is recorded binaurally with a very high level of detail and the listener gets a vivid sense not only of the environment of the uninhabited building (creaking floorboards, echoes and the

ambience of empty rooms) but also the ‘crossing over’ into the uncanny and horrifying (distorted voices, child-like singing and death screams). Binaural recording is effectively ‘three-dimensional’ audio, capturing environments to an exceptional level of aural detail. The effectiveness of this technology for uncanny narratives such as *Bad Memories* is also demonstrated in the 2015 BBC radio adaptation of the BBC television drama *The Stone Tape* (Nigel Kneale, 1972) which was available to listeners in both stereo and binaural versions. This story of a scientific investigation of supernatural phenomena in a mansion thoroughly explored the parameters of sound, the binaural version in particular taking the listeners beyond the visual frame of the original and immersing them inside the haunted house and its sound-based horrors.

Significantly, one of the most ambitious radio plays ever produced is also a ‘haunted house’ radio play: Mike Walker’s *The Dark House* (BBC, 23 September 2003). This binaurally recorded play was webcast in three simultaneous ‘layers’ and the audience could opt for which version of the narrative to listen to. In the play, a radio presenter is on location at one of London’s most haunted buildings (a Clerkenwell apartment block) for a playful Halloween broadcast. However, events turn awry when she encounters an old man and a child in the building. Sometimes the characters interact directly or through locked doors and the listener could craft their own experience of these parallel narratives, choosing their own ‘point-of-hearing’ in an almost game-like way. Eventually it becomes revealed in the narrative that the man and child are ghosts (dying during the Blitz and the 1970s respectively). Moreover, the radio presenter discovers, to her utter horror, that she is a ghost herself, having died during the broadcast. *The Dark House* is a radical experiment exploiting technology in an ambitious way. As a consequence, the complexly realised apartment block almost becomes a character in its own right, just as the listeners become ghost-like as they thread in and through the environment and the story itself. Despite the innovative technology of *The Dark House*, the plot of a radio presenter investigating a haunted location finds a precedent many years before in the *Suspense* play ‘Ghost Hunt’ (23 June 1949), one of the most effective ghost plays in American broadcasting. In this play, a disc jockey also visits a reputedly haunted house with the intention of creating a light-hearted radio feature. ‘Ghost Hunt’ is framed by the discovery of the DJ’s recordings, a device that follows the Gothic tradition of the ‘discovered manuscript’ story while looking forward to the ‘found footage’ genre of screen horror. In the recordings, we hear the DJ’s bemusement and disbelief as ghostly phenomena begin to occur. We are placed ~~us~~ in intimate proximity to the DJ as we follow his experience, trapping us

with him inside the terrifying house. Gradually he descends into terror and lunacy, finally laughing manically as he commits suicide.

The hysterical laughter of the insane DJ in ‘Ghost Hunt’ is not the only type of laughter in examples of ghost radio. Aside from thriving in stories designed to disturb or frighten us, ghosts have always had a comfortable (after)life in radio comedy. On both sides of the Atlantic, comedies have occasionally produced episodes that explore the supernatural. This has included episodes that have tied-in with Halloween or have simply decided to explore the Gothic as a generic option for the sake of variety. Sometimes, by the same token, some more typically ‘dark’ shows have taken a comic angle. For example, in *The Mysterious Traveler* episode ‘The Haunted Trailer’ (June 3, 1952), a man on holiday meets a ghost who he describes – in a vivid image easily achievable on radio – as looking like ‘a disreputable old man carved out of a chunk of London fog.’ The ghost – called Spike Higgins – delights in showing off his scary, sonic tricks, declaring ‘I’ll run through my repertory for ya: the ghostly groan, the dying scream, the scream of the banshee, the hollow footsteps, the squeaking door…’ At the end of the play, the man cannot be rid of the ghost and ends with meta-dramatic self-reference:

> Do any of the radio stations carrying my story need a good sound effects man for mystery programs? Oh, with me and Spike Higgins’ ghost working together, we can guarantee authentic effects!

Another example of the meta-dramatic in ghost comedy can be found in an episode of the BBC’s *I'm Sorry, I'll Read That Again* (19 May 1968) which features within it a creepy story titled ‘The Ghost of McMuckle Manse’. This story of a newlywed couple on their honeymoon in Scotland exploits the instantly evocative language of uncanny radio: organ chords, creaking doors, tolling bells, hollow footsteps and other atmospheric sound effects match the high camp and over-the-top characterisation of the cast. This tale of a family curse is rich with innuendo, parody and bathos. Towards the end, the play begins to disintegrate when the ensemble finds the story too frightening to convey. Eventually, despite the heavily clichéd pattern and detail of the yarn, the programme plays a game which takes us out of the horror story itself: the studio blacks out (or so the audience is informed) and no one claims responsibility for the eerie voice that utters its doom-laden words, as if – in a final punchline – the corny old play has weirdly summoned something authentically supernatural.

The fact that a ghost seems to take over the studio reveals a technophiliac aspect to the spirit world. As Marc Olivier concludes:

> Ghosts, it seems, have always had a thing for gadgets. Ghosts were photobombing back in the 1860s, long before prank-happy teenagers made it a thing. Ghosts flit about in televisions (*Poltergeist*, 1982), VCRs (*Ringu*, 1998), the Internet (*Pulse*, 2001), voice mail (*One Missed Call*, 2003), and text messages (*Txt*, 2006). (Olivier, 2015, 255)

To Olivier's list we can add that most neglected of performance media: radio. As we have seen in this essay, ghosts have flourished on the radio, a medium which allows them to be heard not seen while the listener's imagination conjures up the most frightening scenario they might ever dread to behold. Radio ghosts have haunted audio technology with as much enthusiasm as they have haunted houses; they have driven people insane with terror or mad with lust and passion; they have entrapped people so that they starve to death and made others commit acts of murder or suicide; they have been pranksters as well as vengeful revenants. Ghosts are as invisible as soundwaves and can imbue and inhabit the domestic space of their victims and the listeners.

As we have seen, there is an uncanny potential to the phenomenon of sound and examples of audio technology. We have already considered the haunting, extant voices of Florence Nightingale and others. Tim Crook finds something similar in the recorded oral testimony of First World War soldiers such as Edward Dwyer, who 'chats' to us about life in the trenches and sings an army song but will die in the Somme soon afterwards. For Crook, the unique insight we are given by Dwyer's informal voice, combined with our knowledge of his imminent death, creates a powerful example of Derridean 'hauntology' wherein the present only exists in relation to the ghosts of the past (Crook, 2014). Recorded voices present us with *beings in the passage of time*, not framed by parameters of a screen or a photograph: they are invisible – defined by their lack of physical presence – but still breathing and communicating with us. Mark Fisher also refers to sound recordings when defining hauntology, but cites early twenty-first century record labels like Ghost Box (a group of artists who explore the musical history of a parallel world) and individual artists such as The Caretaker (James Leyland Kirby) who has used looping fragments of old recordings in echoing rooms in the creation of a music that captures qualities of amnesia and dementia. As Fisher writes:

> Their work sounded 'ghostly,' certainly, but the spectrality was not a mere question of atmospherics. What defined this 'hauntological' confluence more than anything else was its confrontation with a cultural impasse: the failure of the future. (Fisher, 2012, 16)

The same year as Fisher wrote this article, Robin the Fog released his own hauntological album: 'The Ghosts of Bush' (2012). This site-specific recording explored the BBC's Bush House shortly before it closed down in the summer of 2012. Using obsolete reel-to-reel tape machines, the recordings explore deserted corridors, empty offices, void stairwells and grinding elevators while, occasionally, voices and music from the BBC World Service seep into the recordings. The resulting album eerily captures a culturally and historically significant space. As Robin the Fog asserts:

> When talking of historic structures, the old clichéd approach is to wonder what one might hear if the 'walls could speak'. I like to think that with 'The Ghosts of Bush' we come closer to hearing them sing: One last song about the passage of time and the impermanence of all things, with the ghosts of the machines joining in. (Robin the Fog, 2012)

When there is no belief in the future, all that can thrive are ghosts, chanting fragmented stories of the past. Whether we are listening to personal anecdotes, on-location recordings, generic stories or pieces of drama, audio technology presents us with ensnared temporality: these captured voices, places and narratives place us in the company of ghosts.

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