Alien or familiar: sounds and images in The Twilight Zone, 'The Invaders'

Book or Report Section

Accepted Version

It is advisable to refer to the publisher's version if you intend to cite from the work. See [Guidance on citing](#).

the End User Agreement.

www.reading.ac.uk/centaur

CentAUR

Central Archive at the University of Reading

Reading's research outputs online

Alien or familiar: sounds and images in *The Twilight Zone*, 'The Invaders' (1961)

Jonathan Bignell

This chapter analyses the unusual and expressive uses of both visual style and sound in an episode of the science fiction series *The Twilight Zone*, 'The Invaders' (1961). The episode seems perhaps an odd choice for this volume because, although the use of unconventional, rhetorical camerawork and visual design is common in the genre (Britton, 2009) and offers much for a consideration of the role of the image, an important aspect of sound is not present at all. The episode has no dialogue, though it has some framing narration spoken direct to camera, and it has little music. Nevertheless, this chapter makes the case that the consequent rebalancing of the usual expressive means available to television is both innovative and compelling. The absence of sound becomes an occasion to think more precisely about what sound does, and by removing some of the usual functions of sound the episode allows us to question the customary hierarchy in which sound is a support for the image. Shifts in the viewer's knowledge of the fictional world depend on how image and sound manipulate our relationship with the female protagonist of 'The Invaders' in both conventional and unconventional ways. Her character, who is never named, is played by Agnes Moorehead, whose wordless performance is central to the episode's images and sound. In particular, sounds produced by her vocally, by her body movement and as a result of actions she initiates, as well as sounds coming from alien invaders and their technologies, carry an extraordinary weight because of the lack of other kinds of audio information. Framing narration at the opening and closing of the episode loads those passages of speech which are present with great significance because they are the only words on the soundtrack, identifying – and, crucially, misidentifying – the nature of the fictional world. In the main body of the episode, lack of the speech which would usually convey information, emotion and tone encourages the viewer to attend to images more intensely than usual, reading details of setting, costume, posture and facial expression for example, to make sense of the action.

In the episode, a middle-aged woman, living alone in a wooden cabin, is disturbed by strange sounds coming from her roof. Upon investigation, she finds a

miniature flying saucer there, and two six-inch high astronauts emerge from it and explore her house. She fights them off, and they defend themselves with miniature ray-guns and the woman's household objects, until she kills one and follows the other back to the spacecraft. She attacks the flying saucer with an axe, and inside it hears the American-accented voice of the second astronaut warning other travellers about the dangerous giants on this planet. She destroys the spacecraft, which is revealed to be a human-made, US-launched exploration ship. Related storylines had appeared in an earlier *Twilight Zone* episode, 'Third from the Sun' (1960), also written by the 'Invaders' screenwriter Richard Matheson, which began in a society on the verge of nuclear war from where the protagonists emigrate to another planet that is revealed to be Earth. The placing of human characters in a giants' world was later the premise of Irwin Allen's *Land of the Giants* (1968-70) television series, and the idea had been explored in science fiction cinema in *The Incredible Shrinking Man* (1957), *The Amazing Colossal Man* (1957) and *Attack of the 50 Foot Woman* (1958). While elements of 'The Invaders' had antecedents and subsequent versions in television and film, this chapter is concerned with the distinctive realisation of the idea in image, sound and performance across only twenty-four intense minutes of television screen time.

Rod Serling's narration, which introduces the series and the episode, and which is spoken in direct address and in vision after *The Twilight Zone*'s surreal opening credit sequence, is a key sonic anchor for the episode and its tone. My analysis of sound begins with Serling's voice and his role as the series showrunner. Subsequently the chapter will assess the shifts in the viewer's knowledge of the fictional world that derive from the camera's relationship with Moorehead's character and the 'invader' astronauts. This relationship shifts from an initial alignment with her as vulnerable and humanly familiar, to increasing distance from her character during violent action sequences and as a result of the progression in her visual presentation, as she becomes increasingly dishevelled and vicious. Sound shapes and emphasises this by the strong distinctions between bodily sounds like chewing, panting or gasping on one hand, and the sounds of technological equipment like ray guns on the other. The bodily sounds are those we would expect from a human protagonist, with whom we would be aligned as viewers, but the twist in the story is that the woman is the alien while the high-tech space travellers are the humans. Serling's framing narration

at the opening allows this misidentification of her as human, and his closing narration at the end of the episode reflects on issues of physical scale (the 'invaders' are 'tiny beings from the tiny place called Earth') in a homily about the hubris of space exploration. So, a key aspect of this chapter's analysis is the manipulation of viewer knowledge in the episode, and the ways that visual style works with speech, diegetic sound and music to control this.

Format and experimentation

The Twilight Zone was an American anthology series of half-hour science fiction and fantasy dramas created and produced by Serling's production company Cayuga for the CBS network, broadcast from 1959-64 (Abbott, 2006). Its aesthetic innovation and interesting approaches to format and storytelling arise from the specific history of how the programme was made and organised. Serling had a showrunner or author-creator role in the series, with exceptional control over it as the owner of the production company and also its lead writer. He owned half of the intellectual property rights in the series, retaining ownership of the film negatives (rather than selling his product to a broadcaster) and had a contract that gave him writer credit for up to eighty per cent of its episodes (Presnell and McGee, 1998). *The Twilight Zone* was one among the many anthology drama formats in US television of the 1950s and 1960s, but contrasted with the main programming diet offered by CBS. The network was locked in competition with NBC for ratings dominance throughout the decade (Brown, 1998), with CBS generally leading by virtue of its filmed genre-based series like the rural comedy *Beverley Hillbillies* (1962-71) and the Western *Gunsmoke* (1955-75). But while these successes had a consistent format comprising regular characters and settings, and a consistent approach to their respective genres, *The Twilight Zone* was a different story each week, with different characters and settings, and a key part of its offer to viewers was precisely its unpredictability. The extraordinary notion of a drama without dialogue, and with only one character, meant 'The Invaders' was, paradoxically, characteristic of the series because of its exceptionalism.

The climate of the time, in which the national networks vied for mass audiences by offering long-running filmed dramas with broad appeal, was not conducive to the speculations of science fiction or to stylistic innovation. While CBS

rhetoric sometimes suggested that it catered to the better-educated, young, white urban viewers who valued 'serious' drama in anthologies like *The Twilight Zone* (Alvey, 2004), until the early 1970s this remained a claim rather than a reality. As William Boddy (1984) argues, Serling's work on filmed anthology series in Hollywood aimed to transfer prestige and seriousness from the single play to the genre series. There was a perception inside and outside the television industry in this period that live one-off plays, shot with electronic cameras rather than on celluloid film, were of higher creative value than filmed series. Serling aimed to demonstrate the seriousness and authorial creativity that could be achieved in filmed genre television, and he had a track-record that underpinned this, having himself written many highly-praised plays for live video production in the waning years of that form. Serling did not write 'The Invaders', but its daring repudiation of dialogue and scant music suited his ambitions for *The Twilight Zone*'s aesthetic experimentation.

Serling was politically liberal, and critical discourse about his work has often supported his own contention that the fantasy genre permitted him and his contributing screenwriters to explore radical social and political ideas metaphorically and thus avoid network and sponsor interference (Engel, 1989; Sander, 1994; Beeler, 2010). But Jon Krazewski (2008) has shown by referring to archival documents that the CBS network was not averse to the political subtexts of Serling's television work, but instead concerned about the supply of storylines for his long-running series. Serling's initial attempts to privilege creative screenwriting over managerial producing, and to provide himself with the opportunity to write eighty per cent of *Twilight Zone* episodes, were largely a failure. He never managed to produce the series and also write most of it; he was forced to seek out screenwriters who could supply scripts to meet the demanding production schedule of a long-running series and he was driven to plagiarising published short stories for episode ideas, with consequent legal penalties. That was how 'The Invaders' came to be written by Matheson. However, Serling's achievement was to oversee a highly successful format for fantasy television, in which a widely varying range of free-standing fantasy narratives could be accommodated, such as the one discussed here. The failings of Serling's management of his factory of ideas left space for experiments like 'The Invaders'.

While the style, places represented and performances in *Twilight Zone* episodes could vary considerably, the demanding shooting schedule for filmed television required the use of a stable team of production staff (directors, designers and camera operators, for example) and extensive production facilities. The majority of the series' episodes were made on monochrome 35 mm film (there was a brief attempt to cut costs by shooting on video), at a cost of about $50,000 each. They were shot in the interior soundstages and backlot sets at MGM studios in Hollywood, spaces that were generously sized, well-equipped technically and embedded in the studio's cinema production culture. The opportunities and expectations raised by the space of production are among the factors contributing to J. P. Telotte's (2010) argument that *The Twilight Zone* is 'cinematic', which I take in this chapter to be equivalent to a claim for quality and aesthetic interest (Mills, 2013), and which I discuss in relation to what television could do in image and sound. In 'The Invaders' this means minute attention to the visual style of the mise-en-scène (lighting, shot composition and staging, for example) and a focus on bravura performance (see Academy of Television Arts & Sciences, undated).

'The Invaders' was in the second season of *The Twilight Zone*, broadcast on Friday 27 January 1961 as a prime-time evening drama. As an adult-orientated programme on the advertiser-supported CBS network, its commercial role was to maximise audiences for its sponsors' inserted promotional messages, from the grocery conglomerate General Foods and cleaning products company Colgate–Palmolive. There were also advertising breaks within and at the start and end of each episode. The significance of this commercial context is that *The Twilight Zone* was designed to attract and retain audiences, especially across commercial breaks, by offering engagement with dramatic situations, surprising storyline events and visual or aural effects. The fact that 'The Invaders' has no dialogue and an entirely linear story structure was a strategy to hook and then hold viewers. The episode's writer, Matheson, also wrote the source texts and screenplays for the science fiction thriller films *The Incredible Shrinking Man* (1957) and *Duel* (1971). 'The Invaders' was directed by Douglas Heyes, who worked on many US television series from the 1950s to 1980s. Like Serling himself, these key personnel behind the camera were experienced, established and relatively well-resourced. While I want to argue for the artistry of 'The Invaders', it was a carefully designed commercial product.

Viewers were introduced to the premise of 'The Invaders' at the end of the previous episode, 'The Whole Truth' (1961). After the commercial break at the close of that story, but before its credit sequence, an off-screen narrator announces: 'And now Mister Serling', as lighting fades up from black to reveal the rough planks of a wooden wall and the closed shutters of an unglazed window. The camera is positioned outside a wooden cabin at night, and Serling opens the shutters inwards so that he becomes visible in a lighted interior space, in medium shot, wearing a dark suit and tie and a white shirt. Serling addresses the viewer:

> Next week we bring you a show called 'The Invaders', written by Mister Richard Matheson, and in this room you'll watch Miss Agnes Moorehead in a tension-riddled attempt at escape from a pair of very improbable housebreakers. This one we recommend to science-fiction buffs, fantasy-lovers, and anyone who wants to grip the edge of his seat and take a twenty-four minute trip into the realm of terror.

Serling's tone is confident and urbane, comfortably taking credit for the leadership and control of the *Twilight Zone* series. Yet he recognises the authorship of Matheson, and the significance to 'The Invaders' of its central performer, Moorehead. He identifies the genre of the episode by referring to science fiction and fantasy, but these textual categories have less prominence than the emotional and somatic features with which he characterises it. The experiences of tension, suspense and terror broaden the audience categories from 'science-fiction buffs' and 'fantasy-lovers' to anyone who can enjoy Moorehead's performance as she attempts to escape from the vaguely-specified 'improbable housebreakers'.

What Serling is advertising is the promise of a viewing relationship with the text that centres on how narrative pacing, threat and the withholding of knowledge will produce pleasure. 'The Invaders' is fantasy, conforming to Tzvetan Todorov's (1975) influential definition of this mode as one in which the viewer or reader experiences a hesitation about what is real and what is unreal, or more specifically in this case, what is familiar, comprehensible and Earth-like versus what is strange, other and alien. As a framing narrator, Serling stands outside the text that he introduces, with knowledge of its contents and appeal, yet he is positioned physically inside the space of the story, inside the cabin, demonstrating his possession of *The Twilight Zone* and his ability to articulate its attractions through his own persona. He is both outside and inside, textually and physically, and his power to traverse the boundaries of the story and series is instantiated visually and aurally by the confidence and

suavity of his performance and how he inhabits the physical space of the set. Serling's onscreen narration started in this second season (Presnell and McGee, 1998: 19), and before Serling himself was given the role the production team considered Westbrook van Voorhis, the stentorian voice of the *March of Time* (1935-51) newsreels, who they rejected, and also the rich, baritone voice of actor-director Orson Welles who would be too expensive. Each of those voices would have produced a very different tone, literally and figuratively, and the sonic character and associations of Serling's authorial voice are key to establishing viewers' relationship with the series.

Visually, the title sequence of *The Twilight Zone* begins with wreaths of mist that traverse the screen, dissolving to reveal a bright orb in its centre. The sound is a repeated, spiky four-note motif (by the French avant-garde composer Marius Constant) that gives way to a more fully orchestrated and somewhat dissonant tune by Jerry Goldsmith using brass, woodwind and percussion. As was common across the series, conventional orchestration is melded with compositional motifs alluding to avant-garde and Modernist forms, as in Hollywood cinema's thriller and horror musical styles (Wierzbicki, 2013). The dispersal of the wreaths of mist to reveal the bright sphere gives the suggestion of movement by the camera forward into a space, as if passing through a cloudy atmosphere to arrive at a planet beneath. Serling's voice-over announces: 'You're travelling through another dimension. A dimension not only of sight and sound, but of mind.' From the right of the screen, a black bar graphic moves to divide the screen horizontally. Developing the implication that the bar is a horizon, the bright circular object sinks down the screen to disappear behind it like a sun setting. Meanwhile, the grey cloudy background gives way to a dark star-field. Sound and music support the images here, establishing an intervening space between classical and contemporary musical styles, between pictorial and graphical representation, and between the viewer's sense of normality and an Other reality which is psychological rather than physical.

Serling's voice continues: 'A journey into a wondrous land whose boundaries are that of imagination. That's the signpost up ahead, your next stop: the Twilight Zone.' As Serling's narration mentions a signpost, *The Twilight Zone*'s title caption rapidly lifts up from the bottom of the screen to occupy a central position against the stars. The camera appears to move towards and through the letters of the caption, and they fragment and scatter, leaving the empty star-field. The stars dissolve away

upwards, giving a sensation of downward movement, and a static long shot of a night-time landscape takes its place. The journey through the graphical elements of the sequence parallels Serling's description of the viewer's journey into a mental space of wonder and imagination, while the jerky dissonance of Goldsmith's musical score invests this movement with a feeling of uncertainty and threat. Sound and vision cohere to orient the viewer for what is to come; towards a particular aesthetic experience that promises to be thrilling and otherworldly.

The camera arrives in a night-time landscape, a rural place with a rough path through scrubby bushes in the foreground leading towards the dark silhouettes of a small house and an adjoining barn. Behind them, white clouds contrast with the dark buildings and the black night sky. In the centre of the image a small, single, lighted window in the house can be seen, and wisps of smoke come from the chimney. The scene's chiaroscuro emphasises the depth in the image between foreground and background, and the contrasts of light and dark in the rural scene might suggest the Manichean moral atmosphere of a Western, or an agrarian melodrama of the Depression era. Other episodes in the series explicitly reference contemporary Cold War concerns (Lawrence, 2010), but this one seems rooted in American mythologies about the past, anchored especially by the rough wooden buildings resembling a pioneer homestead of the late nineteenth century.

Serling's voice over suggests these generic frameworks: 'This is one of the [pause] out-of-the way places, the unvisited places, bleak, wasted, dying. This is a farmhouse. Handmade, crude, a house without electricity or gas. A house untouched by progress.' The camera moves slowly forwards towards the farmhouse, and a dissolve takes the camera to the lighted window, through which a middle-aged woman can be seen, occupied in some domestic task that requires her to look downward at her hands, oblivious of being observed. The camera closes in, and the woman's actions reveal that she is cooking, adding food to a large pot. Serling moves swiftly into shot, dressed in a dark business suit, shirt and tie, holding a lit cigarette. He is out of place in this setting, and continues to occupy the role of a framing narrator, introducing the viewer to a space whose 'bleak, wasted, dying' mood does not affect him at all. While he acts as a conduit into the fictional world, both the contrast of his visual appearance with the rural setting and his knowing, sardonic

vocal tone that separates him from it, are disconcerting as well as helpful to the viewer's comprehension.

Serling looks into the camera, walking forwards. He stops, and the framing tightens to privilege him in mid-shot with the woman continuing to slice vegetables in the lighted window nearby (Fig. 1). He explains: 'This is the woman who lives in the house. A woman who's been alone for many years. A strong, simple woman whose only problem up until this moment has been acquiring enough food to eat. A woman about to face terror that is even now coming at her from [pause, he glances upwards] the Twilight Zone.' The low lighting of the exterior and Serling's dark clothing tend to deemphasise his significance but as the only speaker, sound draws our attention to him. The light inside the house gives visual prominence to the woman as the subject of Serling's description, picking out the contours of her head and shoulder against strong geometric shadows behind her that suggest a ladder. The threat to her comes from above, and from outside her domestic space, Serling's words and upward glance imply. But the shadow of a ladder behind her within the house begins to suggest that boundaries between the lighted interior and dark exterior might be transgressed by something coming in on a vertical axis rather than horizontally through the open window.

Fig. 1. Serling introduces 'The Invaders'.

The story is about home invasion, and whether danger lies outside or inside. It is significant that the inhabitant of the home is a woman, who is attacked by transgressors into her space, so the set-up might also draw some of its power to thrill from allusion to sexual violence, like many horror stories in popular fiction and cinema. However, the surprising twist will be that it is the woman who is excessively violent, and the alien Other is actually the woman in the house rather than the outsiders who attempt to enter it. For Freud (1953), the uncanny (*unheimlich*) is a form of fear deriving from something known; the familiar becomes frightening. The word is the opposite of *heimlich*, the familiar, deriving from the word for 'home', but *heimlich* can also refer, paradoxically, to what is kept out of sight. So, the uncanny is not what is unfamiliar, but the familiar estranged or made alien (Wheatley, 2006). Here, it will be the house and its female inhabitant who become alien, despite their

recognisable, familiar image. In 'The Invaders', the repeated motif of reversal is used to generate suspense, threat and thrill. The viewer is aligned with the apparently fearful, threatened woman as in a conventional horror story, only to transfer her role as victim onto her supposed aggressors. Serling's words are a ruse to lure the viewer into adducing the generic frame of the horror story (and other frames too). This is another way in which, early in the episode, sound and image appear to reinforce each other's meanings while in fact working to mislead. But the dissociation and strangeness this produces have already been introduced in sound and image, by discordance in musical style and by Serling's urbane appearance within the rural setting, for example.

Acting the alien

In the production of *The Twilight Zone*, it was customary to spend two days in rehearsal and then shoot for three days (Zicree, 2011). However, for 'The Invaders', because of the focus on a single performer in a single set, much more rehearsal time was available. Furthermore, the invading astronauts were practical props operated on set, so the action with these miniature creatures could be seamlessly integrated with Moorehead's performance and separately inserted effects sequences were not needed. This contrasted with the usual production schedule for half-hour episodes, which was to shoot the performers in three days, leaving two further days for the integration of specially constructed props, costumes and effects. In 'The Invaders' this additional time was used for developing Moorehead's performance. Since there was no need for rehearsal of dialogue, the read-through of the script that would normally take place on the first day of rehearsal was replaced by work on blocking and physical action. On the second day of rehearsal, major set elements had been constructed and the director of photography George Clemens visited the studio to work out lighting positions and lighting design, before shooting began. The extended rehearsal period provided Heyes and Clemens with greater opportunity to integrate Moorehead's performance with other aspects of the episode's visual style. In the three filming days, Hayes spent the morning rehearsing each take, then shooting in the afternoon. He estimated that he shot the entirety of the drama in only seven or eight long takes, and he reports in an interview with Marc Zicree (2011) that Moorehead enjoyed the production process because it resembled working in theatre (where she had begun her career in Orson

Welles's Mercury Theatre company). The extended long takes enabled her to develop a performance crafted in collaboration with Hayes and with knowledge of Clemens' cinematographic decision-making.

This form of performance was suited to the free-standing television plays broadcast in anthology series such as *Philco/Goodyear Television Playhouse* (1948-55) or *Westinghouse Studio One* (1948-58) that drew on producers as well as writers and performers from theatre, with its personnel mainly located in New York. It was in this mode of television drama that Serling made his reputation, with plays for *Kraft Television Theatre* (1947-58) in 1955 and *Playhouse 90* (1956-60) in 1956. But filmed television drama, made largely on film in Hollywood by the beginning of the 1960s, normally adopted the segmented shooting of separate takes used to make cinema. Moorehead's performance in 'The Invaders' bridged two television eras and two dramatic aesthetics. Previous commentators on *The Twilight Zone* such as M. Keith Booker (2002) and Telotte (2010), have acknowledged the series as a transitional one between the preceding literary and theatrical form of the single play and its filmed drama successors. But their arguments are largely about the relationship between dialogue and visual material, since studio-shot live drama was characterised by talk. In common with previous scholarship, this chapter argues that *The Twilight Zone* negotiates between two eras of American television aesthetic, but proposes that this is not only a matter of the distinction between dialogue and visual spectacle. In 'The Invaders', theatricality as bodily, expressive performance is integrated into the emergent filmed drama form without any talk at all.

Moorehead's performance in the early part of the drama shows her character intently focused on small, domestic tasks, somewhat detached and unware of herself. She slices vegetables, absentmindedly putting a piece in her mouth and chewing a slice that projects from her lips. While this might seem rather slovenly, distancing the woman from norms of politeness around eating, it also emphasises that there is no-one to see her and draws attention to the emptiness of the house. An undemonstrative music accompaniment anchors the tone of the sequence, comprising a slow melody on plucked strings over an orchestral backing. It is sound that heralds a shift in tone as the music stops and is replaced by a mechanical humming, then the woman covers her ears with her hands when an electronic shrieking noise becomes very loud. After crouching to take cover, she seizes a lamp and climbs her ladder up to the kitchen

roof, with sparse plucked strings and occasional dissonant chords on the soundtrack. On the roof, the music disappears again, leaving a silence in which we hear another piercing electronic sound that catches her attention. Clearly, such sounds are alien to the environment of the house and the rural landscape, and the camera does not reveal the source of the sound, dwelling instead on her reactions until she hesitantly walks around the open ceiling hatch. Her relatively static poses while listening, waiting, pausing to look and creeping on the roof are expressive to an exaggerated extent, reminiscent of the theatrically derived 'attitudes' struck by performers in silent cinema melodramas (such as Mary Pickford in *The Wind*, 1928). The camera aligns with her view of a metal disc-shaped object with a central domed section. In a change from the motivated lighting used so far, an overhead light source makes the flying saucer bright in contrast to the surrounding darkness. At this point, the screen fades to black for a commercial break.

Viewers would have recognised key generic cues in the way the spacecraft is represented, just as they would have done when first seeing the episode's rural setting. The spacecraft shares its iconography with many flying saucers in 1950s and 1960s cinema and television; indeed, the prop was a model originally built for the film *Forbidden Planet* (1956) (Lofficier and Lofficier, 2003: 28), made by MGM at the same studios where this episode was filmed. Sound effects closely resembling the electronic sounds of *Forbidden Planet* strongly contrast with the grunts, gasps and slight scraping sounds made by Moorehead's mouth and body. At this point, lighting design gives prominence to the glowing underside of the saucer's central dome and its metallic ramp, lit in part by strong illumination from inside it. In the centre of the frame, the shadow of a humanoid figure moves slowly down the ramp towards the camera. But just as the object creating the shadow might be revealed, the sequence cuts away to the woman, lying next to the roof hatch, her face illuminated by the light from below. It is her reaction to what she sees that the camera privileges. Around the edge of the hatch, illuminated brightly by the upward light, a six-inch high figure, its arms outstretched, lumbers slowly forwards. Its surface shines silvery bright, though its head and details of its appearance cannot be seen clearly. In a sudden, rapid movement the woman's foot invades the frame and knocks the creature down the hatch, she slams it shut with a crashing sound and lies across it. A close-up shows her sweating face and dishevelled hair, and we hear her panting in a release of tension.

But her expression changes rapidly to one of intense listening and the camera zooms rapidly along her eye-line, towards the distant figure of a second silvery creature. The zoom ends with the creature in the centre of the frame, and for the first time the viewer can see it clearly. Its surface is silver, it has two stubby legs and arms, and ridges suggest the articulation of its limbs at hips and knees, shoulders and elbows. Its head is covered by a kind of helmet from which a small antenna projects, and a black apparatus on its belly extends upward via a tube-like structure that terminates on the lower part of its bulbous head. At the ends of its arms are bright flashing lights.

The inspiration for the design of the tiny astronauts was Bibendum, the 'Michelin man' made of tyres. Heyes intended that in viewers' retrospective interpretation of the episode it would be possible to imagine that they wore inflated pneumatic spacesuits resembling Bibendum's body (Zicree, 2011). The astronauts, like the Michelin man, have sufficient visual cues to allow an interpretation of them as human, but are sufficiently different in size and proportion to look alien. Heyes operated the rubber astronauts on the set in some of the shots when the astronauts were against a dark background, using a black sleeve on his arm with his hand inserted into the rubber model so that his fingers could walk their legs across the floor, or move their arms. Small lightbulbs on the ends of the astronauts' arms represented ray guns, and post-produced buzzing sounds were added to match the illumination of the lights and signify the firing of the weapons. The advantage of using practical props of this kind was not only that they could be more seamlessly integrated into the lighting setup and in sequences when the camera was moving, but also that they could be physically handled by Moorehead, as Heyes explained in the interview with Zicree (2011): 'By having them that size, she was able to grab them physically and hurl them across the room … which made it far more interesting'. Matheson (interviewed by Burns, 1981: 49) later regretted that the astronauts had been so concretely realised: 'I also didn't want viewers to catch more than a brief glimpse of the creatures until a very extended point in the story. I envisioned the creatures as really menacing. Once you saw them those little figures wobbling around looked like dolls that you'd find on a street corner or in a cartoon.' But the material, textural reality of the creatures gives Moorehead's physical interaction with them extraordinary power. As Lucy Fife Donaldson (2014: 18) puts it, 'Evocation of feeling by means of visual illusion or, to put it another way, the association of sight

and touch and their sensory mingling, is at the heart of texture's uniqueness'. Sound is crucial to the evocation of textures here, contrasting the woman's bodily sounds with the creatures' inhuman, technological sounds. The camera offers expressive images of Moorehead's facial reactions alongside the sounds of her breathing, cries and gasps in close proximity to the creatures. Her wild hair, rough clothing and sweating face contrast texturally with the creatures' shiny, bulbous and mechanical surfaces, and the drama works in part by these distinctions between the imagined feel of its components.

The emphasis in Moorehead's performance now becomes the dramatisation of her vulnerability to attack from the tiny astronauts, and her increasingly violent defence against them. Sparse music comprising bursts of notes on piano and strings accompany the sequence. Flashing lights and buzzing sounds from the creature indicate a ray-gun attack on the woman's body, and she clasps her limbs together, climbs down into the kitchen, and the camera shows the blistered skin of her hand, forearm and chest. Louder, stabbing musical motifs on the soundtrack follow the woman's hesitant, then sudden movements as the action moves to her living room, which has a brick fireplace and simple wooden furniture. Realising her movement from room to room was a complex task because of Clemens' efforts to make the lighting appear motivated only by the light sources visible on screen (Zicree, 1989: 176). The effect is to leave large areas of the set unlit, as places where the astronauts might hide, while picking out areas of bright light on the woman's face, an astronaut's body or the flickering fire. She opens the door, for example, and a loud musical sting accompanies the camera's tilt down from her point of view to the bright silvery figure of a creature at the threshold against the exterior darkness. The woman's panting and the banging of wood against wood replaces music when she probes with a stick in the shadows under the furniture. Something unseen appears to grasp the stick, and pulling it free, she falls back, knocking over her candle with a crash. With her bedraggled face lit only by the firelight, the woman edges into a corner and the screen fades to black for a commercial break. At this mid-point of the episode, lighting, sound and performance are used expressively to mark the tense high-point of her struggle. Moorehead's facial expressions are carved out by intensely contrastive lighting, as are the increasingly wild movements of her body as she flights the intruders in the firelight. The lack of speech and sparse bursts of spiky music, reminiscent of Bernard

Herrmann's score for the violent scenes in *Psycho* (1960), intensify the significance of these other elements of her performance.

Fig. 2. Listening for the attacking astronauts.

Lighting contrasts develop further in the next sequence, as the woman moves towards a bleeping sound that she hears and the camera shows a rack of knives on her kitchen wall, from which one is missing. The camera finds the bright figure of a small creature stepping across the dark windowsill of the kitchen, and when the woman is attacked she throws one of the astronauts across the room. Strong light and shadow motivated by a lit candle emphasise the blade of a small axe that she carries, a close-up of one of the creatures now clearly visible on the windowsill of the bedroom, and the flash of sparks as the woman throws a wooden box onto the fire, with one of the intruders trapped inside. When one of the creatures waddles up to a hole blasted in the wooden wall, the woman picks up her axe and kneels beside the hole, with a close-up lingering on her face, wet with sweat, saliva dribbling from her mouth, and her disordered hair framing her determined face (Fig. 2). By now, the viewer is invited both to sympathise with her plight as her home is wrecked and her life threatened, but also to see her as animalistic and savage, a reading reinforced by the continued panting, gasping and cries of surprise or pain that dominate the sound in the sequence. The strong contrasts of light and shadow suggest the extremity of her peril, intensified by the diegetic sounds of violent movement, crashing furniture and detonating weapons. The continued use of alternations of slow, suspenseful string accompaniment with sudden loud bursts of dissonant chords match music to the moods and dramatic turns of the sequence.

The music stops and the camera tilts up as the woman climbs the ladder to the roof again, and a close-up shows the saucer's ramp lift back into its lighted interior. A lengthy sequence shows her wielding her axe and raining repeated blows onto the saucer, but she pauses as she hears a human voice inside the saucer contacting its base, speaking English: 'Central Control ... come in Central Control. Do you read me? Gresham is dead! Repeat, Gresham is dead! The ship's destroyed.' Puzzled, the woman resumes hacking at the saucer until the voice stops, then she falls back exhausted. Having still heard no speech from the woman, we suddenly hear this

man's voice, and it next identifies the woman as one of an 'Incredible race of giants here. Race of giants.' In response to an unheard question the astronaut says 'No, Central Control. No counterattack. Repeat, no counterattack. Too much for us. Too powerful. Stay away.' She moves slowly to the roof hatch, exhausted (Fig. 3), and then from a position close to her point of view, the camera pans slowly across the smashed surface of the saucer. Music resumes and begins a motif that builds to a climax when the camera stops on an undamaged section, closing in on the words 'U.S. Air Force Space Probe No.1'. The twist at the end of the story is communicated through language, in the forms both of speech and writing, while mood is conveyed by a new choice of music, a slowly tolling bell that suggests finality and death. The sound of American English links the astronauts to humankind, and thus to Serling and the viewing audience, as does the English lettering on the flying saucer, and confirms the reversal of initial expectations about who is the alien here.

Fig. 3. The smashed flying saucer.

By this point the roof is more fully lit, suggesting the coming of daybreak, and the shot is dominated by the now smoking, shattered saucer. Over this final shot, Serling's voice-over says:

> These are the invaders; the tiny beings from the tiny place called Earth, who would take the giant step across the sky to the tiny question-marks that beckon in the vastness of a universe only to be imagined. The invaders, who found out that a one-way ticket to the stars beyond has the ultimate price-tag. And we have just seen it entered in a ledger that covers all the transactions of the universe. A bill stamped 'paid in full' and to be found, on file, in the Twilight Zone.

In terms of dramatic structure, Serling's voice reintroduces familiarity, and resolves the narrative enigmas of where we are, who the woman is and what threatened her domestic space. The metaphor of the bill paid, and the receipt given, reinforces this closure, but also opens up other possible stories since the 'ledger' where the receipt is stored contains records of many transactions, and is one among many 'files' kept in 'the Twilight Zone'. The screen fades to black, and the episode's final sequence begins with a star-field that fades to reveal an illustration representing a desolate plain under a grey sky. An off-screen voice announces: 'And now, Rod Serling, creator of *The Twilight Zone*, will tell you about next week's story'. As the metaphor of the

ledger hinted, these words suggest the perpetually unfinished format of the television series in which more is to come, and the unquenchability of the viewer's implicit desire for more enigmas and their resolutions. *The Twilight Zone* places itself squarely within television's temporal flow, in which each closure gives rise to the opening of another, adjoining viewing experience.

The sound at the end of the episode is accompanied by a shift in camera point of view, up and away from the rooftop exterior of the house. Telotte (2010, 13-14) associates this with cinematic rather than theatrical or televisual style, a point which is difficult to justify since the pull back is also common elsewhere, in *Star Trek*, for example. But he is right to point out that across *The Twilight Zone* as a whole, shifting point of view produced by tracking away from the action, or cutting to an extreme long shot, is commonly used to produce shifts in audience perspective that place the action we have seen in a larger context, quite literally providing the 'big picture'. Such visual choices also match the epistemological level of the narrative, in which the audience's knowledge reaches a point where the action of the story is given a new significance because it is connected with a larger field of meanings. The establishing long shots, tracks or crane shots are epistemologically equivalent to Serling's narration. His knowing irony and his spatial position external to the narrative derive from an understanding of the story space, one he already inhabits and one into which the viewer is invited through the device of the camera pull-back. Once again, sound and image work together.

A transitional moment

The powerful images in 'The Invaders' are dependent on the circumstances of the programme's production, in which physical props rather than visual effects, and the camera's attention to Moorehead's body in long takes, give a distinctive tactility to the programme. Heyes had formerly worked as an art director, and told Zicree (2011) that his skill with physical props and built set elements was one of the reasons why the production team for *The Twilight Zone* invited him to direct episodes of the series. The episode art directors were George W. Davis and Phil Barber, but Heyes himself designed the astronaut invaders, who were constructed by the make-up department out of synthetic rubber. Heyes explained that when he received the script for the episode, he 'didn't want to do this with process or do it with tricks à la *Doctor*

Cyclops'. His reference is to rear projection or 'process shots', in which performers are positioned in front of a screen showing separately shot footage, and to the film *Doctor Cyclops* (1940) in which elaborate out-of-scale settings and props as well as process shots were used to represent characters shrinking to twelve inches high as a result of the evil Cyclops's experiments with radiation. Here, by contrast, the set, the props and objects in it, and of course the performers, are resolutely present, material and we can imagine touching and exploring them. The powerful use of shadow and contrast in the images conduce to this tactile materiality of which the special props are a part, but sound is also key because of the prominence of noises made by the woman's body, the creatures and the objects in the house. The tight camera focus on Moorehead and her surroundings, and the close-miked sounds of her body, give a sense of aliveness and presence to the visual and aural material of the programme. By minimising music, and recording sound in the enclosed studio space with multiple microphones oriented solely towards the performances by Moorehead and the astronaut puppets, diegetic sound gives a feeling of proximity to the action throughout, even when the camera is further from the action.

When Zicree (2011) interviewed Heyes, the director said he recognised that the audience, after the revelation that the woman was a giant-sized alien and the tiny astronauts were human, would need to retrospectively accept that the episode's mise-en-scène had been unlike Earth. This led to decisions about the visual appearance of set design and props that Heyes rationalised by theorising that humanoid creatures would develop functional objects resembling those we are familiar with: 'If any specie [sic] developed into human form of gigantic size like this, they would eventually think of something like a table, a chair, a knife and a pot.' These functional objects needed to be presented to the audience as sufficiently familiar for viewers to misrecognise the woman and her surroundings as human and Earth-like, but sufficiently unfamiliar for them to be retrospectively understood as alien. For Heyes, the visual design signified the 'primitive', and 'there was no style that could be attributed to any particular period in history or place'. As argued above, the images of the 'primitive' setting invoke a generalised American image of the past, in pioneer settler communities perhaps, to which the sound of Serling's narration artfully avoids giving any specificity.

The Twilight Zone's stand-alone episodes adapted the convention in 1950s science fiction short-story literature of devoting much of their narratives to building in a linear fashion towards an expected resolution, but undercutting the resolution by a reversal or twist that prompted reflection and wonder (Beeler, 2020). Because of the difference between each free-standing *Twilight Zone* story, setting and characters from the others in the series, Serling's public role was needed as a unifying brand-name for the series, appearing on-screen at the start and end of each episode to frame each week's story for the viewer and then to announce the next week's offering. *The Twilight Zone* was an early example of a television drama format in which storylines of differing genres (such as space travel, romance or horror) could be accommodated as long as they fitted the pattern of introducing the fantastic and ending with a plot twist. This meant that experimentation with visual and aural style, setting and casting was not constrained by the need for the consistent 'look', location or main characters normally required in a series. Conventional elements including the episode's framing by Serling's voice, and the episode's limited amount of music, are crucial contributors to its dramatic significance. But in 'The Invaders', voice and silence, familiar and unfamiliar settings, and play with science fiction's visual and narrative conventions are tried out in novel ways. A focus on sound, aligned with images of one performer in a restricted but precisely realised space, exploit possibilities that draw on the technologies, personnel and production resources available in a moment of transition for US television drama as it moved from one-off 'theatrical' performances to filmed genre series. 'The Invaders' was exceptional and innovative in its relationships between image and sound, but the anthology format that enabled it became increasingly alien to the landscape of American television.

References

Abbott, Jon (2006), *Irwin Allen Television Productions, 1964-1970: A Critical History of Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea, Lost in Space, The Time Tunnel, and Land of the Giants*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.

Academy of Television Arts & Sciences Foundation (undated) *Archive of American Television*, short interviews with Richard Matheson (writer), Del Reisman (assoc.

producer), Jerry Goldsmith (composer) of *The Twilight Zone* 'The Invaders', at

http://www.emmytvlegends.org/interviews/shows/twilight-zone-the-the-invaders.

Alvey, Mark (2004) 'Too many kids and old ladies': quality demographics and sixties US television', *Screen*, 45:1, pp. 40-62.

Beeler, Stan (2010) '*The Twilight Zone*', in Stacey Abbott (ed.) *The Cult TV Book*. London: I. B. Tauris, pp. 55-8.

Booker, M. Keith (2002) *Strange TV: Innovative Television Series from The Twilight Zone to The X Files*. Westport, CT: Greenwood.

Boddy, William (1984) 'Entering *The Twilight Zone*', *Screen*, 25:4-5, pp. 98-108.

Britton, Piers (2009) 'Design for Screen SF', in Mark Bould, Andrew Butler, Adam Roberts and Sherryl Vint (eds) *The Routledge Companion to Science Fiction*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 341-9.

Brown, Les (1998) 'The American Networks', in Anthony Smith (ed.) *Television: An International History*, 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 147-61.

Burns, James H. (1981) 'Richard Matheson on "The honourable tradition of writing"", *Rod Serling's Twilight Zone Magazine*, September, p. 49.

Donaldson, Lucy Fife (2014) *Texture in Film*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Engel, Joel (1989) *Rod Serling: The Dreams and Nightmares of Life in The Twilight Zone*. Chicago, IL: Contemporary.

Freud, Sigmund (1953) 'The Uncanny', *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, trans. and ed. James Strachey, vol. 17, pp. 217-52.

Kraszewski, Jon (2008) 'Do not go gentle into that twilight: Rod Serling's challenge to 1960s' television production', *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, 6:3, pp. 343-4.

Lawrence, Novotny (2010) 'Reflections of a nation's angst; or, how I learned to stop worrying and love *The Twilight Zone*', in David C. Wright Jr. and Allan W. Austin (eds) *Space and Time: Essays on Visions of History in Science Fiction and Fantasy Television*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, pp. 9-28.

Lofficier, Jean-Marc and Randy Lofficier (2003) *Into the Twilight Zone: The Rod Serling Programme Guide*. Bloomington, IN: iUniverse.

Mills, Brett (2013) 'What does it mean to call television "cinematic"?', in Jason Jacobs and Steven Peacock (eds) (2013) *Television Aesthetics and Style*. New York: Bloomsbury, pp. 57-66.

Presnell, Don and Marty McGee (1998) *A Critical History of Television's* The Twilight Zone*, 1959-1964*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.

Sander, Gordon F. (1994) *Serling: The Rise and Twilight of Television's Last Angry Man*. New York: Plume.

Telotte, Jay P. (2010) 'In the cinematic zone of *The Twilight Zone*', *Journal of Science Fiction Film and Television*, 3:1, pp. 1-18.

Todorov, Tzvetan (1975) *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. Richard Howard. New York: Cornell University Press.

Wheatley, Helen (2006) *Gothic Television*, Manchester, Manchester University Press.

Wierzbicki, James (2013) 'Music in *The Twilight Zone*', in Kevin Donnelly and Philip Hayward (eds) *Music in Science Fiction Television: Tuned to the Future*. London: Routledge, pp. 1-13.

Zicree, Marc S. (1989) *The Twilight Zone Companion*, second edition. Los Angeles, CA: Silman-James.

Zicree, Marc S. (2011) Interviews with cast and crew, *The Twilight Zone*, season 2, DVD extras, CBS/Fremantle.