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'golden age' of broadcasting**

SPEIDEL, Suzanne

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Suzanne Speidel

‘Lux Presents Hollywood’: films on the radio during the ‘golden age’ of broadcasting.

Whilst adaptation critics, such as Deborah Cartmell, Linda Hutcheon and Brian McFarlane, are accustomed to citing commercial interests as a key motivation for the act of adapting (Cartmell 2014: 160; Hutcheon 2006: 85; McFarlane 1996: 7), this has rarely been so conspicuously declared than in the adaptations of Hollywood movies which were a staple element of broadcasting schedules during US radio’s ‘golden age.’ From the mid 1930s to the early 1950s, networks such as CBS and NBC Blue Network aired a variety of anthology series featuring hour-long and half-hour-long adaptations of recent Hollywood films – productions sponsored by commercial advertisers, whose products featured prominently in the series’ titles and in weekly broadcast intermissions.

This chapter will consider two such series, *Lux Radio Theater* (1934 to 1952) sponsored by Lever Brothers, and the *Screen Guild Theater* (1939-1952), a series conceived by the Screen Actors’ Guild as a means of raising money for the charity, the Motion Picture Relief Fund, and sponsored variously by Gulf Oil, Lady Esther cosmetics and Camel Cigarettes. In common with many radio programmes of the era, these series switched networks several times during their existence, their production and creative personnel being overseen, not by the networks themselves, but by advertising agencies employed by the shows’ sponsors. The resulting programmes blended adaptations and commercials into single entertainment packages for listeners

and buyers, with Hollywood narratives segueing into advertisements for washing detergents, make-up, cigarettes and soap.

Within adaptation scholarship, the fact that adaptation offers what McFarlane terms ‘the lure of the pre-sold title’ (1996: 7), has led critics such as Simone Murray, Christine Geraghty, and Deborah Cartmell to identify the advertising of adaptations themselves as important adaptation paratexts. This is because adaptations are, as Cartmell puts it, ‘entertainment that strategically positions the consumer as the primary target,’ (Cartmell 2014: 163) and the marketing of adaptations sheds light on key creative decisions that have been made with consumers in mind. (These include the degree to which films ‘exploit or undermine literary pedigree, how they translate characters into stars, how they tease us with the promise of our favourite film genres... how they speak to the tastes of a contemporary audience, and how they locate themselves within a particular consumer group.’ [2014: 165]).

For the makers *Lux Radio Theater* (hereafter referred to as *LRT*) and *Screen Guild Theater* (hereafter referred to as *Screen Guild*) the importance of the consumer is clear, and the choice of adapting Hollywood films to radio pairs up the audience-targeting embedded in adapting with the targeting of buyers of sponsorship products. The advertising within these shows is a key paratext of the adaptations, since it not only both flags up with unusual clarity the commercial aims of adaptation but also tells us much about the audiences addressed. As I shall demonstrate, the adaptations highlight the commercial contexts of the golden age of radio, and the radio industry’s commercial contexts also elucidate how creative decisions in adapting are matched to consumer-listeners.

In this chapter I will consider how advertising paratexts illuminate their adaptations, through an examination of two anthology series, and through close analysis of two different radio versions of Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarf* (David Hand et al, 1937). The requirements of radio sponsors during this era have resonance for the study of adaptation, since, as Cynthia B. Meyers makes clear, advertisers sought to market products by employing 'standard, recognizable appeals,' whilst also needing to 'innovate to build new markets' (Meyers 2014: 150). Within adaptation scholarship, the pleasure of adaptation for audiences has been theorized by Linda Hutcheon who, taking her lead from genre studies, defines it as 'repetition with variation,' or 'the comfort of ritual with the piquancy of surprise' (2006: 4). Thus the act of adaptation itself meets the criteria of advertising agencies, since it marries and imbues commercial breaks and product endorsements with the familiarity and the novelty embedded in adaptation. In considering how patterns of repetition and variation play out in two versions of *Snow White*, I will show how audiences are simultaneously targeted as consumers of products and stories. In examining the creative decisions underpinning these adaptations, I will therefore trace adaptation approaches which resemble the marketing strategies of the specific advertising agencies that produced them.

It is worth noting that such parallels at once mirror and also remodel the arguments put forward by Cartmell on the marketing techniques employed for classical-Hollywood film adaptations. Cartmell proposes that the posters and press-packs of Hollywood adaptations traditionally drew on literary pedigree as a selling point, yet at

the same time offered popular, commercial entertainment as a means of ‘sweetening the pill’ of canonical, literary authors such as Shakespeare and Dickens. Classic radio adaptations combine the cultural associations of their respective media in similar ways to those outlined by Cartmell, yet in this instance film entertainment is offered as a counterbalance to the newer medium of radio’s blatant commercialism. In other words, rather than sweetening the pill of high culture, film narratives make palatable the strong flavour of consumerism brought about by sponsorship in broadcast radio.

Critics such Robert Stam have previously noted the ‘class-based dichotomy’ embedded in literature-to-film adaptation, in which ‘literature pays indirect, and begrudging homage to film’s popularity, while film pays homage to literature’s prestige’ (Stam and Raengo 2005: 7). Golden-age radio adaptations of films make clear that such symbiotic plays on cultural capital are at once a staple of cross-media adaptation, and are also enacted in many more combinations and permutations of high-brow, low-brow, entertainment, consumerism, prestige etc. than have been appreciated through adaptation studies’ predominant focus on literature-to-film adaptation.

In her groundbreaking study of the history of commercial sponsorship in US radio, Cynthia B. Meyers dates the involvement of advertising agencies in radio production back to the early 1920s. Meyers records the rapid ascendancy of advertising in radio, with advertising revenues rising from \$3.9 million in 1927 to \$19.2 in 1929. The ‘golden age’ of radio, from the 1930s to the early 1950s, saw radio increase its audience at a time when cinema was experiencing narrowing profit margins due to the Depression and the rising production costs which followed the introduction of sound.

Whilst cinema's overall revenues remained greater than those of radio, the newer medium was able to attract a larger audience with considerably less expense (Meyers 2014: 203), a situation that led to both competition and symbiosis between the two industries.

The radio industry became reliant on the film industry for its ready supply of performance talent, a commodity prized by its commercial sponsors, who exerted pressure on advertising agencies to increase their reliance on audience-generating film stars. Until 1935 there was little incentive for radio networks themselves – whose geographical hub was, like the advertising industry, New York – to broadcast from Hollywood, since the American Telephone and Telegraph Company insisted that programmes be transmitted along its telephone lines to New York before it would transmit them across the country to local stations. However, in 1935 a federal regulatory investigation forced a change in policy, and this meant that broadcast costs from outside New York were reduced (Meyers 2014: 202). Responding to the demands of advertisers for stars, and making use of newly established radio facilities, leading advertising agencies began in the late 1930s to set up radio-production headquarters in Hollywood.

The agency that produced *LRT* was J. Walter Thompson (JWT), which had a previously established history of using film stars in advertising, through its print-media campaign for Lux Toilet Soap, in which stars' pictures appeared alongside their endorsement of the product. Thus *LRT*, in which film stars performed and also praised Lux products during intermissions, grew out of JWT's pre-existing, print campaign for Lever Brothers. *Screen Guild* was produced by Rubicam and Young (Y&R;

Christman 1991: 18), an agency that was generating 30% of all its revenues from its Hollywood-based programming by 1938 (Meyers 2014: 205). Whilst radio copywriters, who took the responsibility for the creative content of programmes as well as for advertisements, remained based in New York until the second half of the 1940s, directors and other technical staff were employed in Hollywood by the advertising agencies, which leased studio space and airtime from radio networks.

The film industry's collaboration with this already complex symbiosis was motivated by the fact that Hollywood film studios could see the marketing potential of radio, and its commercial breaks, just as readily as could the manufacturers of cigarettes and face powders. Initially there was reluctance on the part of studios, both to antagonise film exhibitors (for whom radio represented direct competition) and to undermine their control over stars, and this led to, from 1932 to 1933, a ban by studios on contracted performers from participating in radio (Meyers 2014: 204). However, this proved difficult to enforce, and cooperation between film and radio was encouraged by instances of integration between the two industries. (Notably in 1932 the Radio Corporation of America, which had established RKO pictures in 1928, appointed Merlin Aylesworth, the president of NBC, to be president of RKO as well, and his six-year tenure in both roles set a precedent for cross-promotion between film and radio [*Advertising Hall of Fame*]). Thus the number of star-led, Hollywood-inspired programmes grew in the late 1930s, with examples including *Kraft Music Hall*, *Hollywood Hotel* and *Old Gold Hollywood Screen Scoops*.<sup>1</sup>

'Package' agreements between film studios and radio sponsors were rare (although in 1937 MGM signed a deal giving coffee manufacturer Maxwell House access to all its

stars, writers and producers), because they tended to result in conflicts of interest (for example, MGM star Clark Gable had an endorsement deal with rival coffee company, Chase and Sanborn [Meyers 2014: 204]). Such complicated commercial entanglements help explain the appeal for sponsors of adaptation anthology series, in which a different film was adapted every week. This format gave access to studio property, in the form of both actors and screenplays, which could be negotiated on an episode-by-episode, studio-by-studio basis. Whilst this was time-consuming for advertising agencies, it also broadened choice in terms of adaptation sources and the stars – whose availability was limited and costs high.<sup>2</sup>

The specific format of the adaptation anthology series also meets the paradoxical advertising criteria of ‘standard and recognizable appeals’ coupled with innovation ‘to build new markets’. The series offer both familiarity (every week will offer an adaptation and so every week will be the same) as well as novelty (every week will feature a new film and new stars and so every week will be different). Episodes of anthology series usually finished as did *LRT*’s ‘Casablanca’ (broadcast in 1944), where the series’ host, who was no less than Cecil B. DeMille, tells listeners what is in store next week: ‘One of the big, dramatic prizes of the past year – the Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer hit, ‘Random Harvest.’’ Here DeMille entices audiences to return through a combination of popular entertainment and prestige – a romantic melodrama and an Academy-Award-nominated picture – neither of which need to be directly stated, since both were known to cinema audiences.

Such concision, drawing on pre-existing audience knowledge, was precisely how advertisers were trained to present products to radio audiences, since the transience of

the medium led to fears that listeners may miss broadcast content. Staff at JWT were advised to consider radio commercials as analogous to billboards rather than newspaper advertising, and to ““avoid quick transitions... or concepts which listeners cannot grasp as the words fly by”” [Meyers 2014: 74]. Radio scholarship has since echoed this early, medium-specific analysis by advertisers, with critics such as Frances Gray, Richard Hand and Mary Traynor theorizing radio-listening as at once a ‘liberation’ and ‘a secondary experience,’ (Hand and Traynor 2011: 35) since, even before the advent of transistor radios in the 1960s, it was often undertaken alongside other, household activities. Hand and Traynor posit that this led radio drama to ‘compensate’ for surrounding distractions: ‘narrative structure tends to be uncomplicated, involving few characters... simplicity is the key to the most successful radio drama’ (2011: 36-37).

*LRT*’s ‘Casablanca’ demonstrates how the repetition embedded in adaptation assisted in these compensatory tactics, since it enabled such complex scenarios as the European refugee-trail to the Americas via Casablanca and Lisbon to be summarized easily, audiences being already familiar with the geo-political context (which the film explicates with the aid of globes and maps). At the end of play we hear strategies of repetition employed to advertise the series’ next episode: ‘Random Harvest,’ with its story of post-war, lost love, echoes the appeal of ‘Casablanca,’ yet at the same time, its fresh appeal is signalled to listeners by the response of the studio audience, who give two rapturous gasps, once when the title is announced, and once for the film’s and adaptation’s stars, Ronald Coleman and Greer Garson. The gasps of pleasure were a customary, weekly response (although the audience performed their role with particular conviction on this occasion) helping to ensure that any inattentive listeners

would then be eagerly awaiting the later recap of who and what was to come next week – which DeMille in this episode gives after a propaganda appeal to listeners to buy more war bonds.

The remit of novelty and familiarity could also be met by adaptation anthologies through the variety of films and genres on offer. Women were transparently the principal target audience of US commercial radio, since they were the chief purchasers of consumer goods: as one JWT advertising manager put it when describing ‘Mrs Consumer,’ the target listener for the show *Kraft Music Hall*, ““She’s your wife! She is first rate and high class and Kraft advertising is fashioned to meet those attributes.”” (Meyer: 220) Not surprisingly therefore genres such as the melodrama, the musical and the romantic comedy predominated adaptation anthologies schedules, with for example, *LRT* dramatising ‘Stella Dallas’ (1937), ‘Wuthering Heights’ (1939 and 1954), ‘Mrs Miniver’ (1943) ‘Rebecca’ (1941 and 1950), ‘All About Eve’ (1951) ‘Show Boat’ (1940 and 1952) ‘A Star is Born’ (1939 and 1942), ‘His Girl Friday’ (1940), and ‘The African Queen’ (1952).

Within the broad market of the female listener/ consumer advertisers also sought to target different demographics. Mothers were encouraged to listen with young children to adaptations of children’s films such as *The Wizard of Oz* (Victor Fleming, 1939), and intermission advertising was shaped accordingly. Thus regular guest ‘Hollywood reporter, Libby Collins,’ tells listeners of ‘The Wizard of Oz’ (1950) that star Joan Bennett, the ‘glamorous mother of four lovely daughters’ uses Lux Flakes on ‘everything from dainty party dresses to two-year-old Shelley’s gay cotton play clothes.’ The second world war brought changes both to the lives of target listeners

and to the duties of advertising agencies: women's roles in the war effort were recognised through commercials focusing on young, working women – for example through the endorsement of 'hard-working, Fox starlet,' Susan Blanchard (*LRT*, 'It's a Wonderful Life,' [1947]), as well as through advertisements in which wives who have been 'working all hours' and 'neglecting beauty care' are advised by friends to use Lux soap before their husbands return home on war-leave (*LRT*, 'Casablanca' [1944]).

During wartime the advertising strategy of using entertainment to 'sweeten the pill' of radio's address to consumers took on greater prominence and urgency because it was extended to propaganda. Advertising agencies were answerable to the Office of War Information (for whom copywriters volunteered) as well as to sponsors, which meant that commercial sponsors, as a means of promoting their own wartime contribution, effectively footed the bill for the US's government's radio propaganda (Meyers 2014: 242). (It also meant that series needed to simultaneously promote soap and gasoline whilst also encouraging frugal product-use and car pooling). Adaptations such as 'Casablanca' met the demand for palatable, pleasurable propaganda, its hero's noble, self-sacrificing protection of refugees being ideally suited to the difficult task of persuading a war-weary US public to invest yet more money in the government's 'Fourth War Loan Drive.'

The balance between repetition and variation could sometimes be a precarious one. In a crowded market with many sponsors chasing similar target demographics, it was not uncommon for series to remake adaptations. Different anthology series also adapted the same films as one another (for example, *Screen Guild* also recorded 'Mrs

Miniver' [1942], 'Rebecca' [1943 and 1948], 'A Star is Born' [1937 and 1942], 'Casablanca' [1943], 'His Girl Friday' [1941] and 'Wuthering Heights' [1946]). This meant that the offer of novelty and variety could be undercut through a multiplicity of radio adaptations, and across the major networks of NBC and CBS there was also a host of different adaptation anthology series on offer, such as *The Dreft Star Playhouse*, *Hollywood Star Time*, *Hollywood Playhouse* and *The Screen Directors' Playhouse*. The ubiquity of anthology series, as well as the need to find a new film every week, meant that such series could not only adapt films and genres with an obvious, 'safe' appeal to the female market, and as a result *LRT* also made versions of noir films, biopics, war dramas and Westerns.<sup>3</sup> Whilst some films were clearly more likely to attract radio audiences than others, the series' inherent diversity offered the potential for them to pick up new listeners from week to week, through the different appeal offered by such variety in films, genres and stars.

The combination of familiarity and novelty was particularly evident when it came to the presence of stars, whereby radio adaptations offered the pleasures of repetition, the pleasures of variation, and the pleasures of variation combined with traces of repetition (or vice versa). Thus where the adaptation featured the film's original stars (as in *Screen Guild's* 'Casablanca', sponsored by Lady Esther), this was proudly announced when the stars were introduced, promoting the familiarity and authenticity of film stars in their (own) film roles. At the same time, such repetition was itself offered as novelty, since much of the appeal of the adaptations lay in the (then) ephemeral nature of films, which could not be re-experienced after their theatrical run unless they were subsequently reissued. Some of the series' complicated plays on repetition, newness and rarity can be heard in *LRT's* 'Wizard of Oz', which in 1950

came eleven years after the film's original release, but only one year after MGM reissued the film in cinemas for a new generation of children (Fricke 2013: 93). Host William Keighley's introduction of Judy Garland – 'audiences have asked for her to be brought back again and again' – effectively uses the film's re-release to remind audiences that it will always be worth revisiting, whilst also offering up the specific radio performance (with a twenty-eight-year-old Garland providing a rather more throaty rendition of Dorothy) as a new, special, not-be-missed experience.

Conversely where a film's original cast were not used in the radio adaptation, broadcasts provided the novelty of hearing familiar stars playing roles made familiar by other actors – for example *LRT*'s version of 'Casablanca' featured Alan Ladd, Hedy Lamarr and John Loder, instead of Humphrey Bogart, Ingrid Bergman and Paul Henried. The unique ability of radio to bring audiences new combinations of well-known stories and stars was used to promote broadcasts, as DeMille's introduction to *LRT*'s 'Casablanca' makes clear:

Getting these players together in one drama is a talent scoop of the first magnitude in Hollywood and it's unlikely that it would ever happen in a picture, because our stars are under contract at different studios and are kept so busy on their home lots that they aren't "loaned out".

In this instance the film industry's ownership of stars is effectively used against it, with radio subtly presented as a newer, freer industry, able to circumvent the bureaucracy of powerful studios for the benefit of the audience's entertainment at home.

The fact that radio was indeed listened to in the home constitutes an important ingredient of its ‘medium specificity’ (see Carroll 1996: 26), and part of the novelty, or ‘variation’, offered by adaptation anthology series was derived from the way they exploited the inherent intimacy of radio. Again this was evident in the use of stars, since not only did actors share ‘their’ shopping and beauty tips through product endorsement, they also did so by featuring in ‘behind-the-scenes’ chats during programme intermissions (thus, at the end of *LRT*’s ‘Casablanca’ DeMille points out that Hedy Lamarr is also ‘Mrs John Loder,’ and Loder, Lamarr and DeMille exchange [slightly awkward] banter on whether DeMille advises married co-workers to ‘do a little rehearsing at home.’) The consumerism which brought about such listening pleasures also had the potential to undermine them, since the conversations’ stiltedness arose from the fact that they were scripted by copywriters. This potentially undercut the impression of stars speaking intimately to listeners, although at the same time, these segments still provided the novelty of stars ‘staying behind after the show’ to talk to the audience. Radio also offered an unfiltered experienced not available in the cinema, in that broadcasts were live, which meant that mistakes and off-script additions could not be removed. (Thus Judy Garland shamelessly gives the game away at the end of ‘The Wizard of Oz,’ whilst reassuring DeMille that she is not away from her family for the Christmas-holiday broadcast: ‘I brought my three-year-old – my *four*-year-old – daughter, Liza, with me. It says three in the script, but really she’s four.’) The studio audience’s reactions to both scripted jokes and unscripted contributions suggests a mixture of innocence and knowingness – a willingness to suspend disbelief in the spontaneity of star chat, and a concomitant delight when the illusion is broken and they are ‘let in on the act.’

The seeming informality of these star segments was helped by the absence of any writers' credits. Neither the writers nor their employers, the advertising agencies who produced the series, are mentioned anywhere in the episodes, a policy Meyers presents as typical of commercial broadcasting at the time, ensuring that programmes appeared to originate directly from their sponsors (Meyers 2014: 215). This downplays the status of the adaptations (and their chosen medium), since they are devoid of authorial markers that would distinguish them from sources (and promote radio as the product of creative talent). Cartmell argues that a similar practice occurred with classical Hollywood adaptations of literature: marketing stressed literary authors, film stars and also the words of talkies (which had the potential to offer fidelity to literary sources). In both instances the adaptation promotes elements of the source medium with a view to evoking its (marketable) prestige, though the precise ways in which cultural capital is at play differ in each case.

The radio adaptations' authors are not just given a low profile, but are entirely uncredited. Authors are present, but they are cinematic, with directors such as DeMille (and later William Keighley) hosting (and billed as 'producer'), in order to give the series cultural weight. Thus film authors are evoked for radio during a period before the rise of auteurism gave them the profile they enjoy today (and when they were downplayed in film adaptations which promoted *literary* authorship instead). At the same time film directors and stars promote sponsorship products, so that their presence in covering up radio authorship advances commercial goals as well as prestige; effectively directors and stars assist in the project of audience misdirection away from the advertising-agency employees who are the adaptation authors.

There is a certain irony in the role that film occupies here: Meyers suggests that within the advertising industry there was reluctance to embrace radio advertising because it lacked the authority of the printed word, evoking instead a tradition of oral fakery associated with ‘travelling medicine shows’ (Meyers 2014: 61). Thus in classical Hollywood film adaptations, spoken words are used to evoke literary, written words; the adaptations respond Stam’s notion of a ‘class-based dichotomy’ by linking film to literature through its ‘talkie’ (rather than ‘movie’) status. In golden-age radio adaptations meanwhile, a key dichotomy emerges, not between words and images, but between spoken words and advertising’s more usual employment of written language; cinema’s glamorous, moneyed voices thus offer industrial respectability and prestige to recorded, spoken words, despite the fact that when cinema adapts it is more usually understood to occupy the low-brow, populist, visual (non-linguistic) side of the adaptation coin.

Although radio adaptation anthologies effectively promote their own subordination to film, it is nevertheless possible to detect traces of authorship within individual adaptations. Specifically, adaptation approaches at times mirror the methods used for marketing sponsorship products, and the combined broadcast of the narrative and its sponsorship paratexts allows us to trace how approaches to adaptation are shaped by the targeting of audiences by advertising agencies as simultaneous consumers of stories and products. Frequently these creative decisions involve the manipulation of Hutzcheon’s definition of adaptation pleasure, that is ‘repetition with variation... the comfort of ritual with the piquancy of surprise’ (2006: 4). Two versions of Disney’s *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (David Hand et al, 1937) demonstrate this, one by *LRT* in 1938 and the other by *Screen Guild* (then named *Lady Esther Screen Guild*

*Players*) in 1944. The Online Archive of California at the University of Santa Barbara lists the adaptor for seasons 1943 to 1947 of *Screen Guild* as Harry Kronman, but does not have the same information available about writers for *LRT*.

Meyers presents the J. Walter Thompson agency, makers of *LRT*, as ‘the foremost producer of star-studded popular entertainment derived from the Hollywood film industry’ (2014: 224), and its was the only anthology series to record hour-long, rather than half-hour adaptations. Meyers also offers JWT policy towards sponsors as standing in direct contrast to that of Young and Rubicam (producers of *Screen Guild*), citing JWT’s radio-department head, John Reber, as disapproving of programs which ‘kid the product and make fun of advertising on radio’ (2014: 162). Y&R, meanwhile, is described by Meyers as ‘a pioneer of disarming audience resistance to commercials by mocking their commercialism’ (2014: 169), with one agency executive, Pat Weaver, even featuring in sketches making fun of advertising and broadcasting, in Fred Allen’s *Town Hall Tonight*. Meyers considers Y&R to be a leading exponent of ‘soft sell’, which depended on ‘positive associations between products and consumers’ emotions’ (2014: 169), whilst JWT, though it also employed ‘soft sell,’ sometimes used ‘hard sell’, or ‘repetitious hectoring, and direct, rational appeals’ (2014: 8). On *LRT* stars were used to endorse the product directly (women stars often being required to gush about the facial-beauty benefits of Lux soap), whilst *Screen Guild* employed stars for the adaptation but used radio announcers to speak the commercials.<sup>4</sup>

*LRT*’s ‘Snow White’ was a Christmas-time broadcast, which took place just over a year after the film’s theatrical release. Host DeMille introduces the film by stressing

Walt Disney's trepidation and daring the year before – the film being the first feature-length animation ever made – and by recounting its success in extravagant terms:

In the tiny hands of a little lady named Snow White lay the reputation and the future of Walt Disney. How this picture was received is history. It brought laughter and tears from the children and grown-ups of every nation. Praise came from the pulpit, from statesmen, from the press for this unassuming man, who even his switchboard operator calls "Walt".

The adaptation is clearly capitalizing on the prestige of the film and its maker, so much so that DeMille's bombastic tone is allowed to compete with humanizing assertions of Disney's humility, and more so with the episode's evocation of radio as an intimate medium telling listeners a bed-time story. (DeMille does not really modulate his voice during the broadcast, incongruously proclaiming the line 'Let's dim the lights a little. Let's sit down and shut our eyes. Forget the world and just imagine...'.) The film poses an obvious difficulty for radio in that its ground-breaking technical achievement rest with the animated visuals. It is precisely here that both the film's appeal and prestige lie, which means that a key adaptation technique necessarily becomes talking about what the episode cannot show (the 'one half million drawings' by 'more than five hundred artists'). This build-up promotes the broadcast as a special event within the series, marking the end of *LRT*'s 1938 season.

The narrative itself is treated faithfully, with much of the screenplay reproduced in the radio play. This was *LRT*'s custom, and a major appeal of the adaptation anthology format was obviously the fact that large portions of its radio scripts had already been

written by screenwriters. Some changes that are introduced directly respond to the needs of the sponsor, as when story events are reordered (for example, the Queen finds out that Snow White is not dead only after Snow White's second rendition of 'Some day my prince will come') in order to create three defined acts that will accommodate commercial breaks. Other changes accommodate the broadcast schedule of the radio network: the drama is shortened to under one hour by having DeMille's narration summarize minor scenes, by curtailing occasional songs, and by cutting the length of sequences that rely on visual humor. (Thus Snow White sings a shorter version of 'Whistle while you work' as she cleans the dwarfs' house, since we cannot watch the forest animals comically helping her with chores.)

Elsewhere we find additions designed to compensate for the absence of visuals: dialogue is added to impart information (as in Snow White's 'there are eyes in the dark... staring at me... monstrous shapes and mouths agape'), whilst the episode also uses music to create 'stylized sound effects' (Crisell 1994: 52) – for example, the name of each dwarf is accompanied by a different musical instrument playing a different note, so that musical pitch and timbre comically convey the relative size and sweetness of the characters. DeMille's narration occasionally also adds musicality (as in '...We hope she'll be happy as young girl should, With seven little men so kind and good...') which echoes the playfulness of the visuals it replaces, and also evokes the film's fairytale source through child-friendly alliteration and rhyme. Whilst *LRT* cannot reproduce the film's animation, it has the advantage that the film's performers are vocal artists, and the episode includes from the original cast Roy Atwell as Doc, Moroni Olsen as the Mirror , Stuart Buchanan as the Huntsman and Billy Gilbert (the comedian famous for his noisy sneeze routines) as Sneezy. Most obviously the radio

version is able to reproduce the film's songs, and it plays out famous romantic and comic numbers – such as 'Someday my prince will come,' and 'It's off to work we go' – in full.

The character of Dopey, who is famously silent in Disney's film, is included by the sound of a bell round his neck. The popularity of round-eyed Dopey with audiences was signaled by the fact that he featured on the front cover of the *Radio Guide* issue promoting the adaptation, and his inclusion via sound effect demonstrates the adaptation's determination to replicate the film's appeal. On one hand such sound-effect additions draw our attention to visuals which the radio episode has lost in adaptation, yet it is worth noting that they also draw on medium-specific properties of radio which adaptations are particularly well-placed to exploit. Theories of radio repeatedly counter the notion of radio as a medium defined by lack ('a TV which gives us nothing to look at' [Hand and Traynor 2011: 3]) with the notion that radio provokes the visual imagination; Hand and Traynor specifically employ the notion of *anamnesis*, defined by Augoyard and Torgue as 'an effect of reminiscence in which a past situation or atmosphere is brought back to the listener's consciousness, provoked by a particular signal or sonic context' (2011: 4). The radio episode's playful sound effects, such as Dopey's bell, make use of this capacity of radio sound, with the listener's visual memory of the source film being evoked through sonic substitutions and approximations. This technique manages to offer variation which actually suggests repetition, and makes clear that the aim of the adaptation is fidelity to its source. In this, the episode echoes the reverence with which JWT approaches product sponsorship, their hour-long broadcasts leaving time for star product-endorsement,

replication of much of the film's dialogue and songs, as well as homages to the film through sound-evocations of its visual style and achievements.

The episode's guest star is Walt Disney himself, and he and DeMille engage in intermission chats which in themselves make the episode a noteworthy piece of film history. In these (scripted) interludes the two men compliment each others' work using the motif of adaptation, with each speculating how their films would be if adapted into the genre favoured by the other.<sup>5</sup> JWT's copywriters also put their advertising skills to work summarizing the Disney brand, with Walt Disney allowed a prolonged, 'folksey' speech endorsing the studio's wholesome ethos:

Over at our place we're sure of just one thing. Everybody in the world was once a child. We grow up, our personalities change, but in every one of us something remains of our childhood... And it just seems to me that if your picture hits that spot in one person, it's going to hit that same spot in almost everybody. So in planning a new picture we don't think of grown up, and we don't think of children, but just of that fine, clean, unspoilt spot down deep in every one of us, that maybe the world has made us forget, and that maybe our picture can help recall.

This speech encapsulates the symbiosis at work, with advertisers paid by Lever Brothers using radio in order to promulgate the 'cleanliness' of Disney pictures, as a means of boosting the sales of Lux washing detergent. Here the sponsor, the commercial paratexts and the adaptation seem perfectly matched, with all clearly

addressing the family market, and the mothers who were presumed to assess the suitability of washing powders, children's films and evening radio broadcasts.

*LRT* clearly utilizes Disney's *Snow White* as a means of self-promotion, its prestige and uniqueness stressed and mimicked in order to make this Christmas broadcast festive and special. However, towards the end of 'Snow White' *LRT* also surreptitiously 'one-ups' the film, adding in extra lines as Snow White comforts the dwarfs before leaving with her prince: 'Please don't be sad, little men, I'll be coming back... Once every year we'll meet.' This partly addresses the medium-specific difficulty of the film's rapid, visually resolved ending (almost no words are spoken after Snow White wakes in her glass coffin and is led away into the sunset by her prince), but it also subtly promotes *LRT* as the means by which Snow White can be returned to us, replacing finite film releases with the comfort of radio seriality. Radio adaptation is thus associated with Christmas itself, bringing (the same) stories to our firesides year after year.

*LRT*'s manipulation of both its source and its medium mirrors the selling tactics of JWT: the star endorsements, with their wholesome positivity are clearly soft-sell, but the cumulative repetition of endorsements for Lux products pushes the overall approach towards hard-sell techniques. Similarly the fidelity of the adaptation, and DeMille's praise for Disney, speak of reverence for the cinematic hypotext and cinema itself; at the same time the hyperbole and bombast of DeMille's narration, coupled with the implication that broadcast radio can offer pleasures in repetition in ways that cinema cannot, reveals the precisely targeted, self-serving appeal to consumer-listeners which is at the heart of sponsored, commercial radio.

Five-and-a-half years later *Screen Guild* and Y&R did indeed bring Snow White back to radio, thereby belatedly fulfilling (or perhaps breaking) *LRT*'s promise of annual fairytale outings. This was a much smaller production, and its appeal was its stars - not of film, but of radio, since the episode featured ventriloquist Edgar Bergen and his dummy side-kick, Charlie McCarthy. Bergen and McCarthy were much-loved radio stalwarts (despite the fact that Bergen's act of ventriloquism could not actually be seen on the radio), and were headline acts on *The Chase and Sanborn Hour* (a programme produced by JWT). *Screen Guild*'s 'Snow White' has 'straight-man' Edgar Bergen tell the fairytale to his mischievous dummy and comic foil, Charlie McCarthy, having been phoned up, he says, by *The Lady Esther Screen Guild Players*, who want him to play the prince in their production. The episode is thus played out as if it is not part of the series at all, but rather an off-stage retelling prompted by a future, 'real' *Screen Guild* production, in which Bergen hopes to star.

Just as Y&R made use of mockery to disarm audience resistance to sponsorship, in this version of 'Snow White' the agency takes a humorous approach towards adaptation and the medium of radio. This strategy is effective given the high number of adaptations and adaptation series that were being broadcast at the time – the episode's comic elements clearly provide novelty, and in contrast to *LRT*'s proclaiming tone, the adaptation and its stars suggest self-deprecation. The adaptation's mise-en-abyme technique promotes, but also parodies, the notion of radio as the intimate teller of fireside tales, with McCarthy providing risqué, unchildlike asides (such as the suggestion that Snow White has had 'a snoot-full' when she 'stumbles on a cottage') during Bergen's 'parental' recount. McCarthy's

contributions ridicule Bergen, but they also poke fun at fairytales and their retelling through adaptation (he follows Bergen's 'Once upon a time, long, long ago...' with 'Funny, how nothing ever happens *nowadays*'). The imaginative power of radio, so prized by medium-specific theorists, is also gently ridiculed: when Bergen announces a scene change, McCarthy mocks radio's low-budget, non-visual story-telling with 'that's what I like about radio – it's so *flexible*'). The episode features topical, wartime jokes ('the manpower shortage isn't that bad,' responds a skeptical McCarthy to the notion of Bergen cast as prince), which occasionally also poke fun war propaganda (when Bergen invites us to 'journey back to the time of Snow White,' McCarthy responds 'Yes, but before we go, is this trip really necessary?')

Although Disney's *Snow White* is not itself mocked (McCarthy gets caught up in the story, and its romance is told 'straight' through the inclusion of the film's songs), the McCarthy/ Bergen 'Snow White' makes clear how the advertising technique of 'disarming audience resistance' was utilized in radio adaptation. Here potential wartime disillusion with both escapist fairytales and radio's propaganda role are anticipated and salved through self-aware, humorous entertainment. The episode indicates Y&R's consciousness of possible changes in consumer-listener tastes since the broadcast of *LRT*'s adaptation. It therefore seeks to sell the film anew to (women) listeners – whose experiences of war and work may have made them slightly cynical towards this wholesome tale of how Snow White replaces drudgery for the queen with drudgery for 'seven little men,' to be whisked off with barely a word, by a returning prince to his fairytale castle in the sky. The popularity of this 'Snow White' was such that *Screen Guild* reworked and rerecorded it four more times (in 1946, twice in 1948, and in 1950). Two were Christmas broadcasts, echoing *LRT*'s earlier intimation of

radio as the means by which fairytales and films could be retold (and refreshed) year after year.

Hollywood was to offer a satirical commentary on commercial radio in 1947 through an adaptation of Frederic Wakeman's 1946 novel *The Hucksters* (Jack Conway). Both film and novel depict radio as enslaved to the advertising industry, with a programme output that insulted listeners with infantile unoriginality, dictated by the whims of despotic sponsors, such as the film's 'Old Man Evans,' president of 'Beautee Soap.' It was an accusation often leveled at commercial radio, though it was refuted by those working for it, such as JWT writer Carroll Carroll, who argued that "If advertisers sometimes butt into the jobs of the writers and directors, so, too, does the money on Broadway and in Hollywood dictate to the creative echelon." (Meyers 2014: 215). This idea is echoed within contemporary adaptation studies, most obviously in Simone Murray's *The Adaptation Industry*, which refutes previously held dichotomies of cinema as commercial where literature is not, by tracing the complex networks of agents and publishing houses that make up the book industry. What Murray's work demonstrates is the need to understand all adaptations as the products of their industrial conditions and as targeted by consumers of stories.

In 1949, director Robert Siodmak, when featured as a guest on the *Screen Director's Playhouse* radio adaptation of *The Killers* (Siodmak, 1946), was asked by star Burt Lancaster why he, a German, was assigned to direct such a 'typical America' story. Siodmak, responding that as an outsider he has insights not obvious to Americans, elucidates as follows:

When I first traveled across the United States I came to a small town with a big sign. The sign read ‘Coca Cola.’ So I said to myself, ‘Ah-hah! I am now in Coca Cola, New Mexico.’ And then I came through Burma Shave, Arizona!

As Siodmak’s anecdote demonstrates, advertising is ubiquitous in the United States, just as vested financial interests, and the pursuit of profit, are inseparable from the production of narratives in any capitalist culture. What golden-age radio adaptations offer us is conspicuous sign-posting that this is so – that adaptations are always sold as well as told. In the parallels between the radio plays and their sponsorship paratexts, we can also see the techniques by which consumerism is rendered, not just acceptable, but pleasurable and entertaining within adaptations’ narrative landscapes.

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<sup>1</sup> *Kraft Music Hall* was a variety show produced for the dairy manufacturer Kraft by JWT and hosted from 1936 to 1946 by Bing Crosby; *Hollywood Hotel*, produced by the agency Ward Wheelock for Campbell Soup, and *Old Gold Hollywood Screen Scoops*, produced by Lennen and Mitchell for the P. Lorillard Company, the makers of Old Gold cigarettes, were both gossip shows.

<sup>2</sup> *LRT*, which was first broadcast on Sunday afternoons from New York, and featured Broadway actors in stage-to-radio adaptations, moved to Hollywood – and to film-to-radio adaptations – in 1936, after a primetime, broadcast slot opened on CBS on Monday nights. Its talent costs rose accordingly, from \$10500 per episode in 1935 to \$25300 per episode in 1937 (Meyers 2014: 216), though clearly this increase was considered justifiable for primetime broadcasting, since what it purchased was the audience appeal of big-screen stories and stars.

<sup>3</sup> Examples include thrillers such as ‘Angels with Dirty Faces’ [1939] and ‘This Gun for Hire’ [1943]; biopics such as ‘The Life of Emile Zola’ [1939]; war dramas such as ‘Wings of the Navy’ [1940]; Westerns (such as ‘My Darling Clementine’ [1947] and ‘Red River’ [1949]).

<sup>4</sup> Tom Lewis, Vice President of Y&R (whose marriage to Loretta Young is presented by Young’s biographer as being partly motivated by his pursuit of stars for radio; Dick 2011: 231), was able to recruit actors for *Screen Guild* because the series raised money for charity: respective sponsors Gulf, Lady Esther and Camel paid Y&R and the host radio networks, but actors and studios waved their fees, which the Screen Actors’ Guild – who commissioned the series – used to build and fund its Country Home and Hospital for retired, ill or destitute industry artists (Christman 1991: 18). JWT enticed stars to *LRT* through lucrative salaries, although its Hollywood Office

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president, Danny Danker also had a reputation for ruthlessness, and was rumored to persuade reluctant stars through blackmail (Meyers 2014: 217).

<sup>5</sup> DeMille's *Union Pacific* [1939] would feature a steam-engine hero falling in love with a beautiful coal car, and wooing her with the line 'Baby, we gotta make tracks!'; De Mille also self-consciously tells Disney of the importance of Lux Flakes in keeping costumes clean during the making of epics).

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#### Radio Series

*Lux Radio Theater*, National Broadcasting Company, Blue Network, (1934-35); the Columbia Broadcasting System (1935-54); the National Broadcasting Company (1954-55): ‘Stella Dallas’ (10.11.37, CBS), ‘Snow White and the Seven Dwarf’ (26.12.38, CBS), ‘A Star is Born’ (9.13.37 and 28.12.42), ‘Angels with Dirty Faces’ (22.5.39, CBS) ‘The Life of Emile Zola’ (5.8.39, CBS), ‘Wuthering Heights’ (18.9.39, CBS and 14.9.54, NBC), ‘Show Boat’ (24.6.40 and 11.2.52, CBS), ‘His Girl Friday’ (30.9.40, CBS), ‘Wings of the Navy’ (7.10.40, CBS), ‘Rebecca’ (3.2.41 and 6.11.50, CBS), ‘This Gun for Hire’ (25.1.43), ‘Mrs Miniver’ (12.6.43, CBS), ‘In Which We Serve (21.6.43, CBS), ‘Casablanca’ (23.1.44, CBS), ‘Random Harvest,’ (31.1.44, CBS), ‘My Darling Clementine’ (4.4.47, CBS), ‘It’s a Wonderful Life,’ (10.3.47, CBS) ‘Red River’ (7.3.49, CBS), *The Wizard of Oz* (25.12.50, CBS), ‘All About Eve’ (1.10.51, CBS), ‘The African Queen’ (15.12.52, CBS)

*Screen Guild Theater* (known variously as *The Gulf Screen Guild Show*, *The Gulf*

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*Screen Guild Theater*, *The Lady Esther Screen Guild Theater* and *The Camel Screen Guild Theater*), Columbia Broadcasting System (1939-1948); the National Broadcasting Company (1948-1950); the American Broadcasting Company 1950-1951; the Columbia Broadcasting System (1950-1952): ‘His Girl Friday’ (30.03.41, CBS), ‘A Star is Born’ (17.11.40, CBS), ‘Mrs Miniver’ (6.12.42, CBS), ‘Casablanca’ (26.04.43, CBS), ‘Casablanca’ (26.04.43, CBS), ‘Rebecca’ (31.05.43 and 18.11.48, CBS), *Snow White and the Seven Dwarf* (24.04.44, 25.02.46 and 23.12.46, CBS; 07.06.48 NBC; 28.12.50, ABC), ‘Wuthering Heights’ 25.02.46, NBC

*Kraft Music Hall* (1933-1971, NBC), *Hollywood Hotel* (1934-1938, CBS), *Hollywood Playhouse* (1937-1940, NBC), *Old Gold Hollywood Screen Scoops* (1937-1938, CBS); *The Dreft Star Playhouse* (1943-1945, CBS); *Hollywood Star Time* (1946-1947, CBS); *The Screen Directors’ Playhouse* (1949-1951, NBC).

Films:

*Snow White and the Seven Dwarf* (David Hand et al, 1937; Walt Disney Productions)  
*The Wizard of Oz* (Victor Fleming, 1939; Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer)  
*Union Pacific* (Cecil B. DeMille 1939, Paramount Picture  
*Casablanca* (Michael Curtiz, 1942; Warner Brothers)  
*The Killers* (Robert Siodmak, 1946; Mark Hellinger Productions and Universal Pictures),  
*The Lion King* (Roger Allers, Rob Minkoff, 1994; Walt Disney Pictures)

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